PERSUASION TACTICS IMPLEMENTED IN MULTICULTURAL MARKETS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ETHNICALLY TAILORED ADVERTISEMENTS

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ii
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Abstract

of

PERSUASION TACTICS IMPLEMENTED IN MULTICULTURAL MARKETS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ETHNICALLY TAILORED ADVERTISEMENTS

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Pairing the Elaboration Likelihood Model with Social Categorization Theory and Social Identity Theory, an experiment examined the effect of both the persuaders’ ethnicity and the strength of the targets association with their own ethnicity on being persuaded. A total of 180 participants from a single University rated their liking for a never-before-seen product after viewing a commercial with either Hispanic actors or European American actors. Although the results were non-significant, the research provided insight into the design and measurement of this topic for future studies.

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iv
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................................. v

List of Tables ..................................................................................................................................... vii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................. 1

    Elaboration Likelihood Model ...................................................................................................... 4

    Self-Categorization Theory and Social Identity Theory ............................................................ 8

2. METHOD ................................................................................................................................... 22

    Participants ................................................................................................................................... 22

    Design ........................................................................................................................................ 24

    Materials ...................................................................................................................................... 24

    Procedure .................................................................................................................................... 27

3. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA ........................................................................................................ 30

4. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS .................................................................................. 41

Appendix ............................................................................................................................................ 46

References ........................................................................................................................................... 47
LIST OF TABLES

1. Table 1 Design of the Experiment .................................................................35
2. Table 2 Analysis of Variance Summary Table Using White, Hispanic, and Other Ethnic Groups .................................................................36
3. Table 3 Analysis of Variance Summary Table Using White, and Hispanic Ethnic Groups ..................................................................................37
4. Table 4 Analysis of Variance Summary Table Using White and Hispanic Ethnic Groups Who Identified as Medium or Strong ................................38
5. Table 5 Analysis of Variance Summary Table Using White and Hispanic Ethnic Groups and the CI Attitude Sub-Scale........................................39
6. Table 6 Analysis of Variance Summary Table Using White and Hispanic Ethnic Groups and the CI Behavior Sub-Scale ........................................40
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of a global consumer market has posed a new challenge for the advertisement world. No longer limited by geographical location, race or cultural distinction; target audiences span entire regions such as North America, Western Europe, and Latin America. Currently, the majority of communication strategies are based on and directed towards consumers in the United States (Maheswaran & Shavitt, 2000). Although these methods and theories might work for some consumers outside of the U.S. it is unclear how this style of communication will affect other cultures. In order to achieve effective persuasive communication, advertisement communications must maximize target acceptance to a product while simultaneously minimizing rejection by individuals within the target group. Similar to a keystone, advertising is “located in a pivotal position between production and consumption… and plays a key role in constituting the geographic boundaries or markets in the internationalization of consumer culture” (Leslie, 1995, p. 402). As businesses reach out to target audiences across regions, there is a need for greater understanding of how cultural contexts influence consumer behavior (Maheswaran & Shavitt, 2000). A new and broader perspective on persuasion tactics is necessary to address the emergence of a culturally dynamic and ethnically varied global market.
In particular, electronic media has rapidly and drastically altered the persuasive power of advertising. Television ad campaigns have the ability to reach millions simultaneously. However, the challenge of television is to reach and appeal to as many people as possible without excluding groups or individuals. This is particularly salient when examining the role ethnicity plays when selecting actors for an advertisement (Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994). From a social influence standpoint, television advertising has taken an everyday occurring phenomenon and converted it into a marketing tool. As Robert Cialdini (2005) discusses, the influence of observed social behavior has an undeniable power over an individual’s subsequent social behavior. Social Influence research has found that “people frequently ignore or severely underestimate the extent to which their actions in a situation are determined by the similar actions of others there” (Cialdini, 2005, p.158). In the context of television advertisements, individuals are being exposed to the actions of others in an attempt to persuade them to accept the persuasive argument or attitude. Television advertising has created a fictional situation in an attempt to persuade viewers to behave a certain way, i.e. purchase a product.

The act of being persuaded is achieved though the combination of established attitudes, availability of knowledge, strength of the persuasive communication, and contextual cues. The present study used the definition of persuasion provided by Perloff (2008) in which persuasion is defined as a process through which symbols are used to communicate and convince a receiver to freely change his or her attitude regarding a particular issue and or product. The present study used ethnicity of the persuader (actor) as the symbol to communicate attitude change. This combined with the lack of available
knowledge about the product, the ethnic identity of viewer (participant) and the persuader (actor), and the strength of association with an ethnic group the viewer discloses, are the central factors being examined. It is believed that collectively these factors have the potential to create a positive or negative opinion, thus leading to acceptance or rejection of the persuasive message.

This creation of a positive opinion about the message is a measure of persuasion. For example, a merchandiser may present a product through television commercials or print advertisements that look appealing, but it is ultimately the decision of the consumer to purchase or use the services advertised based on the argument presented. The merchandiser cannot coerce the consumer into buying the product; persuasive tactics (visual and auditory) must be implemented to convince the consumer to make an attitude change in turn eliciting the desired behavioral change.

Before the target can establish a positive or negative opinion, he or she must go through the process of evaluating the argument presented. This evaluation process involves variables such as the amount of time permitted to elaborate on the information provided, how much is already known about the product, and how the target associates or views themselves in relation to the persuader. This process is best explained by using a combination of a social model, the elaboration likelihood model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppop, 1986; Petty & Wegener, 1999) and social theory, the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982), and self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987).
Elaboration Likelihood Model

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) was established as a general theory of attitude change. Specifically, the ELM outlines the basic processes of what potentially increases the persuasiveness of a message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The model encompasses varying research findings about persuasion to create a framework of how, by changing an individual’s attitude, you can change behavior.

The term elaboration refers to the extent to which person thinks about issue-relevant arguments contained in the persuasive communication (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). During this elaboration, attitude change occurs through one of two processes: the central route or the peripheral route (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

The central route of persuasion requires a great deal of critical thought on behalf of the persuadee to determine the merits of the persuasive argument. High elaboration occurs when there is enough time, available knowledge, and motivation to critically assess the message. This means allowing enough time surrounding the persuasive communication for a target to acknowledge that a persuasive message is being communicated, decide if he or she is interested in the product, evaluate the benefits and costs of the product, and decide whether the item is desired enough to purchase. In general, “motivation refers to the individual’s personal relevance to the persuasive message” (Sher & Lee, 2009, p.139). Motivational factors that can influence an individual include how involved they are in or with the topic, their interest in the topic, and if this is a topic they feel they need to evaluate (Baker & Petty, 1994). In regards to advertising, motivation “refers to a desire to process the content of the ad” (SanJosé-
Cabezudo, Gutiérrez-Arranz, Gutiérrez-Cillán, 2009, p.299). It is important to take note that the motivation to elaborate upon a persuasive argument, or in this case a product is specific to each individual (Sher & Lee, 2009).

The central route is important when the target is exposed to new ideas before reaching a decision (Booth-Butterfield & Welbourne, 2002). Arguments that are well supported by both prior knowledge and new information provided by the advertisement are found to be persuasive (Booth-Butterfield & Welbourne, 2002). Arguments that are not supported by prior knowledge tend to generate unfavorable thoughts toward the persuasive message and are considered to be weak. Weak arguments can lead to rejection of a persuasive communication (Booth-Butterfield & Welbourne, 2002).

The peripheral route involves less cognitive participation on the part of the target. This route allows the persuadee to rely on environmental characteristics, heuristic processing, attributional reasoning and social role mechanisms activated by the message (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). These environmental characteristics include: perceived credibility of the source, quality of presentation, attractiveness of the source, one's confidence in one's attitudes, and/or the use of a catchy slogan (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Unlike the central route that relies on critical analysis of each argument, the peripheral route user will rely on such cues as physical and or behavioral characteristics of the persuader (actor in this study), how long the message is, and any visual or acoustic elements contained within the message (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Additional factors, such as entertainment value, presentation continuity, aesthetic quality, and use of a
memorable slogan can influence the acceptance or rejections of the argument (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

A crucial factor in determining the effectiveness of a persuasive communication is what knowledge the individual target possesses. Oftentimes targets recall biased or unbalanced information about a particular topic that influences the processing of messages (Simons, Morreale & Gronbeck, 2001). There have also been discussions about the influence culture has on the individuals ability to recall information (Aaker, 2000). For instance, the ease in which associations are made between a product and previous knowledge can vary by culture. In addition to known information, a study by Sher and Lee (2008) revealed that personality traits, such as skepticism, play a role in acceptance of a persuasive argument. Results suggested that although both types of skeptics (high and low) relied on the peripheral route to evaluate the persuasive message both reached different conclusions. Highly skeptical consumers disregarded credibility of source, the quality of the argument, and the number of arguments made when exposed to a persuasive message. These individuals were found to be biased towards their intrinsic beliefs and could not be persuaded otherwise regardless of argument quality (Sher & Lee, 2009). On the other hand, low skeptic consumers were found to rely on source credibility and the number of arguments when accepting a persuasive message. While these findings were based on a study regarding online shopping, the results suggest that skepticism in both high and low involvement, direct the individual to utilize the peripheral route of elaboration. This becomes particularly salient in the case of television commercials since the persuasive message and testimonials will be subjected to the individual’s skepticism.
In addition to skepticism, Petty, Briñol, and Tormala (2002) found that an individual’s level of confidence plays a role in persuasion. Relevant to the present study, Petty et al. (2002) found that confidence can play a role in an individual using high elaboration (central route) or low elaboration (peripheral route) when evaluating a persuasive argument. Individuals, who were highly confident about their thoughts prior to the persuasive argument, were more likely to use low-elaboration (peripheral processing) and rely on their attitude as the source cue for acceptance.

In summary, it appears that both an individuals prior knowledge about a topic and their personality type alter their motivation and therefore predispose them to a particular route of processing even before a persuasive message is presented.

In the event a target is unmotivated to highly elaborate on a persuasive message, the peripheral route will be utilized to establish message validity and to make a decision to accept or deny the persuasive argument. During this scenario, a target relies heavily on peripheral cues to form a positive or negative attitude towards a message (SanJosé-Cabezudo, Gutiérrez-Arranz, Gutiérrez-Cillán, 2009).

One of the goals of the present study is to direct the individual into using the peripheral route to evaluate the persuasive argument. This is accomplished by manipulating several variables including an individual’s motivation and available knowledge. As stated previously, a participant’s level of motivation is related to involvement, interest, and need to evaluate (Baker & Petty, 1994). By selling a new product, little information will be available for the individual to draw upon; therefore no prior involvement with or about this product would exist. Although the product might
appeal to participant’s interest, the need to critically evaluate the persuasive argument will be low given the topic, i.e. sunglasses. Therefore, participants will rely more on non-elaborative elements such as the level of association between themselves and the individual selling the product (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999).

A specific nonelaborative element is the use of ethnicity as a peripheral cue in establishing a positive or negative attitude about the persuasive message. Targets who perceive themselves similar to the individual delivering the persuasive message will categorize that individual as an in-group member and therefore have more positive attitude towards message, while targets that perceive themselves to be different from the persuader will categorize that individual as an out-group member. This process of categorizing individuals into groups is best explained using the self-categorization theory (Worchel, Iuzzini, Coutant, & Ivaldi, 2000).

Self-Categorization Theory and Social Identity Theory

The process of categorizing individuals, favoring in-group members and discriminating against non group members are discussed in Tajfel’s (1982) social identity theory and further built upon by Turner et al. (1987) in the self-categorization theory. Self-categorization theory and the social identity theory were both established as a way to describe an individual’s attitude towards and within a group. Self-categorization outlines the process of how and why individuals associate or disassociate with groups and the effect on attitude, while the social identity theory explores how group membership fosters an individual’s perceived identity by others.

The categorization of oneself as similar to a group (in-group membership) or
different from a group (out-group membership) is based on two distinct aspects: social identity and personal identity (Worchel et al., 2000). Social identity consists of “categorizing the world into in-group and out-groups, self labeling, and placing oneself into a group” (Worchel et al., 2000, p. 17). Personal identity consists of the unique attributes of the individual such as personality traits, physical characteristics, and personal experience (Worchel et al., 2000). This categorization of self has been found to be context dependent. The example provided by Reid, Palomares, Anderson, and Bondad-Brown (2009) describes how an American, when compared to an Iraqis, “might self-define as capitalistic, individualistic, and materialistic” (p. 469). However, when compared to the British, American’s are described as “happy-go-lucky, brash, and laid-back” (p.469). These categories or prototypes as Reid et al. (2009) call them, establish the collective groups normative behavior in a social situation. Members of a group are expected to follow the groups normative behavior in a given social setting and exhibit consistent characteristics of the group. This expectation that an individual will behave consistently with a groups normative behavior is referred to as normative fit (Platow, Grace, Wilson, Burton, & Wilson, 2008). “Self-categorization theory predicts that the closer an individual person is to the in-group prototype, the more influential he or she will be” (Reid et al., 2009, p.469). Applying this theory to the present study, if the actor is correctly perceived as being a member of the same ethnic group as the target, either European American or Hispanic, the more influential the persuader will be due to a perceived shared similarity between the target and the actor. To avoid any gender confounds, both a male and female actor will be used in the commercial to maximize the
targets association with the actor.

Social identity theory is based on the principle that a group is comprised of persons that perceive themselves as a single distinct unit, with similar characteristics. Persons within the group work together to formulate, differentiate, and elevate the prestige of their group while discriminating against outgroups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Since the characteristics of the group are applied to the individuals within the group, those individuals will seek to maintain the group identity by supporting behavior and or characteristics that would be considered the group norm. For example, individuals will display in-group favoring as a means to maintain the correctness of their group and therefore maintaining a positive attitude about their own social identity (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979). Individuals classify others as in-group or out-group members based on varying social characteristics, by labeling persons into categories, individuals are better able to identify and categorize themselves (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In this study grouping will be based on self-identified ethnicity of the target and the perceived ethnicity of the persuader. Based on the Social Identity theory, individuals who identify with an ethnic group (Hispanic or European American) will favor that group’s behavior in a particular context. In this study, that context is the endorsement of the Speak-Easy. However, what is uncertain is if the exposure to a non-group member will elicit a positive or negative reaction based on the persuaders perceived social identity (majority or minority categorization).

The strength with which an individual identifies himself or herself as an in-group member, relates to how strongly they discriminate against out-group members
Preference for in-group members becomes particularly salient when persuaders are creating an advertisement to reach a broad and diverse target audience. Exposing an in-group member to an out-group member can either increase the persuasive argument, in the case of a minority target seeing a majority member (Brumbaugh, 2002), or completely nullify it as when a majority target is exposed to a minority persuader (Whittler & Spira, 2002). These studies display two varying findings. Brumbaugh’s (2002) study suggests that an individual who identifies with a minority group aims to be included as majority group member, and therefore is more susceptible to persuasive arguments when they are directed towards majority group members. However, Whittler and Spira (2002) found that when a majority group member is exposed to a persuasive argument provided by a minority group member, the majority in-group member does not find the message to be relevant to them.

Deshpandé and Stayman (1994, p.57) provide the example of “the American in Paris” situation where the more an individual is the minority, the more feelings of being different the individual will experience. Individuals in the minority will feel increased ethnic-based identification to their ethnic group due to their minimal representation. This increased identification is believed to elicit in-group favoritism and therefore produce a positive attitude towards the persuasive message via the peripheral route of processing.

In addition to the strength of individual identification with an ethnic group, Brumbaugh (2002) suggested that the cultural status of an ethnic group has the potential to influence a person's attitude about a product endorsed by an actor affiliated with an ethnic group. Brumbaugh (2002) examined the need to activate culture specific cues in order to
implement an effective persuasive communication. The study focused on cultural cues that influence persuasion between European Americans and African Americans. African Americans were selected as the subculture, or minority group, because unlike other culture groups fewer immigrate to the United States. This is important because it implies that they, African Americans, have been exposed to the majority culture for the entirety of their lives. The experiment involved two made up types of products, instant developing film and an unsecured personal loan. These products were selected because they were purchased at similar rates across salary ranges for both European Americans and African Americans. The study suggested that because of the assimilation of African Americans into the larger (majority European American) society, information would be available from both African American and European American groups. Brumbaugh (2002) used cultural cues such as language, traditions, and idealistic scenes to influence behavior for both European American and African American targets. For example, cultural specific idealistic scenes were created to evoke an in-group association between actor and target. Participants were provided a booklet with two advertisements and told they were to evaluate advertisement layouts. After viewing each advertisement, participants completed several inventories evaluating attitude towards the advertisement, activation of subculture, and personal models. According to Brumbaugh (2002), minorities show preference for majority (dissimilar) advertising due to minorities being incorporated into the larger in-group. These subgroups identify with both their own in-group (similar) and the majority out-group (dissimilar) because they co-exist within the two groups. The minority self-identifies with the majority out-group; the larger out-group
becomes the umbrella in-group. This inclusion within both groups activates available knowledge each participant possesses regarding social identity and personal categorization.

Brumbaugh (2002) found that exposing a minority target to an ethnically dissimilar actor of the majority group leads to higher acceptance of the persuasive argument than a majority target exposed to an ethnically dissimilar actor. Overall the study lends support to the effectiveness of target advertising and it’s ability to activate shared cultural knowledge through cues.

Whittler and Spira (2002) found similar results with regard to the strength of ethnic identity. African Americans who identified strongly with their ethnicity tended to show a preference for a similar model regardless of argument strength. This is in opposition to targets that identified weakly as African American and showed no preference for model race. These findings suggest that racial cues influence decision making when ethnic identity is high, especially in regards to advertising techniques.

The influence of perceived similarity between the target and the model (persuader) was further supported using ethnicity as the similar factor. Forehand and Deshpande (2001) found that priming ethnic self-awareness through visual or verbal cues increased the likelihood that consumers would feel similar (in-group member) or dissimilar (out-group member) to an ethnic persuader consistent with the ELM. By increasing the perceived similarity, the decision to accept the persuasive argument was also increased.
The strength of ethnic identification also plays a role in consumer behavior. Deshpandé, Hoyer, and Donthu (1986) found results to suggest that consumer behavior and the strength of ethnic identification played a crucial factor in brand loyalty. The results found that overall Hispanic participants were more brand loyal than Anglo participants, however, the level of ethic identification within each group also dictated brand loyalty. For example, Hispanic participants who strongly associated with the ethnic group were found to be more loyal to a particular brand than individuals who weakly associated with the ethnic group. Since the present study is a new product, the effect of strength of ethnic identification will be explored in a setting with an un-established brand. It’s possible that the absence of an established brand the strength of ethnic identification will not play a role in consumer behavior.

Whittler and Spira (2002) paired the elaboration likelihood model and social categorization theory to examine the influence of racial cues on product advertising. African Americans were used as the target audience for a garment bag advertisement. The study exposed African Americans to models of similar (African American) ethnicity or to models of dissimilar (European American) ethnicity. After exposure to one of the conditions, participants responded on several measures including a free write of their thoughts about the product, comprehension of the message, brand identification, the model’s likeability, similarity to the model, and their overall impression of the garment bag. Results suggested participants who identified strongly with being African American attributed more positive attributes to the African American model, and therefore reported more positive opinions of the garment bag. Participants who followed this pattern
categorized themselves and the model into the same in-group, consistent with previous research (Tajfel, 1982).

African American participants who saw a dissimilar model selling the handbag associated the garment bag with the out-group member and were more judgmental of the garment bag. This identification of the African American participant to the African American model lead to discriminatory actions against the out-group member, represented in this study by the European American model. These findings were further supported by Goldstein and Cialdini (2007). Their research supports the hypothesis that individuals take on attributes of those they identify as being similar to themselves. In this situation, the African American participant identified the African American model as being similar to themselves, and therefore an in-group member. This categorization of being part of the same group led to positive feelings toward the model, which therefore led to a favorable attitude of the product being sold.

African American targets that identified weakly with their ethnic group did not show a preference for the European American model or the African American model. Results suggest that the tendency for a participant to racially identify with the persuader positively influenced the participants’ attitude toward the product being sold. Results also demonstrated that participants, who did not racially identify with the model, were less likely to desire the garment bag. Overall the study demonstrated the influence of racial categorization on persuasion methods.

The present study followed a similar approach by combining the ELM with social identity theory and self-categorization theory. However, the difference lies in that the
present study used a never-before-seen product rather than an existing product on the market. Also, while the previously mentioned studies (Whittler & Spira, 2002, and Brumbaugh, 2000) focused their attention on the responses of African Americans, this study focuses on the reactions of Hispanic Americans as target and non-target viewers.

Research has also revealed that dominant groups do not respond positively to persuasive arguments when presented by minority group members. For example, Aaker, Brumbaugh and Grier (2000) examined consumer behavior of the nontarget market groups. A nontarget could be an individual or a group of individuals we were not the intended audience of the marketing tactic (Aaker et al., 2000). Three experiments were conducted by Aaker et al. (2000) to examine the effects of a minority persuader on an audience made up of both in-group targets, those the message was intended for, and out-group targets, those who were not the intended audience.

The three-part study was conducted to examine how individuals who were not the intended audience of a persuasive message (nontargets) reacted to seeing an advertisement targeting a specific group. When companies target a specific group it means they are directing the message and or product towards a particular group of buyers with similar characteristics or needs (Kotler, Armstrong, & Starr, 1991). Target marketing aims to establish a brand by connecting itself to a group of consumers. Aaker et al. (2000) provides the example that Maybelline cosmetics advertisements target the girl next-door buyer. This target approach appeals to those who already identify as the girl next door as well as drawing others in, wanting to be that girl. Target marketing can also be culturally directed. Unlike the Maybelline advertisements that target young
women, the Stovetop brand created two commercials, described by Aaker et al. (2000) based on two distinct cultural target markets. The example provided in the study describes a situation where a white middle-aged individual is watching TV and a commercial for, what appears to be Stovetop stuffing comes on. However, instead of the product being called stuffing, as it is labeled on the box, the commercial is targeted towards an African American audience and therefore the product is referred to as dressing. The white middle-aged individual was confused as to why the product was being referred to as something other than it was known to be. This example depicts a situation in which an individual’s culture can be a factor in persuasive messages. Those who are not the intended audience, in this case the white individual, can feel isolated by the persuasive attempt. This type of situation draws attention to the impact of being a nontarget of a persuasive message. Aaker et al. (2000) explore the negative reactions nontargets experience and or display when they are excluded from a persuasive message.

The first experiment was created to measure the negative reaction of nontargets to minority advertisements. The targets included European American heterosexual viewers, African American heterosexual viewers and European American homosexual viewers. Each distinct group was exposed to a nontarget advertisement with an actor from each of the target groups. Negative non-target market effects were found when cues of the advertisement did not match the expectations, beliefs, or characteristics of the consumer. When targets did not feel similar or included in the persuasive advertisement, negative perceptions and feelings arose. Self-identification towards a particular group played a crucial role in determining whether one was the target or non-target audience.
The second experiment was designed to test the findings of the first experiment. However several changes were made to more closely examine the effects of nontarget marketing. Instead of three distinct groups, two were used in the second experiment (European Americans and African Americans). Participants were asked to rate their perceptions of “felt similarity” and “felt targetedness” (Aaker et al., 2000, p. 132) toward the fictitious magazine advertisement. Two versions of the print ad were created to examine the effects of target and nontarget responses. The first was a student travel advertisement with only text promoted by either a predominantly African American group (African-American Student Union) or a European American group (Windsurfing Club). The second advertisement used images of travel and only varied between use of three European American students or three minority students as promotion. Participants were asked to report the level of how targeted they felt by the advertisement, if they believed the advertisement was meant for them. Unlike the first experiment which used a within-subjects design which possibly influenced participants responses; the second experiment use a between subjects design. Results suggested that the majority (dominant) group responded with an unfavorable account of the advertisement when the advertisement was tailored for the minority group. The results supported the findings of the first experiment.

The third and final experiment followed the same design as the second. Participants were asked to evaluate “advertisements for two new web retail outlets” (Aaker et al., 2000, p. 135). After viewing each advertisement participants were asked to “complete identification, internalization, and attitude measures for each” (p. 135).
Participants were grouped to create numeral minority and majority groups. Undergraduates from the business and nursing school (about 10% of the undergraduate population) were labeled the minority group. Undergraduates from the engineering school and arts and sciences schools (about 40%) represented the majority group. Results showed that students had a preference for the advertisement that mentioned his or her academic school. Experiment three confirmed the internalization of persuasive communications, the identification with the message source, and the rejection of a persuasive message if the target was unable to identify with the persuader.

Although research to date has focused on cultural cues of target and non-target consumers (Aaker et al, 2000; Brumbaugh, 2002; Whittler & Spira, 2002), relatively little is known about the effects of the degree of self-identified ethnicity on the acceptance of persuasive arguments. The present thesis explored the relationship between levels of self-identified ethnicity (strong, moderate, weak) and the effectiveness of persuasion tactics using European American and Hispanic American participants.

The study consisted of two advertisements, one with European American actors and the other with Hispanic American actors selling an identical never-before-seen product. The reactions of the targets when seeing an ethnically similar or dissimilar commercial were measured by how likely individuals were to purchase the product in relation to how strongly they identified with the ethnic group.

The present study compares a majority group (European Americans) to a minority group (Hispanic Americans). By segmenting participants into levels of ethnic identity strength (strong, moderate, weak) the study can explore if and/or how the strength of
association with an ethic group influences the acceptance of a persuasive message. Historically, majorities have held several persuasive advantages over minorities, including control over social rewards, social correctness, and higher social status. Therefore individuals are more inclined to associate with a majority group (Baker & Petty, 1994). However research on in the area of majority influence is conflicting. A study by Maass and Clark (1983) found that minority persuasive messages were found to be more influential and created a greater attitude change when conducted in private. While in a more public setting, the reverse was true. Majorities were more successful at creating an attitude change when the individual thought their decision would be disclosed in a public setting (Maass & Clark, 1983). A few years later, a study by Mackie (1987) found results that the setting, private or public, was not necessarily the underlining factor in accepting a persuasive message. Rather, it was the individual’s deliberation on the content of the message that best predicted attitude change.

The present thesis measured both the cognitive and evaluative components of group membership proposed as fundamental aspects of group identification (Tajfel, 1982). The cognitive aspect will be the disclosure of being European American, Hispanic/Latino/Latina American, or other. The evaluative and emotional connection portion will be measured using questions about how strongly they identify with their identified ethnic group. The goal of this study is to demonstrate that targets who highly identify with an ethic group (Whittler & Spira, 2002) also strongly endorse values of said group (Turner et al., 1979; Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007) and will thus exercise favoritism towards in-group members and discriminate toward out-group members (Branscombe &
Wann, 1994) resulting in different levels of persuasion based on ethnic similarity. This favoritism to an in-group member, actor of similar ethnicity, will elicit positive feelings toward the persuasive message, thus leading to acceptance of the persuasive message which is measured by desire to purchase the product. However, targets who possess low levels of group identity will evaluate their own group with fewer positive traits leading to less biased processing (Branscombe & Wann, 1994) and be less persuaded based on ethnic similarity.

I hypothesize, based on supporting research previously discussed (in particular; Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Brumbaugh, 2002; Whittler & Spira, 2002; Aker et al., 2000, and Forehand & Deshpande, 2001), that participants who identify strongly with an ethnic group (European American or Hispanic American) both socially and personally, will be more persuaded when viewing advertisements containing actors of similar (in-group) members. However, I believe there will be significant difference between in-group members with varying levels of ethnic identification (strong, moderate, weak) when viewing advertisements of similar and dissimilar actors. The higher the ethnic identification, the more persuaded the participant will be by an ethnically similar actor. I am most interested to see the response of strong ethnic identification Hispanic who views the persuasive message (commercial) with a European American actor. As stated earlier, previous research is divided in regards to what the predicted outcome of this group will be; targets will either be disinterested in the advertisement due to a lack of similarity, or accept the argument because of the position of the minority group to the majority group.
Chapter 2

METHOD

Participants

The study relied on the surveys completed by 182 participants from 3 groups of students all enrolled, in undergraduate courses at a California State University, Sacramento. Of the 182 surveys collected, 89 were from the Psychology Department participant pool, 48 were collected from students enrolled in an upper division Psychology undergraduate course, and 45 were collected from students enrolled in a second upper division Psychology undergraduate course. Two of the studies were not completed entirely and therefore removed from the ANOVA analysis, leaving 180 usable cases. Students from the Psychology Department Research Pool voluntarily signed up for a research session via the research website. Students were requested to identify as either European-American or Hispanic/Latino/Latina to be eligible to participate, however this was not a mandated criteria for participation. Sessions consisted of 1-8 students and all students received course credit for participating in the study.

Participants from the classes were provided the option to participate in the study during the first 10 minutes of their regularly scheduled class time. Students from one psychology course received no compensation for participating in the study. Students from the second psychology course were given the option to participate in the study in an adjacent room during class time for extra credit or they could complete a written assignment provided by the professor for the same amount of credit should they decide
not to participate in the study.

All students who participated in the study ranged in age from 18-51 with a mean age of 22 years; 66.5% of participants were female and 25% were male. While students who ethnically identified as European American or Hispanic/Latino/Latina were encouraged to participate above other ethnicities, there were various groups represented. The majority (37.9%) of participants identified themselves as White, Caucasian, Anglo, Europeans American, non-Hispanic; 15.9 % identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino, including Mexican American, Central American and others; 11% identified themselves as Asian or Asian American including Chinese, Japanese, and others; 6% identified themselves as Black or African American; and .5% identified themselves as American Indian or Native American. A large amount of participants (18.1%) identified as mixed, meaning that their parents were from two different groups, 2.7% identified other groups not fitting under the above categories, and 7.7% did not respond. The original goal for this study was to focus on individuals who identified themselves as European American or Hispanic/Latino/Latina. However, there was unexpected number of participants who did not identify as either European American or Hispanic/Latino/Latina. Therefore, a third group was created and labeled as “other” to capture any additional information from those added groups. A supplemental analysis was conducted using only the participants who identified as European American or Hispanic/Latino/Latina to ensure that the results found in the larger study were representative of these particular groups.

Participants signed informed consent forms acknowledging that participation was entirely voluntary and may be discontinued at any time. Through random assignment of
research sessions, 108 participants viewed the Hispanic commercial and 74 viewed the European American commercial. Block randomization was not utilized to assign sessions and is further talked about as a design flaw in the discussion section. All participants’ were treated in accordance with the American Psychological Association Ethical Standards (2002).

**Design**

The design was a 2 (Ethnicity of Participant: European-American or Hispanic/Latino/Latina) x 3 (Strength of Self Identified Ethnicity: weak, moderate, strong) x 2 (Ethnicity of Actor: European-American or Hispanic/Latino/Latina) between-subjects factorial design. The dependent variable was persuasion as measured by the intention to buy the product presented in the advertisement. Three ethnic identification levels (weak, moderate, and strong) were created using a three–way split based on participants overall score on the MEIM scale. Those who scores ranged between 12-28 were labeled as weakly identifying with their ethnic group, scores of 29-44 were labeled as moderate association with their ethnic group, and those scoring within 45-60 were labeled as strong association with their ethnic group.

**Materials**

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992) was used in this study to identify ethnic identity and establish strength of association with an ethnic group. In addition to gathering demographic information, the scale measures two factors, ethnic identity search/affirmation, and belonging/commitment. None of the questions are reversed; therefore, scoring is done by taking the mean of the 12 items for an over—all
score. These total scores were grouped into weak, moderate, or strong identification with an ethnic group.

The original format of the scale was altered from a 4-point likert-type scale with word anchors (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) to a 5-point likert-type scale with percentage anchors (0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%). The anchors were altered from numbers to percentages to better assist the participant in responding. Examples of some of the items on the scale include, “I have a clear sense of my ethnic backgrounds and what it means for me,” “I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to,” and “I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group”. The MEIM is an additive scale; the lowest possible score is a 12 indicating an individual has a low association with an ethnic group, the highest possible score is 60 indicating the individual has a strong association with an ethnic group. The scale has a previously reported average alpha of .80 found across varying ages and ethnicities, indicating high reliability. For this particular study, a reliability test found a Chronbach’s alpha of .90, confirming the survey had high reliability.

The Commercial Interest (CI) questionnaire was created for this study and used to measure the effectiveness of the commercial at persuading the viewer to purchase the item presented. Keeping in mind the working definition of persuasion provided by Perloff (2008), scale items were created to assess an individuals attitude towards a product, in this case the Speak Easy. Several scale items were created and then narrowed down to what was logically believed to be the most effective at assessing the products persuasive ability. Participants were asked to complete the survey based on their honest opinions
regarding the commercial. The CI scale included a total of 11 items, 9 of the items assessed the participant’s interest in the product being sold and 2 of the items were manipulation checks. Each of the 9 items was measured using the same 5–point likert-type scale with percentage anchors as the re-formatted MEIM scale. Examples of the items asked include, “I like this product,” “This is a great product,” and “I would buy this as a gift”; for a complete list of the items please reference Appendix. The scale was an additive measure with the lowest possible score (not interested in the product) being a 9 and the highest (very interested in the product) being 45. The Commercial Interest scale was found to have high reliability with a Chronbach’s alpha of .91. Item total statistics indicated that by removing item 4 Chronbach’s alpha would be increased to .92, however given the already high reliability no items were removed.

The two manipulation questions were included to ensure the viewer was paying attention to the commercial. These two items were fill-in-the-blank and asked the participant to record the ethnicity of first and second actor in the commercial. The items were provided as fill-in-the-blank to not prompt the participant to a particular response. However, during the study it was made apparent that some students did not know what ethnicity means, therefore it might have positively altered the results had the same MEIM ethnicity scale been used to categorize the actors in the commercial. The participants who viewed the Hispanic Commercial, 81.5% correctly identified the male actor as Hispanic but only 9.3% correctly identified the female actor as Hispanic. This mis-categorization of the persuader has the potential to dramatically alter results, and should be addressed in future studies. However, 70.3% of participants who viewed the European Commercial,
correctly identified the male actor as white/Caucasian, and 94.6% correctly identified the female actor as white/Caucasian.

Two commercials were made for this study, one with Hispanic Actors and the other with European Actors. Both commercials have a male and female actor to avoid any gender influence on the persuasive message. Actors are shown struggling in their everyday lives with using a commercial Bluetooth headset, a solution is then brought forward, the Speak-Easy. The commercial encourages individuals to buy the speak-easy, sunglasses with built in bluetooth capabilities on the side. The commercials are identical in that both follow an infomercial structure, last approximately 1:30 (Hispanic lasts 1:30, European lasts 1:33), and have the same voice over. The commercials were created using iMovie and burned to a DVD for ease of use.

**Procedure**

Two types of rooms were used for this study. The first was one of four small research rooms in a building on campus commonly used for student research. Students could sign up for one of the 30-minute research sessions posted online or they could drop into a research session provided there was space. Each research session consisted of 1-8 students; these sessions were randomly assigned to either the European American actor infomercial or the Hispanic actor infomercial using a random numbers table. Upon entering, students were handed a manila envelope with the informed consent form for research credit paper clipped to the outside and the two scales (MEIM and CI) placed inside the envelope.
Data collected from one class had group sizes ranging from 10-16 students per session. The researcher arrived early set up the study in the classroom. The manila envelopes containing the two surveys and the no credit informed consent form were handed out to students upon entering.

A similar room was also used to collect data from the second class of participants. In this situation the researcher would announce in the beginning of class that there was a study available for students to participate in for extra credit being conducted next door. Participation was entirely voluntary and should they not want to participate they would be provided an alternative written assignment form their professor. Upon entering the lab room, participants were handed the manila envelope containing the two surveys and the Extra credit informed consent form.

In all three situations, the MEIM scale was printed on standard letter sized green paper and the CI scale on standard letter sized blue paper. Participants were instructed to read over the consent form, sign it, and return it to the researcher. Students in the classes were instructed that if they do not wish to participate to please sit quietly so as not to disrupt others and simply turn in a blank form at the end. Once all consent forms were collected and placed in a separate manila envelope the lights dimmed and one of the two commercials, previously selected at random, started.

The commercials were shown via a MacBook using an overhead projector. For research conducted in the research rooms, a white wall was used to project the commercial upon, for the research conducted in a classroom; a white projector screen was used.
Once the commercial ended participants were asked to open their envelopes and complete both sides of the green paper first (MEIM) and then move onto the blue paper (CI). Once all participants had completed the surveys, everyone was asked to return the forms to their respective envelopes and pass them back to the researcher. At this time participants were handed a debriefing form, orally debriefed, and were able to ask any questions about the study. Participants were then thanked for their time and dismissed.
Chapter 3
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

A 3x3x2 ANOVA was used to examine the effectiveness of a persuasive argument when activating ingroup and outgroup feelings based on the participant’s ethnic identity. The three factors included the participant’s self-identified ethnicity (Caucasian, Hispanic, Other), how strongly the participant associated with their ethnic group (Strong, Moderate, and Weak) and the commercial they were exposed to (Hispanic American or European American). The experiment explored how the strength of an individual's association with an ethnic group influences their acceptance of a product being sold (persuasion) by someone ethnically similar to them (ingroup member) or ethnically dissimilar to them (outgroup member). The use of a majority group (European American) and a minority group (Hispanic American) were used to explore if a minority group would wish to assimilate into a larger majority group and therefore be more receptive of persuasive arguments made by the majority group. As previously mentioned, a third ethnic group labeled “other” was added due to the number of individuals who participated in the study that did not fall into either Hispanic or Caucasian categories. Additionally, by using an other group we can briefly explore the reactions of non-targets to a persuasive message by a Hispanic actor or European Actor. For a breakdown of participant assignment to each condition please see table 1.

Overall, the participant’s responses on the ethnic identity scale yielded a normal distribution with no outliers, and no indication of significant skewness or kurtosis that
would warrant transformation. The distribution for how strongly participants identified with their ethnic group displayed slight skewness and kurtosis however; this could be a result of the group sizes being varied. The Levine’s test was found to be non-significant, $F(16, 163) = 1.249, p = .237$, indicating homogeneity of variance was upheld. Finally, participants were only permitted to complete the experiment once, upholding our assumption of independence.

Overall the experiment was not statistically significant; no differences were found among the three main effects (see Table 2). There was a non-significant main effect of participant ethnicity on acceptance of the product, $F(2, 163) = .893, p = .412$. There was a non-significant main effect of strength of ethnic identity on acceptance of the product, $F(2, 163) = 1.340, p = .265$. Finally, there was a non-significant main effect of commercial viewed on acceptance of the product, $F(1, 163) = .052, p = .821$.

None of the two-way interaction effects or the three-way interaction were found to be statistically significant indicating that a relationship was not found between ethnicity of the participant, strength of association with ethnic group, and commercial viewed.

A supplementary analysis utilizing a 2x3x2 (Participant Ethnic Identity x Strength of Association x Commercial) design was conducted using only participants who identified as European American ($n = 68$) or Hispanic/Latino/Latina ($n = 29$). Of the 97 participants in this subsequent analysis, 11 identified weakly with their self-identified ethnic identity, 50 moderately identified, and 36 identified strongly with their ethnic group. Roughly half of the group ($n = 55$) was exposed to the Hispanic Commercial
while remaining participants (n = 42) were exposed to the European American Commercial. The Levine’s test was found to be non-significant, $F(10, 86) = 1.477, p = .162$, indicating homogeneity of variance was upheld. As with the larger analysis, the results were not statistically significant; therefore no differences were found among the three main effects (see Table 3). There was a non-significant main effect of participant ethnicity on acceptance of the product, $F(1, 86) = .920, p = .340$. There was a non-significant main effect of strength of ethnic identity on acceptance of the product, $F(2, 86) = .215, p = .807$. Finally, there was a non-significant main effect of commercial viewed on acceptance of the product, $F(1, 86) = .232, p = .631$.

To further explore the possible influence of ethnic identity on persuasion a third analysis was conducted comparing those who identified weakly and moderately with those who identified strongly with an ethnic group. By combining participants who identified as weakly and moderately into a new category (termed medium) we can flush out in difference in behavior. Similar to the second analysis, only those who identified as European America or Hispanic/Latino/Latina were included in the analysis. However, the design was a 2x2x2 (Participant Ethnic Identity x Strength of Association x Commercial). The 11 participants who identified weakly were added to the 50 participants who moderately identified, giving a total of 61 participants who made up the medium ethnic identification group. The 36 who identified strongly with their ethnic group remained the same. Consistent with the other analyses, the results were not statistically significant; therefore, no differences were found among the three main effects (see Table 4). The Levine’s test was found to be non-significant, $F(7, 89) = 1.001, p = .436$, indicating
homogeneity of variance was upheld. There was a non-significant main effect of participant ethnicity on acceptance of the product, $F(1, 89) = 2.236, p = .138$. There was a non-significant main effect of strength of ethnic identity on acceptance of the product, $F(1, 89) = .288, p = .593$. Finally, there was a non-significant main effect of commercial viewed on acceptance of the product, $F(1, 89) = .058, p = .810$.

Since the Commercial Interest scale included items related to both attitude and behavior, the variable was split to explore if there were any differences between attitude and behavior in regards to the persuasive assessment.

Part 1 of the split focused on items that were related to and or described a change in attitude. The sub-category CI Attitude scale included item 1, “I like the product”, item 2, “I would recommend this product to my friends”, item 3, “this product is unnecessary”, item 7, “I need this product”, and item 9, “I do not want this product”. The Levine’s test was found to be non-significant, $F(10, 86) = 1.346, p = .220$, indicating homogeneity of variance was upheld. As with the other two analyses, the results were not statistically significant; therefore no differences were found among the three main effects (see Table 5). There was a non-significant main effect of participant ethnicity on acceptance of the product, $F(1, 86) = .772, p = .382$. There was a non-significant main effect of strength of ethnic identity on acceptance of the product, $F(2, 86) = .153, p = .858$. Finally, there was a non-significant main effect of commercial viewed on acceptance of the product, $F(1, 86) = .348, p = .557$.

Part 2 of the split focused on items that were related to and or described a change in behavior. The sub-category CI Behavior scale included item 5, “I would purchase this
product”, item 6, “I would not use this product”, and item 8, “I would buy this as a gift”. The Levine’s test was found to be non-significant, \( F(10, 86) = 1.885, p = .058 \), indicating homogeneity of variance was upheld. However, it is important to point out that Levine’s test barely missed the cut off for significance at the .05 level. As with the other two analyses, the results were not statistically significant; therefore no differences were found among the three main effects (see Table 6). There was a non-significant main effect of participant ethnicity on acceptance of the product, \( F(1, 86) = 1.005, p = .319 \). There was a non-significant main effect of strength of ethnic identity on acceptance of the product, \( F(2, 86) = .327, p = .722 \). Finally, there was a non-significant main effect of commercial viewed on acceptance of the product, \( F(1, 86) = .056, p = .814 \).

Bi-variate correlations were conducted on the strength of association with an ethnic group and the participants score on the CI scale (acceptance of the product). A non-significant correlation was found between participants who identified as Hispanic and their acceptance of the product, \( r = -.122, p > .05 \), between participants self-identified as Caucasian and accepting the product, \( r = .184, p > .05 \), and also between participants self-identified as Other and accepting the product, \( r = .162, p > .05 \). These non-significant correlations suggest the variables were not linked in such a way that a result on one variable would influence a result on another.
Table 1

**Design of the Experiment**

European American Commercial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength of Association with an Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>European Amer.</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td>n = 8</td>
<td>n = 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>n = 1</td>
<td>n = 25</td>
<td>n = 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>n = 1</td>
<td>n = 4</td>
<td>n = 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hispanic American Commercial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength of Association with an Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>European Amer.</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>n = 17</td>
<td>n = 4</td>
<td>n = 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>n = 3</td>
<td>n = 21</td>
<td>n = 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>n = 0</td>
<td>n = 6</td>
<td>n = 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Footnote ¹: the option on the MEIM scale for Hispanic includes, “Hispanic or Latino, including Mexican American, Central American, and others”

Footnote ²: the option on the MEIM scale for European American includes, “White, Caucasian, Anglo, European American; not Hispanic”
Table 2

*Analysis of Variance Summary Table Using White, Hispanic, and Other Ethnic Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variance</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group Association</td>
<td>153.280</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>76.640</td>
<td>.893</td>
<td>.412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>230.064</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>115.032</td>
<td>1.340</td>
<td>.265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>4.422</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.422</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Strength</td>
<td>126.439</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31.610</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>.831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Commercial</td>
<td>30.073</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.037</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength * Commercial</td>
<td>60.898</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30.449</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td>.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Strength *</td>
<td>73.926</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24.642</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>.835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>13996.566</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>85.869</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14960.328</td>
<td>179</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05
Table 3

*Analysis of Variance Summary Table Using White and Hispanic Ethnic Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variance</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group Association</td>
<td>77.607</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>77.607</td>
<td>.920</td>
<td>.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Strength</td>
<td>17.628</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.814</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Commercial</td>
<td>5.585</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.585</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength * Commercial</td>
<td>44.281</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.141</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>.770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Strength * Commercial</td>
<td>1.067</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.067</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Commercial                           |                         |    |             |      |      |
| Error                                | 7254.956                | 86 | 84.360      |      |      |
| Total                                | 6566.485                | 96 |             |      |      |

* p<.05
Table 4

*Analysis of Variance Summary Table Using White and Hispanic Ethnic Groups Who Identified as Medium or Strong*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variance</th>
<th>Type III Sum</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group Association</td>
<td>183.615</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>183.615</td>
<td>2.236</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>23.682</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.682</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td>.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>4.781</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.781</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Strength</td>
<td>9.589</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.589</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Commercial</td>
<td>7.360</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.360</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength * Commercial</td>
<td>18.825</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18.825</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>.633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Strength * Commercial</td>
<td>1.365</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.365</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>7307.904</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>82.111</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7577.485</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05
Table 5

*Analysis of Variance Summary Table Using White and Hispanic Ethnic Groups and the CI Attitude Sub-Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variance</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group Association</td>
<td>29.115</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29.116</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>.382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>11.574</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.787</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>13.132</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13.132</td>
<td>.348</td>
<td>.557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Strength</td>
<td>20.423</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.211</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>.764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Commercial</td>
<td>2.848</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.848</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength * Commercial</td>
<td>28.001</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.001</td>
<td>.371</td>
<td>.691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Strength * Commercial</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>3244.824</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>37.731</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3425.340</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05
Table 6

Analysis of Variance Summary Table Using White and Hispanic Ethnic Groups and the CI Behavior Sub-Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variance</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group Association</td>
<td>11.653</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.653</td>
<td>1.006</td>
<td>.319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>7.590</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.795</td>
<td>.327</td>
<td>.722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>.648</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.648</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Strength</td>
<td>.862</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Commercial</td>
<td>.457</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.457</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength * Commercial</td>
<td>2.055</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.028</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group * Strength * Commercial</td>
<td>.750</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.750</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>997.335</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>11.597</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1027.278</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05
Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Although the results of the study are non-significant, the implications are inconclusive. Non-significant results could be a consequence of the factors examined, the design of the experiment, or a true reflection of the population.

As previously discussed, studies conducted by Whittler and Spira (2002) and Brumbaugh (2002) have examined how ethnic identity has influenced persuasive arguments. The findings of these two studies suggest that ethnic majority group members are negatively affected by exposure to minority persuasive arguments, while ethnic minorities are positively affected by exposure to majority persuasive arguments. Based on this previous research, the present study should have revealed a significant difference between each of the groups acceptance of the persuasive argument based on seeing a commercial similar or dissimilar to their self identified ethnic group. However, the results of this study did not lend support to this previous research. Both groups, those who identified as European American and those who identified as Hispanic American, appeared to be unaffected by the persuasive arguments proposed in the commercial. This suggests the factors selected are not strongly linked to an individuals acceptance of a persuasive argument or that the design of the experiment was flawed.

The design utilized an ANOVA to explore the influence of ethnic identity, the strength of the association with an ethic group, and exposure to a similar or dissimilar group persuasive argument on persuasion. Although the ANOVA proved helpful to
collect additional information and expand upon the available information on the topic of persuasion, the results were inconclusive. Future studies would benefit from the ability to predict an individual’s behavior. Therefore, a Regression model would be best suited to explore the predictive ability of these factors on accepting a persuasive message.

In addition to the analysis of the experiment, there are several aspects of the methods that, when altered, could influence the outcome of the study. A major focus in this area would be the number of participants and their assignment to conditions. The sample size for the design and uneven groups proved to be troublesome for this study. Future studies should randomly assign participants into blocked groups to ensure each group has an equal sample size. By increasing the number of participants and reducing the level of variables explored the overall power of the analysis would increase. A future study could focus on a single ethnic group over a period of time rather than single exposure. A study by Hitlin, Brown, and Edler (2006) found support for the theory of racial identifying not being a fixed self-categorization. Results suggest that youth (age 14-18) from a monoracial family elaborate less on self-categorizing themselves into a racial group than youth from a biracial or multiracial family. Most notably, the study suggests that, “youth who ever report being multiracial are 4 times as likely to switch self-identification as to report consistent multiracial identities” (Hitlin et al., 2006, p. 1298). This finding could greatly impact the way in which advertisers maintain their consumer base over an extended period of time. This aspect could be examined further in a follow up longitudinal study that compared product preference over time.
Another aspect to adjust in future studies would be the size of group sessions. The present study included both large (more than 8 participants) and small (less than 8 participants) groups per session. The recommendation for future studies would be to use solely large groups to mimic a realistic product testing session. These groups could be pre-screened to only include those who identify with the same ethnic group. This would involve the creation of a pre-experiment survey to establish self-identified ethnicity. Participants would be assigned to a group and than randomly assigned to a condition. Assignment to a particular condition should be done using blocked randomization. This would ensure that each of the conditions have the same number of participants.

Future studies could also benefit from expanding the subject pool beyond the psychology student population at a single university. Expanding beyond the psychology pool would provide a wider age range and social cohort of the participants. Also, it might be beneficial to conduct the research in an area with a more defined majority. The use of European Americans and Hispanics might not have yielded the desired reaction to a minority group as anticipated due to the demographics of California. The effect of city context on feelings of distinctiveness (Grier & Deshpandé, 2001) can play a role in how strongly an individual feels similar or distinct from a group. Sacramento County in particular reported that 57.8% of its residents identified as White while 16% identified as Hispanic of Latino in the 2000 U.S. Census data report. These percentages were predicted to even out as the years continued. Now in 2010, it’s possible the steady increase of exposure to each of these ethnicities has reduced the peripheral cue of ethnic association when exposed to an advertisement with an actor of similar or dissimilar ethnicity.
Other items to address would be the production quality of the commercial and the ability of viewers to associate the actor with a particular ethnic group. Commercial grade production quality could increase the credibility and realism of the study. The commercial could include “testimonies” from each actor to give the viewer a better opportunity to categorize the actor. Actors should be pre-screened by small groups to ensure the actor is easily identifiable with a particular group. Although the researcher attempted to carefully select the actors featured in the commercials, based on the analysis of the manipulation checks, participants struggled with identifying the actors with the correct ethnicity. This was particularly true in the case of the Hispanic female actor whom was correctly identified by less than 10% of the participants who viewed the Hispanic commercial. This could be a result of lack of attention, not being able to see her face clearly, or a lack of time to elaborate on her ethnicity. However, this improper identification could have played a significant role in the acceptance of rejection of the persuasive message. Since participants were not able to correctly label the Hispanic Actress as Hispanic, then it is possible that no racial cues were triggered, thus nullifying the goal of the study. Future studies would benefit from pilot studies to test how easily an actor/actress is associated and or labeled as a member of an ethnic group. Based on what recent studies have suggested, I would be interested to see if age plays a role in a participant’s ability to associate an actor or actress with an ethnic group. Also the age of the actor and perceived attractiveness could play a role in persuasion and should be investigated further.
Overall the study provided adequate groundwork for future studies and investigations. By altering the design of the study and or addressing issues of method and application, the study could lend support to previous studies conducted in the realm of persuasive tactics.
APPENDIX

Appendix A.

Commercial Rating Scale

Using the scale below, circle the response that best describes how much you agree with each statement.

1 – Agree 0%
2 – Agree 25%
3 – Agree 50%
4 – Agree 75%
5 – Agree 100%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I Agree:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0% 25% 50% 75% 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I liked the product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I would recommend this product to my friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>This is a great product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>This product is unnecessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I would purchase this product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I would not use this product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I need this product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I would buy this as a gift.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I do not want this product.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What was the ethnicity of the first actor? _________________________________________

What was the ethnicity of the second actor? _________________________________________
REFERENCES


http://censtats.census.gov/data/CA/05006067.pdf