

# Identity Salience and the Influence of Differential Activation of the Social Self-Schema on Advertising Response

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The authors examined how identity primes and social distinctiveness influence identity salience (i.e., the activation of a social identity within an individual's social self-schema) and subsequent responses to targeted advertising. Across 2 studies, individuals who were exposed to an identity prime (an ad element that directs attention to the individual's social identity) and who were socially distinctive (minorities in the immediate social context) expressed systematically different evaluations of spokespersons and the advertisements that featured them. Specifically, Asian (Caucasian) participants responded most positively (negatively) to Asian spokespersons and Asian-targeted advertising when the participants were both primed and socially distinctive. No main effects of identity primes or social distinctiveness were found. The implications of these findings for identity theory, advertising practice, and intervention communications are discussed.

In consumer behavior, a great deal of research has discussed the influence of social identity (e.g., shared traits, common avocations, matching political affiliations, similar religious beliefs, and common ethnic heritages; cf. Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Ethier, 1995) on consumer attitudes and judgments (cf., R. E. Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993; Laverie, Kleine, & Kleine, 2002). For example, a consumer's social identity is more predictive of his or her behavior when the consumer's identity has been explicitly labeled (Tybout & Yalch, 1980). Consumers also respond differently to gender-oriented appeals when their gender schemas have been activated (Meyers-Levy, 1988; Jaffe, 1991). More recently, the accessibility of a consumer's traits has been found to positively influence attitudes toward products with similar brand personality traits (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, & Garolera, 2001). Other research has investigated the influence of social identity on food consumption (O'Guinn & Meyer, 1984), media usage (Saegert, Hoover, & Hilger, 1985), brand loyalty (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Deshpandé, Hoyer, & Donthu, 1986), and information search behavior (Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1991).

Although it is widely accepted that an individual's social self-schema (i.e., the sum total of his or her social identities) is a unique

knowledge structure in memory (Markus, 1977) that plays an important role in behavior, the process by which particular identities become activated is less well understood. It is proposed that a variety of social, contextual, and individual difference factors can differentially activate specific social identities within one's social self-schema. As a result, the mere presence of a particular social identity within an individual's social self-schema may not automatically prompt increased processing of identity-relevant information. Rather, increased processing of identity-relevant information should be most pronounced when the pertinent social identity is an activated component of the individual's social self-schema. When this activation occurs, the individual is likely to be affected by *identity salience*—a state characterized by heightened sensitivity to identity-relevant stimuli.

## Identity Salience and Shifts in Judgments

Heightening the salience of a particular social identity can influence perceptions, behavior, and performance (e.g., Abrams, 1994; Giles & Johnson, 1987; Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Hogg, 1992; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). For example, Black women who had recently had their ethnic (female) identity made salient, had more favorable (unfavorable) perceptions of O.J. Simpson's innocence (Newman, Duff, Schnopp-Wyatt, Brock, & Hoffman, 1997). Similarly, Asian-American women's math test scores improved when their ethnic identity was activated but worsened when their gender identity was activated (Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999). Other research has found that increasing the salience of an identity that is positively related to a performance domain can decrease performance if the salience creates unrealistic performance expectations or anxiety (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). Finally, a recent study on women's attitudes

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toward affirmative action has demonstrated that heightening the salience of an identity increases the alignment of judgments with group membership norms, particularly when the membership group possesses a clear position on the issue (Cohen & Reed, 2001).

Each of these studies demonstrates a particular consequence of identity salience. This article builds on this research stream by examining the underlying factors that heighten identity salience. Two specific factors are examined: identity primes (i.e., stimulus cues that direct attention to some aspect of a person's social identity) and social distinctiveness (i.e., the extent to which the person's social identity is unique in the immediate environment). Further, this article assesses their joint influence on spokesperson and advertising response. To help demarcate the effects of identity salience, this article is divided into three sections. In the first section, we discuss the determinants of identity salience and develop hypotheses regarding the influence of identity salience on advertising response. In the second section, we report on a pilot study and a main experiment that test the influence of identity primes and social distinctiveness on identity salience and response to targeted advertising. Finally, these results are discussed and related back to several key substantive domains.

### Determinants of Identity Salience

Identity salience occurs when an individual is prompted to categorize himself or herself along identity-oriented criteria. Self-categorization is a spontaneous and often unconscious process that occurs when individuals compare themselves with others and assess their relative similarity or dissimilarity (cf. Eiser & Sabine, 2001; Stapel & Koomen, 2000). Individuals may self-categorize on the basis of any of a number of social identities. The salience of a particular social identity as the basis for self-categorization is highly variable and is often determined by the momentary activation of the individual's various identities. Further, momentary identity salience is influenced by several classes of factors including stimulus cues, the social context, and individual differences.

### *Identity Salience as a Function of Stimulus Cues*

A variety of stimulus cues have been found to increase identity salience. These stimulus cues include reference group symbols (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976), symbols related to out-groups (Wilder & Shapiro, 1984), out-group members (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Rijsman, 1988), and visual images and words (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Chatman & von Hippel, 2001; Forehand & Deshpandé, 2001; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000; Reed, 2002). Such stimulus cues also include identity primes that may exist within the media context.

*Hypothesis 1:* Individuals exposed to identity primes should demonstrate higher levels of identity salience than should individuals not exposed to identity primes.

For example, Hong et al. (2000) found that the attribution styles of "multicultural" Asian students in Hong Kong became more "Eastern" if the students were first exposed to Chinese cultural icons (a Chinese dragon, The Great Wall) and more "Western" if the students were first exposed to American cultural icons (U.S. flag,

Superman). These effects of exposure to cultural icons on attributional style were argued to occur because the icons increase awareness of one identity over others (in a multicultural individual), presumably by activating specific identities in the students' social self-schemas (Hong et al., 2000; Wyer & Srull, 1986).

### *Identity Salience as a Function of the Social Context*

A second factor that may influence identity salience is the composition of an individual's social environment. McGuire, McGuire, Child, and Fujioka (1978) proposed that particular group memberships are salient to the extent that the individual's membership in that group is "distinctive." For example, a study that asked grade school children to talk for a few minutes about themselves found that girls from households where their gender was in the minority (majority) were more (less) likely to mention gender in their spontaneous self-descriptions (McGuire, McGuire, & Winton, 1979). Similar effects were demonstrated in another study in which the salience of ethnic identity of children was found to affect informal self-descriptions (McGuire et al., 1978). Additionally, the basic effects of social distinctiveness on identity salience have also been demonstrated in consumer behavior (Forehand & Deshpandé, 2001; Grier & Deshpandé, 2001; Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994). Therefore, research suggests that an important array of features associated with the immediate social environment may combine to trigger identity salience (McGuire et al., 1978).

*Hypothesis 2:* Socially distinctive individuals should demonstrate higher levels of identity salience than should socially nondistinctive individuals.

### *Identity Salience as a Function of Stable Traits*

Individual difference variables are a third class of factors that influence identity salience. Most notable of these variables is the "strength of identification" that the person has with a given identity. For example, strength of identification has been found to influence the amount of attention consumers give to information, the probability that consumers will purchase identity relevant products, and the response of consumers to congruent identity actors in advertising (Deshpandé, Hoyer, & Donthu, 1986; Ellis, McCullough, Wallendorf, & Tan 1985; Hirschman, 1981; Saenz & Aguirre, 1991; Williams & Qualls, 1989). Similarly, individuals who strongly identify with a group are more likely to behave in a fashion consistent with that group's norms than are weak identifiers (Cota & Dion, 1986; Gerard & Hoyt, 1974; Madrigal, 2001; Terry & Hogg, 1996; Ybarra & Trafimow, 1998). Moreover, the importance of strength of identification has been demonstrated across a variety of groups, including African Americans (Williams & Qualls, 1989), Asian Americans (Ellis et al., 1985), Hispanics (Deshpandé et al., 1986; Saenz & Aguirre, 1991), and individuals of Jewish heritage (Hirschman, 1981).

### *Identity Salience Versus Identity Strength*

Although strength of identification possesses some similarities to identity salience, they are distinct constructs that differ in their duration. Strength of identification is an enduring association between an individual's sense of self and his or her identity, whereas identity salience is the momentary activation of a partic-

ular social identity. Identity salience is most often elicited when individuals process identity-related information and categorize themselves along identity-related criteria. At any given moment, an individual who strongly associates with an identity is more likely to be in a state of identity salience than is an individual who weakly associates with the identity, but possessing a strong association with an identity does not necessitate identity salience. Instead, identity salience is often elicited by external factors, and although it may be easier to elicit identity salience in a strong identifier, a strong identifier is not necessarily in a constant state of identity salience.

### The Influence of Identity Salience on Advertising Response

To summarize, the social self-schema consists of social identities that may become activated by identity primes or by social distinctiveness. Both identity primes and social distinctiveness should increase identity salience by temporarily altering the hierarchical ordering of the individual's identities (Burke & Reitzes, 1991) and by directing attention toward the activated component of one's social self-schema (Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994; Forehand & Deshpandé, 2001; Markus & Herzog, 1995). Although it is generally accepted that identity primes and social distinctiveness should influence identity salience in general, little is known about their potential combinatorial effects because they have been discussed and investigated separately in the research literature. This separation has obscured a potential interaction between the two in which their effects might be most pronounced when they simultaneously elicit identity salience. Specifically, individuals should be more sensitive to identity relevant information when those identities are distinctive in the social environment (Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994).

*Hypothesis 3:* Socially distinctive individuals should be more sensitive to identity primes than should socially nondistinctive individuals.

Moreover, this interactive effect of identity primes and social distinctiveness may influence consumer response to spokespersons and to advertising that is targeted toward individuals possessing that social identity.

### Effects of Identity Salience on Spokesperson Evaluation and Advertising Response

Consumers respond more positively to same-identity spokespersons when the consumer's identity salience is heightened by either identity primes in the media context (Forehand & Deshpandé, 2001) or by the social context (Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994). Identity salience leads to more positive evaluations of same-identity actors and spokespersons through an assimilation process (i.e., by highlighting the similarity between the consumer and the spokesperson and thereby increasing the likelihood that the consumer will classify the spokesperson as a member of his or her "in-group" (cf. Stapel & Koomen, 2000). Once same-identity actors are classified into the consumer's in-group, a host of positive biases should follow (cf. Chatman & von Hippel, 2001). Evaluators believe members of their in-group are more interesting

(Linville, Fischer, & Salovey, 1989), more persuasive (Berscheid, 1966), and more likable than members of an out-group (Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988). Moreover, the evaluation of in-group members has been found to improve when attention is focused on the evaluator's group memberships (Abrams, 1985). This suggests that spokespersons who represent an evaluator's in-group should be evaluated most positively when the evaluator's identity is made salient.

*Hypothesis 4a:* Individuals should evaluate spokespersons who represent an in-group most positively when the evaluator is socially distinctive and when their identity has been primed.

To the extent that the advertising becomes associated with the actors and spokespersons featured in it, the advertisement itself can become an extension of the in-group (Belk, 1988). As a result, advertising directed to an individual's in-group should also be affected by in-group assimilation.

*Hypothesis 4b:* Individuals should evaluate advertising directed to an in-group most positively when the evaluator is both socially distinctive and their identity has been primed.

Just as identity salience may improve reaction to actors and spokespersons who share the identity of the perceiver, it may have a detrimental effect on the evaluation of actors and spokespersons who do not share the identity of the perceiver. For example, consumers who have been exposed to identity primes are more likely to perceive actors of a different social identity to be members of an out-group, which can lead to less positive reactions (Stapel & Koomen, 2000). It is important to note that this self-categorization contrast effect does not necessarily result in negative reactions per se, but rather less positive reactions than if the evaluator had not been exposed to an identity prime. Mirroring the positive effects of identity salience, consumers should respond to different-identity actors least favorably when the consumer's identity is made salient via both social distinctiveness and identity primes.

*Hypothesis 4c:* Individuals should evaluate out-group spokespersons least positively when the evaluator is both socially distinctive and their identity has been primed.

As before, these out-group contrast effects should also be transferred to the advertisement itself.

*Hypothesis 4d:* Individuals should evaluate advertising directed to an out-group least positively when the evaluator is both socially distinctive and their identity has been primed.

It should be noted that although it is predicted that consumers will evaluate in-group members more positively when the consumers' identities are salient, the strength of this positive effect is variable within the group. One reason for this variability is individual differences in strength of identification (cf. Deshpandé et al., 1986). Weak identifiers are less likely to show a positive bias than strong identifiers. It is even possible that weak identifiers may wish to disassociate themselves from their group and therefore respond negatively to other in-group members. A second cause of

variability is the subjective construal of whether a given depiction is stereotypical or derogatory. To the extent that a consumer perceives the depiction of a spokesperson to be stereotypical, he or she may respond less positively to the targeted advertising than if there was no identity-based presence in the advertising at all (Weigel, Loomis, & Soja, 1980). Given that increasing an individual's identity salience should intensify his or her reactions to identity-based advertising, identity salience should cause consumers to respond even more negatively to stereotypical advertising than they otherwise would. Although these two factors increase the variability of response within the target market, the domain of analysis in this project is limited to advertising that is not generally perceived to be stereotypical or derogatory. As a result, identity salience should have largely positive outcomes on consumer evaluation of same-identity spokespeople and advertising.

### Pilot Study

#### Method

*Overview and design.* The goal of the pilot study was to assess the influence of identity primes and social distinctiveness on identity salience and response to targeted advertising. In both the pilot study and main experiment, the social identifications of Asian identity and Caucasian identity were used. To manipulate social distinctiveness, participants were drawn from two different West Coast universities that possessed opposite Asians versus Caucasians compositions. At the first university, Asian students were members of a minority (23% of the student population), whereas Caucasian students were members of a majority (69% of the student population). At the second university, Asian students were members of a majority (73% of the student population), whereas Caucasian students were members of a minority (20% of the student population). This pilot study was a quasi-experiment with 2 Levels of Social Identity (Asian or Caucasian)  $\times$  2 Levels of Identity Prime (present or absent)  $\times$  2 Levels of Social Distinctiveness (distinctive or nondistinctive) between-participants factorial.

*Participants.* Two hundred eighty-four undergraduate students from two major West Coast universities participated as part of a class requirement: One hundred nine students were drawn from the university with a Caucasian majority, and 175 students were drawn from the university with an Asian majority. The participant sample from the first university included 52 Asian participants and 57 Caucasian participants. The participant sample from the second university included 119 Asian participants and 56 Caucasian participants. The participant sample from the first university included 56 male participants (51%) and 53 female participants (49%). The participant sample from the second university included 101 male participants (58%) and 74 female participants (42%). For each university, the gender percentages were consistent across the two ethnicities and were representative of the gender distribution in the overall university populations. The average age of participants from both universities was 21.<sup>1</sup>

*Procedure.* Three weeks prior to the pilot study, participants completed a survey that included personality scales and demographic items. The participants self-reported whether they were Asian or Caucasian in this initial survey, and this measure was used to classify participants into one of the two social identities.

During the pilot study, participants were randomly assigned to either the prime present or prime absent condition. On entering the lab, participants were informed that the researchers were "examining attitudes toward television media" and that participants would be asked to watch an 8-min segment from a news program and then answer some questions about the program in a questionnaire packet. After the initial instructions, participants were asked to direct their attention to the front of the room where a video monitor played the videotape containing a series of commercials

embedded between two news segments. When the videotape ended, participants completed a questionnaire that contained all dependent measures.

*Stimuli.* The videotape stimuli were a series of television advertisements embedded between two news segments. The news segments originally aired on a regional news broadcast and contained general information about local traffic and weather. The series of ads presented between the two news segments contained the focal ad for the study (a targeted advertisement for Nokia cellular phones) and three filler ads (all for consumer nondurables). The Nokia cellular phone advertisement was classified as an Asian-targeted advertisement because it featured only Asian actors and actresses. The Nokia advertisement was selected because it originally aired in Singapore (in English) and was never aired in the markets from which participants were drawn, thereby limiting any potential pre-exposure to the ad.

In the identity prime present condition, one additional advertisement was included that was expected to prime identity salience. This ad also originally aired in Singapore and featured Vidal Sassoon hair care products. Although both the Nokia ad and the Vidal Sassoon ad would be considered targeted advertisements in the markets from which the participants were drawn, the Vidal Sassoon ad contained a more direct identity prime. This prime was a statement (provided verbally and in text) in the Vidal Sassoon ad that expressly stated that the products were "for Asian hair." This statement serves as an identity prime because it should draw attention to whether the participant possesses an Asian or Caucasian social identity.

The final ordering of ads in the identity prime absent condition was as follows: Filler Ad 1, targeted ad (Nokia), Filler Ad 2, Filler Ad 3. In the identity prime present condition, the identity prime ad (Vidal Sassoon) was placed in the second position, creating the following ordering: Filler Ad 1, identity prime ad (Vidal Sassoon), targeted ad (Nokia), Filler Ad 2, Filler Ad 3.

*Measures.* The first page of the questionnaire asked some general questions about the newscast and the news anchors, supporting the television media cover story. This cover story was used to direct some attention away from the advertisements so as to create a more externally valid representation of how consumers typically view ads (focus of attention on the programming rather than the ads).

After completing the cover story measures, participant identity salience was measured. To assess the influence of identity primes and social distinctiveness on identity salience, this project used the spontaneous self-description method first developed to study the effects of societal distinctiveness by McGuire et al. (1978). This measure is particularly sensitive to unconscious influences on identity salience because it allows individuals to describe themselves along any dimensions they feel are relevant and does not explicitly question individuals about their social identifications. The specific wording of this open-ended measure asked participants to "please tell us about yourself in your own words. Please take about a minute to do so." The probability that a participant would spontaneously report whether they were Asian or Caucasian in the self-

<sup>1</sup> Although participants were randomly assigned to prime conditions, the other factors in this quasi-experiment (participant's Asian or Caucasian social identity and distinctiveness) could not be randomly assigned. Because the participants were instead drawn from existing populations, it is important to document the comparability of these populations. The populations were compared on two potentially relevant dimensions: household income and self-reported proficiency with the English language. Other major demographic variables, such as education level and age, were equivalent by definition because all participants were drawn from student populations. These comparisons revealed no significant differences between the participants drawn from the two different universities on any of these measures ( $p > .10$ ). Similarly, no significant differences were found between Asian and Caucasian participants on either of these measures ( $p > .10$ ).

description was used as the critical measure of identity salience (McGuire et al., 1978).

The open-ended response measures were followed by a series of questions about the focal advertisement. Five 7-point semantic differential items were used to assess attitude toward the target ad. These items were anchored with *bad* and *good*, *dislike* and *like*, *useless* and *useful*, *uninformative* or *informative*, and *unpleasant* or *pleasant*. An average score across these five measures was calculated to provide an overall rating of attitude toward the ad (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

These attitudes toward the ad measures were followed by a set of cognitive response measures that assessed participant reactions to the advertising. Participants were asked to take a minute and write down all their reactions to the Nokia ad, both positive and negative. These cognitive responses were coded as positive, negative, or neutral. Positive and negative cognitive responses were treated as separate measures to provide greater insight into the potential for ambivalent reactions from participants (Priester & Petty, 1996). Specifically, it is possible that identity salience could influence both positive and negative reactions concurrently. The calculation of a difference score on these two types of cognitive responses could therefore mask underlying patterns. Two coders who were blind to the experimental hypotheses completed all coding. The coders demonstrated 91% agreement on their initial codings. Disagreements between the coders were resolved through discussion.

Attitudes toward the ad spokesperson were assessed by using four measures of liking for the spokesperson. The spokesperson liking items were seven-point semantic differential items anchored by *cold* and *warm*, *unlikable* and *likable*, *insincere* and *sincere*, and *unfriendly* and *friendly* (Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). These four items were averaged into a single measure of spokesperson liking (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.94$ ).

The final set of measures included a measure of the participant's strength of Asian or Caucasian identification and measures of other demographic information. The strength of the participant's identification was measured by using a 9-point scale anchored with *very weakly* and *very strongly* (Deshpandé et al., 1986). The use of a 9-point scale for this measure was useful because individuals disproportionately indicate strong as opposed to weak identification with their respective groups.

## Results

**Identity salience.** It was hypothesized that both identity primes (Hypothesis 1) and social distinctiveness (Hypothesis 2) should increase identity salience. To test these hypotheses, the percentage of participants who spontaneously mentioned whether they were Asian or Caucasian on the open-ended self-report measure was compared across the treatments. Results from a logistic regression supported the hypotheses. Summing across both Asians and Caucasians, participants self-reported their social identity at a higher rate after exposure to an identity prime, prime present (PP) = 29%, prime absent (PA) = 16%,  $\chi^2(1, N = 284) = 6.85, p < .01$ . The results also supported the prediction that participants would self-report their social identity at a higher rate when they were distinctive in the social environment than when they were not distinctive, distinctive (D) = 32%, nondistinctive (ND) = 18%,  $\chi^2(1, N = 284) = 9.42, p < .01$ .

In addition to the aforementioned main effects, it was hypothesized that identity primes would differentially increase the identity salience of socially distinctive participants (Hypothesis 3). Support for this hypothesized interaction was mixed. Exposure to an identity prime increased the self-report rate of nondistinctive participants from 13% to 21% and increased the self-report rate of distinctive participants from 19% to 44%. Although the priming-based increase in self-report was greater for socially distinctive

participants than for nondistinctive participants, the predicted interaction between prime and distinctiveness was not found,  $\chi^2(1, N = 284) = 1.07, p > .10$ . However, separate analyses on Asian and Caucasian participants revealed an interaction for Asian participants. Specifically, it was found that although the prime only modestly increased the self-report rate of nondistinctive Asians (19% vs. 23%), the prime had a more pronounced effect on the self-report rate of distinctive Asians (17% vs. 33%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 171) = 2.70, p < .10$ . The prime did not interact with social distinctiveness for Caucasian participants ( $p > .20$ ).

**Spokesperson and advertising evaluation.** Hypotheses 4a, 4b, 4c, and 4d predicted that individuals should evaluate spokespersons and advertising directed to an in-group (out-group) most positively (negatively) when the evaluator is both socially distinctive and their identity has been primed. When combined together, these separate predictions for in-group and out-group members suggest a three-way interaction between social distinctiveness, identity prime, and participant identity. Moreover, this three-way interaction should be consistent across all of the spokesperson and advertising dependent measures. To test for the existence of a consistent three-way interaction across the dependent variables, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), in which participant evaluations of the spokesperson, participant evaluations of the advertising, the number of positive cognitive responses to the advertising, and the number of negative cognitive responses to the advertising were included as dependent variables. The independent variables in the MANOVA were participant ethnic identity, presence or absence of an identity prime, and social distinctiveness (Asian participants from the first university and Caucasian students from the second university were distinctive). Support for Hypotheses 4a–4d was found because the predicted three-way interaction was observed in this MANOVA,  $F(4, 254) = 2.71, p < .05$ .

To better understand the nature of this interaction, planned contrasts that separately test Hypotheses 4a–4d were conducted. Hypothesis 4a proposed that individuals should evaluate spokespersons and advertising directed to an in-group most positively when the evaluator is both socially distinctive and their identity has been primed. In the pilot study, this suggests that Asian participants should respond most favorably to spokespersons and advertising targeting Asians when the Asian participants are both socially distinctive and have had their Asian identity primed. To test this hypothesis, the responses of Asian participants who were both distinctive and primed (heretofore referred to as high-identity salience, HIS) were contrasted with the responses of Asian participants who were either not distinctive, not primed, or neither distinctive nor primed (heretofore referred to as low-identity salience, LIS). Compared with LIS Asian participants, HIS Asian participants evaluated the spokesperson more positively,  $Asian_{HIS} = 4.90, Asian_{LIS} = 4.37, F(1, 167) = 5.24, p < .02, \eta^2 = .02$ ; evaluated the advertising more positively,  $Asian_{HIS} = 5.51, Asian_{LIS} = 5.08, F(1, 167) = 3.69, p < .05, \eta^2 = .01$ ; provided more positive cognitive responses,  $Asian_{HIS} = 1.16, Asian_{LIS} = 0.70, F(1, 168) = 6.58, p < .01, \eta^2 = .02$ ; and provided fewer negative cognitive responses,  $Asian_{HIS} = 0.36, Asian_{LIS} = 0.69, F(1, 168) = 4.02, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$ . These contrasts provide consistent support for Hypotheses 4a and 4b across all dependent measures.

Similar contrasts were run to test Hypotheses 4c and 4d, which proposed that individuals should evaluate spokespeople and advertising directed to an out-group least positively when the individuals are both socially distinctive and their identity has been primed. This suggests that Caucasian participants should respond most negatively to spokespeople and advertising targeting Asians when the Caucasian participants are both socially distinctive and have had their Caucasian identity primed. To test this hypothesis, the responses of Caucasian participants who were both distinctive and primed (HIS) were contrasted with the responses of Caucasian participants who were either not distinctive, not primed, or neither distinctive nor primed (LIS). Compared with LIS Caucasian participants, HIS Caucasian participants evaluated the spokesperson more negatively,  $Caucasian_{HIS} = 3.49$ ,  $Caucasian_{LIS} = 4.26$ ,  $F(1, 97) = 7.10$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ , and provided fewer positive cognitive responses,  $Caucasian_{HIS} = 0.26$ ,  $Caucasian_{LIS} = 0.67$ ,  $F(1, 97) = 4.01$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . However, distinctive and primed Caucasians neither evaluated the advertising more negatively,  $Caucasian_{HIS} = 4.39$ ,  $Caucasian_{LIS} = 4.75$ ,  $F(1, 97) = 1.60$ ,  $p > .10$ ,  $\eta^2 = .006$ , nor provided more negative cognitive responses,  $Caucasian_{HIS} = 0.74$ ,  $Caucasian_{LIS} = 0.80$ ,  $F(1, 97) = 0.07$ ,  $p > .10$ ,  $\eta^2 < .001$ . These contrasts provide support for Hypothesis 4c and partial support for Hypothesis 4d. Means and standard errors across dependent variables in the pilot study are provided in Table 1.

*Supplementary mediation analyses.* Although it was not directly hypothesized, it is possible that identity salience also may mediate the effects of the manipulations on consumer reaction to targeted advertising. In our previous analyses, identity salience was treated as the product of specific environmental manipulations. As a result, the analyses presented to this point assessed what effect these manipulations had on a) the tendency for participants to self-report relevant identities (the measure of identity salience), and b) participant evaluation of targeted advertising and spokespeople. Given that these manipulations influenced both identity salience and advertising response, an additional test for mediation was warranted.

To test for identity salience-based mediation of spokesperson and advertising response, a series of three regressions were conducted following the procedure of Baron and Kenny (1986). Using these procedures, self-report of Asian and Caucasian identity was not found to partially or fully mediate the effect of the manipulations on any of the dependent measures. It should be noted, however, that this is a particularly demanding test of mediation because identity salience was measured by using McGuire's classic spontaneous self-concept measure (McGuire et al., 1979; McGuire et al., 1978).

The use of McGuire et al.'s (1978) spontaneous self-report measure provides an excellent measure of identity salience, but is not the most sensitive measure in tests of mediation. Identity salience is theorized to be a psychological state during which the individual is more sensitive to information relating to his or her social identity. This sensitivity is a direct result of "pure" activation of a social identity within the social self-schema. The spontaneous self-report procedure efficiently taps this activation because it is unlikely to intrude upon participants' psychological processes. As a result, it has been used extensively in research on group processing within psychology (McGuire & McGuire, 1981; McGuire et al., 1979; McGuire et al., 1978; McGuire & Padawer-

Table 1  
Pilot Study Cell Means and Standard Errors

Dependent variable	PSI: Asian				PSI: Caucasian			
	Distinctive		Nondistinctive		Distinctive		Nondistinctive	
	Prime	No prime	Prime	No prime	Prime	No prime	Prime	No prime
Spokesperson liking	4.90 (0.18)	4.05 (0.28)	4.49 (0.13)	4.41 (0.16)	3.57 (0.22)	4.54 (0.28)	4.05 (0.23)	4.22 (0.21)
Attitude toward the ad	5.51 (0.19)	4.78 (0.24)	5.19 (0.13)	5.12 (0.17)	4.56 (0.27)	4.94 (0.17)	4.37 (0.25)	4.86 (0.18)
Positive cognitive responses	1.16 (0.18)	0.52 (0.10)	0.79 (0.12)	0.66 (0.11)	0.30 (0.13)	0.62 (0.13)	0.61 (0.20)	0.79 (0.16)
Negative cognitive responses	0.44 (0.15)	1.07 (0.21)	0.59 (0.09)	0.60 (0.14)	0.67 (0.18)	0.76 (0.17)	1.00 (0.24)	0.55 (0.09)

Note. Standard errors are in parentheses. Social distinctiveness is indicated by the column spanners *Distinctive* and *Nondistinctive*. Identity prime is indicated by the column heads *Prime* and *No prime*. PSI = participant social identity.

Singer, 1978) and consumer behavior (Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994; Forehand & Deshpandé, 2001; Grier & Deshpandé, 2001). A more direct measure of identity salience might simply ask respondents "to what extent were you thinking about your *x* identity" on some continuous response measure. However, given demand artifact concerns (Cook & Campbell, 1979) and the difficulty of participants introspecting into their own psychological processes (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), such an approach would be suspect at best.

Although McGuire et al.'s (1978) self-report measure is unobtrusive, it is not ideal for testing mediation because it is a binary variable. Identity salience is presumably a continuous variable, and a binary measure like the spontaneous self-report measure is likely to miss much of the variance across participants. The measure, instead, assesses whether an individual has crossed a threshold of identity salience that prompts him or her to self-report. This type of a discrete measure works quite well as a manipulation check across a population, but is less discriminating in tests of mediational paths amongst continuous variables.

*Supplementary analyses: Strength of identification.* It was proposed that identity salience is temporally distinct from strength of identification because strength of identification is an enduring state of the individual, whereas identity salience is momentary activation of one's group memberships. If this is indeed the case, then the manipulations should not affect an individual's strength of identification. Support for the distinction between strength of identification and identity salience was found as the prime manipulation had no effect on strength of identification,  $F(1, 383) = 0.30, p > .10, \eta^2 < .001$ . Given that the prime manipulation did not significantly affect strength of identification, it is also impossible for strength of identification to have mediated the effects of the manipulations on the other dependent variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

### *Discussion of Empirical Findings*

The pilot study demonstrated that identity salience, as measured by self-report tendencies, is influenced both by exposure to identity primes and by social distinctiveness. Moreover, an interaction between social distinctiveness and identity primes was observed on the self-report tendencies of Asian participants, suggesting that sensitivity to identity-relevant information is heightened by pre-existing social distinctiveness. The self-report findings also supported the proposed distinction between identity salience and strength of identification because neither social distinctiveness nor identity primes had any effect on reported strength of identification. The absence of any influence of the manipulations on strength of identification suggests that strength of identification is an enduring trait that is relatively resistant to situational variables.

The pilot study also demonstrated that the combination of social distinctiveness and identity primes can influence consumer response to targeted advertising. HIS Asian participants (those who were both distinctive and who had their identity primed) responded more positively to Asian spokespersons and advertisements than did LIS Asian participants (those who were either not distinctive, not primed, or neither distinctive nor primed). Similarly, HIS Caucasian participants responded more negatively to Asian spokespersons and advertisements than did LIS Caucasian participants. However, the less positive responses of the HIS Caucasians

did not transfer to the evaluation of the advertisement itself. This suggests that the out-group biases under observation here are more pronounced for evaluations of individual members of the out-group (Hypothesis 4c) than for ads with which those out-group members are associated (Hypothesis 4d).

Although the pilot study provided consistent support for the hypotheses, one methodological limitation within the pilot study warrants attention. Specifically, the use of a distinct advertisement as the identity prime in the pilot study opens up the results to alternative explanations. Participants who viewed the identity prime (the explicit Asian comments in the Vidal Sassoon ad) were also viewing an ad and product category that participants in the identity prime absent condition did not view. As a result, the observed effects could be due to other elements in the Vidal Sassoon ad or to the fact that participants in the prime-present condition were exposed to two ads featuring Asian models as opposed to just one for participants in the prime-absent condition.

To address this limitation, a second quasi-experiment was developed that kept equal the amount of information presented across the prime-present and prime-absent conditions. This equivalency was established by exposing all participants to an identity prime but manipulating whether the participant was exposed to an identity prime that was either congruent or incongruent with their social identity. In the pilot study, it was found that the Asian identity prime increased the identity salience of both identity congruent individuals (Asian participants) and identity incongruent individuals (Caucasian participants). However, the influence of the identity prime was particularly dramatic for participants who possessed a social identity matching the identity used in the prime (heretofore referred to as identity congruent). This finding is consistent with a great deal of research that has demonstrated that individuals pay more attention to, and demonstrate quicker recall of, trait information consistent with their own self-schema (Fekken & Holden, 1992; Markus & Sentsis, 1982; Skitka & Maslach, 1996). Because of this heightened responsiveness to self-relevant information, individuals are expected to demonstrate greater increases in identity salience after exposure to identity-congruent primes than to identity-incongruent primes.

Another limitation of the pilot study is that the focal ad that was evaluated always featured Asian actors and actresses. As a result, any effects of the identity primes or distinctiveness on Asian participants constitute positive biases toward the in-group, whereas any effects of the identity primes or distinctiveness on Caucasian participants constitute negative biases toward the out-group. To increase the generalizability of the findings in the pilot study, a second focal ad was added to the main experiment that featured a Caucasian spokesperson. By adding an ad featuring a Caucasian spokesperson, it is possible to assess whether Asian participants will also demonstrate out-group discrimination and whether Caucasian participants will demonstrate in-group favoritism.

## Main Experiment

### *Method*

*Overview and design.* The goal of the main experiment was to assess the robustness of the results from the pilot study, expand their generalizability, and address the aforementioned methodological limitations. To gain greater equivalency between the information presented in the prime advertisement and the targeted advertisement, print stimuli were used

instead of video stimuli (this also allows an examination of generalizability of the pilot study findings to a different media context). The main experiment was a between-participants factorial quasi-experiment with 2 Levels of Participant Social Identity (Asian or Caucasian)  $\times$  2 Levels of Identity Prime (prior ad containing an Asian identity prime or a Caucasian identity prime)  $\times$  2 Levels of Social Distinctiveness of the Participants (distinctive or non-distinctive). To increase the generalizability of the pilot study findings, an advertising replicate was added to the design. Specifically, participants in the main experiment evaluated either a focal ad featuring an Asian spokesperson or an ad featuring a Caucasian spokesperson.

**Participants.** Three hundred eighty-four undergraduate students participated in the experiment as part of a class requirement. As in the pilot study, participants were drawn from two separate universities that differed in their composition of Asian and Caucasian students. At the first university, Caucasian students were in the majority and Asians were in the minority. At the second university, Asian students were in the majority and Caucasian students were in the minority. One hundred seventy-five students were drawn from the university with a Caucasian majority and 209 students were drawn from the university with an Asian majority.

The participant sample from the Caucasian-majority university included 61 Asian participants and 114 Caucasian participants. The participant sample from the Asian-majority university included 148 Asian participants and 61 Caucasian participants. The participant sample from the first university included 101 male participants (58%) and 74 female participants (42%). The participant sample from the second university included 107 male participants (51%) and 102 female participants (49%). For each university, the gender percentages were consistent across the two ethnicities. The average age of participants from both universities was 21 years.

**Procedure.** Three weeks prior to the main experiment, participants completed a survey that included personality scales and demographic items. As in the pilot study, the self-reported identity measure in this initial survey was used to classify participants.

During the main experiment, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four identity prime or target ad conditions. On entering the lab, participants were informed that the researchers were “examining attitudes toward print media” and that participants would review a number of print advertisements and then answer some questions about the ads in a questionnaire packet. Each participant was given an ad booklet to review. The experimenter read the instructions to the participants and then controlled the pace at which participants read the ads. The experimenter allowed the participants to review each ad for 20 s before instructing them to proceed to the next ad. After the participants finished reviewing all five ads, the ad booklets were collected and questionnaires that contained all dependent measures were distributed.

**Stimuli.** Print advertisements were used as stimuli. The identity prime was a modified Northwest Airlines ad that had originally been created to promote “Business First,” a program for business travelers. The original ad featured a small photo in the center of an otherwise white page with large text above the photo announcing the program, small text alongside the photo describing the program, fine print at the bottom of the page detailing restrictions, and the Northwest Airlines logo in the lower right corner. To make the product category more relevant to the participants, the product promoted by the ad was changed from a “Business First” program to a “Students First” program. Although this change required alterations to the content of the large text at the top of the page and the small text along side the photo, the text position, font, and size were kept as they were in the original ad.

To keep the amount of information presented consistent across the two identity-prime conditions, two versions of the Northwest ad were created that were identical except for the identity prime. The type of identity prime was created by manipulating the text at the top of the page and the photo presented in the center of the page. The large text at the top of the page was altered to say either “Travel Overseas to Asia” (an Asian identity prime) or

“Travel Overseas to Europe” (a Caucasian identity prime). Compared with the rest of the large text, the words “Asia” and “Europe” were written in a significantly larger font and were in bold. Following the findings of Hong et al. (2000), photographs of cultural icons were also used as identity primes to strengthen the manipulation. The photo at the center of the ad was also altered to display either a photograph of the Great Wall of China (an Asian identity prime) or of Big Ben, the clock tower and bell that is part of the British House of Parliament (a Caucasian identity prime). All of the small text alongside the photo and the fine print at the bottom of the page were identical between the two prime versions, with the exception of four spots where the ads either said “Asia” or “Europe.”

The focal ads that were evaluated by the participants were two versions of an IBM ad that was originally used to advertise IBM Global Services. Both ads featured the photograph of an approximately 35-year-old man’s face in front of a hazy background. One ad featured the face of an Asian man, the second the face of a Caucasian man. Both ads also featured a small box filled with text that was placed alongside the photograph of the man. The text of the original ads was changed in several ways for the purposes of the experiment. First, the product category was changed from IBM Global Services to the IBM ThinkPad laptop computer to make the product category more relevant to the student population. The rest of the text in the box was edited so that the Asian and Caucasian versions of the ad contained identical information. The text provided information about the man’s name, occupation, a quote from the man, the ThinkPad Web site URL, and a slogan statement for the ThinkPad. *John Lee* was selected as the man’s name because “Lee” is a surname that can be found for both Asians and Caucasians.<sup>2</sup>

Three other ads were selected as filler ads in the experiment. The three ads were selected because they did not feature human models, thus helping prevent any unintended identity primes. These ads were for FTD flower bouquets, American Express credit cards, and Refresh eye drops. All ads (including the identity-prime ad and target ad) were presented in black and white. The final ordering of ads was as follows: Filler Ad 1, identity-prime ad (Northwest), targeted ad (IBM), Filler Ad 2, Filler Ad 3.

**Measures.** The same dependent measures were used in the main experiment as in the pilot study.

## Results

**Identity salience.** It was originally hypothesized that both identity primes (Hypothesis 1) and social distinctiveness (Hypothesis 2) should increase identity salience. Given that all participants were exposed to an identity prime in the main experiment, it was expected that congruent identity primes would increase identity salience more than incongruent identity primes. To test these predictions, the percentage of participants who spontaneously mentioned whether they were Asian or Caucasian in the open-ended self-report measure was compared across the treatments.

<sup>2</sup> In a pretest, 70 participants who did not participate in the main experiment evaluated the two IBM models to ensure that the ads were equivalent except for the model being Asian or Caucasian. These 70 participants were drawn from both universities. Participants were randomly assigned to evaluate either the Caucasian or Asian version of the advertisement and were instructed to evaluate the model’s friendliness, happiness, intelligence, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. All responses were collected on 7-point semantic differential items. No significant differences were found in participant evaluation of the models on any of the aforementioned items ( $p > .20$ ). Separate analyses were also run for Caucasian participants and Asian participants, and again, no significant differences were found on evaluation of the models ( $p > .20$ ). Finally, a comparison of the responses from students from the two universities demonstrated no significant differences in their evaluation of the models ( $p > .20$ ).



Summing across both Asian and Caucasian participants, it was found that distinctive participants self-reported their identities at a higher rate than nondistinctive participants, distinctive = 39%, nondistinctive = 22%,  $\chi^2(1, N = 384) = 12.43, p < .01$ . This finding supports Hypothesis 2. However, the results did not support the prediction that congruent identity primes would increase identity salience more than incongruent identity primes, congruent-identity prime = 29%, incongruent-identity prime = 26%,  $\chi^2(1, N = 384) = 0.68, p > .20$ .

Given that the manipulation of prime congruency did not influence identity salience as expected, an additional analysis was run comparing the self-report rates of participants exposed to the Asian and Caucasian identity primes, independent of whether the prime was congruent with the participant's social identity. This analysis revealed that both Asian and Caucasian participants self-reported their identity at a higher rate after exposure to the Asian identity prime than after the Caucasian identity prime, Asian identity prime = 33%, Caucasian identity prime = 22%,  $\chi^2(1, N = 384) = 5.97, p < .01$ . Given that the Asian identity prime increased identity salience for both Asian and Caucasian participants and that the Caucasian identity prime did not increase the identity salience for either Asian or Caucasian participants, all subsequent analyses were recoded. Specifically, the Asian identity-prime condition was coded as an identity-prime present condition for both Asians and Caucasians and the Caucasian identity-prime condition was coded as an identity-prime absent condition for both Asians and Caucasians.

A final identity salience hypothesis proposed that identity primes would differentially increase the identity salience of socially distinctive participants (Hypothesis 3). Support for this hypothesized interaction was found,  $\chi^2(1, N = 384) = 4.16, p < .04$ . Specifically, exposure to an Asian identity prime only increased the self-report rate of nondistinctive participants from 20% to 24% but increased the self-report rate of distinctive participants from 24% to 52%.

*Spokesperson and advertising evaluation.* Hypotheses 4a, 4b, 4c, and 4d predicted that individuals should evaluate spokesperson and advertising directed to an in-group (out-group) most (least) positively when the evaluator is socially distinctive and when his or her identity has been primed. When combined together, these separate predictions for in-group and out-group members suggest a three-way interaction between social distinctiveness, identity prime, and participant social identity. Moreover, this three-way interaction should be consistent across all of the spokesperson and advertising dependent measures. To test for the existence of a consistent three-way interaction across the dependent variables, we conducted two separate MANOVAs, one for the Asian-targeted ad and one for the Caucasian-targeted ad. Ad ethnicity was used as a blocking variable (thereby allowing two separate MANOVAs) because the hypothesized three-way interaction was intended as an extension and replicate as opposed to a factor. In these MANOVAs, participant evaluations of the spokesperson, participant evaluations of the advertising, the number of positive cognitive responses to the advertising, and the number of negative cognitive responses to the advertising were included as dependent variables. The independent variables in the MANOVAs were participant social identity (Asian or Caucasian), Asian or Caucasian identity prime, and social distinctiveness.

Support for Hypotheses 4a and 4b was found for the Asian-targeted ad as the predicted three-way interaction was observed in this MANOVA,  $F(4, 188) = 2.56, p < .04$ . However, no support was found for Hypotheses 4a and 4b for the Caucasian-targeted ad,  $F(4, 174) = 1.05, p > .20$ . The only significant effect found in the MANOVA for the Caucasian-targeted ad was a main effect of identity in which Caucasians responded more positively than did Asians across the dependent measures,  $F(4, 174) = 11.87, p < .01$ . Given that neither social distinctiveness, identity priming, nor any combination of the two influenced response to the Caucasian ad, the evaluations of the Caucasian-targeted ad will not be discussed further in the results. The means and standard errors for both the Asian-targeted ad and the Caucasian-targeted ad are presented in Tables 2 and 3 respectively.

To better understand the nature of the three-way interaction found for evaluation of the Asian-targeted ad, we conducted planned contrasts that separately tested Hypotheses 4a–4d. Hypotheses 4a and 4b proposed that individuals should evaluate spokesperson and advertising directed to an in-group most positively when the evaluator is socially distinctive and when his or her identity has been primed. For the Asian-targeted ad, this suggests that Asian participants should respond most favorably to the spokesperson and the ad when the Asian participants are both socially distinctive and have had their identity primed. As in the pilot study, to test this hypothesis, the responses of Asian participants who were both distinctive and primed (HIS) were contrasted with the responses of Asian participants who were either not distinctive, not primed, or neither distinctive nor primed (LIS). Compared with LIS Asian participants, HIS Asian participants evaluated the spokesperson more positively,  $Asian_{HIS} = 5.22, Asian_{LIS} = 3.94, F(1, 109) = 17.61, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$ ; provided more positive cognitive responses,  $Asian_{HIS} = 1.67, Asian_{LIS} = 0.70, F(1, 109) = 19.01, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$ ; and provided fewer negative cognitive responses,  $Asian_{HIS} = 0.61, Asian_{LIS} = 1.29, F(1, 109) = 6.23, p < .01, \eta^2 = .01$ . However, HIS Asian participants did not evaluate the advertising more positively,  $Asian_{HIS} = 4.07, Asian_{LIS} = 3.96, F(1, 109) = 0.01, p > .10, \eta^2 < .01$ . These contrasts provide full support for Hypothesis 4a and partial support for Hypothesis 4b.

Similar contrasts were run to test Hypotheses 4c and 4d, which proposed that individuals should evaluate spokesperson and advertising directed to an out-group least positively when the evaluator is both socially distinctive and when his or her identity has been primed. For the Asian-targeted ad, this suggests that Caucasian participants should respond least positively to spokesperson and advertising when the Caucasian participants are both socially distinctive and have had their social identity primed. To test this hypothesis, we contrasted the responses of Caucasian participants who were both distinctive and primed (HIS) with the responses of Caucasian participants who were either not distinctive, not primed, or neither distinctive nor primed (LIS). Compared with LIS Caucasian participants, HIS Caucasian participants evaluated the spokesperson less positively,  $Caucasian_{HIS} = 3.25, Caucasian_{LIS} = 4.22, F(1, 88) = 9.46, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$ , and evaluated the advertising less positively,  $Caucasian_{HIS} = 3.37, Caucasian_{LIS} = 4.15, F(1, 88) = 6.12, p < .02, \eta^2 = .03$ . However, HIS Caucasians neither provided fewer positive cognitive responses,  $Caucasian_{HIS} = 0.46, Caucasian_{LIS} = 0.43, F(1, 88) = 0.51, p > .10, \eta^2 < .001$ , nor provided more negative cognitive responses, Cau-

Table 2  
Main Experiment Cell Means and Standard Errors for Asian-Targeted Ad

Dependent variable	PSI: Asian				PSI: Caucasian			
	Distinctive		Nondistinctive		Distinctive		Nondistinctive	
	Asian	Caucasian	Asian	Caucasian	Asian	Caucasian	Asian	Caucasian
Spokesperson liking	5.22 (0.36)	4.21 (0.27)	3.90 (0.19)	3.86 (0.20)	3.25 (0.25)	4.32 (0.22)	4.05 (0.20)	4.34 (0.22)
Attitude toward the ad	4.39 (0.30)	4.07 (0.29)	3.91 (0.18)	3.82 (0.17)	3.37 (0.22)	4.38 (0.32)	4.13 (0.22)	4.26 (0.24)
Positive cognitive responses	1.67 (0.20)	0.82 (0.20)	0.77 (0.15)	0.58 (0.14)	0.47 (0.19)	0.67 (0.16)	0.40 (0.15)	0.31 (0.16)
Negative cognitive responses	0.61 (0.26)	1.18 (0.26)	0.95 (0.12)	1.68 (0.19)	1.47 (0.27)	0.67 (0.14)	1.73 (0.19)	1.38 (0.21)

Note. Standard errors are in parentheses. Social distinctiveness is indicated by the column spanners *Distinctive* and *Nondistinctive*. Identity prime is indicated by the column heads *Asian* and *Caucasian*. PSI = participant social identity.

Table 3  
Main Experiment Cell Means and Standard Errors for Caucasian-Targeted Ad

Dependent variable	PSI: Asian				PSI: Caucasian			
	Distinctive		Nondistinctive		Distinctive		Nondistinctive	
	Asian	Caucasian	Asian	Caucasian	Asian	Caucasian	Asian	Caucasian
Spokesperson liking	4.30 (0.29)	4.39 (0.33)	4.84 (0.19)	4.35 (0.21)	5.09 (0.19)	5.10 (0.31)	4.70 (0.23)	4.46 (0.19)
Attitude toward the ad	4.34 (0.22)	4.05 (0.20)	4.31 (0.17)	4.15 (0.17)	4.24 (0.24)	4.38 (0.32)	4.21 (0.27)	5.22 (0.26)
Positive cognitive responses	0.20 (0.21)	0.36 (0.25)	0.62 (0.16)	0.50 (0.12)	1.00 (0.22)	0.58 (0.15)	0.71 (0.17)	0.79 (0.14)
Negative cognitive responses	1.40 (0.25)	1.82 (0.29)	1.54 (0.19)	1.79 (0.23)	0.69 (0.15)	0.58 (0.19)	0.71 (0.20)	0.68 (0.17)

Note. Standard errors are in parentheses. Social distinctiveness is indicated by the column spanners *Distinctive* and *Nondistinctive*. Identity prime is indicated by the column heads *Asian* and *Caucasian*. PSI = participant social identity.

casian<sub>HIS</sub> = 1.47, Caucasian<sub>LIS</sub> = 1.35,  $F(1, 88) = 0.00$ ,  $p > .10$ ,  $\eta^2 < .001$ , than did LIS Caucasians. These contrasts provide full support for Hypothesis 4c and partial support for Hypothesis 4d.

*Supplementary mediation analyses.* As in the pilot study, procedures were conducted to test whether identity self-report mediated any of the effects caused by the manipulated variables of Baron and Kenny (1986). These analyses again revealed no identity self-report-based mediation of any of the observed effects.

*Strength of identification.* As in the pilot study, we also found that although the Asian identity prime increased identity salience, it did not increase strength of identification,  $F(1, 383) = 0.86$ ,  $p > .10$ ,  $\eta^2 < .001$ . This again supports the contention that identity salience is temporally distinct from strength of identification, and that the latter is an enduring state that is not subject to momentary changes in the heightened activation of a social identity.

### General Discussion

Examining all dependent measures reveals that the main experiment replicated the findings of the pilot study. As in the pilot study, both identity primes and social distinctiveness heightened identity salience as measured by the tendency of participants to spontaneously self-report whether they were Asian or Caucasian (cf. McGuire et al., 1978). Moreover, the main experiment found that the effect of an identity prime on identity salience was most pronounced when the individual was already socially distinctive (cf. Stapel & Koomen, 2000). No support was found for the contention that congruent identity primes would have a greater effect on identity salience than would incongruent identity primes. In fact, the Asian identity prime was found to significantly influence identity salience for Asians and Caucasians alike. This effect across both Asian and Caucasian participants suggests that identity primes that focus attention on one's exclusion from a group (cf. Marques et al., 1988) can increase identity salience in the same way that attention to one's inclusion in a group does (Doise & Sinclair, 1973; Wilder & Shapiro, 1991).

Mirroring the pilot study, the main experiment also found that identity priming and social distinctiveness influenced the evaluation of Asian-targeted advertising by both Asian and Caucasian participants. These effects are particularly noteworthy given the subtle prime manipulation used in the main experiment (Prentice & Miller, 1992). In the pilot study, the identity prime explicitly stated that a product was "for Asian hair" and thereby overtly encouraged participants to evaluate the product as "for me" or "not for me" (S. S. Kleine, Kleine, & Allen, 1995). In contrast, the main experiment used photos of cultural icons (Hong et al., 2000) and potential travel destinations as an identity prime. Although it is possible that a specific travel destination might be differentially attractive to Asians versus Caucasians, the ad that contained the primes does not explicitly target either because anyone could be interested in traveling to a given location. As a result, both the pilot study and the main experiment used primes that should prompt classification along Asian or Caucasian dimensions of social identity, but those used in the main experiment were much less direct.

A second result that merits attention is the absence of any identity prime or distinctiveness-based effects on evaluation of the Caucasian-targeted ad by either Asian or Caucasian participants. At first glance, the absence of effects on the Caucasian-targeted ad is surprising because the Asian and Caucasian-targeted ads in the

second experiment are identical outside of their content. However, a closer inspection reveals that their rates of occurrence in the general advertising context are not equivalent. Caucasian-oriented ads constitute the majority of advertising in the larger media environment to which the participants are normally exposed. As a result, the Asian-targeted ad stands out in the ad context much more than does the analogous Caucasian-targeted ad. This makes the Asian-ad a natural target for biased evaluation for participants whose identities are momentarily salient. Because the Caucasian-targeted ad does not attract this identity-based processing, it is unlikely to be differentially processed by individuals whose identities are salient.

A final result from both the pilot study and the main experiment is the presence of stronger group biases toward spokespersons than toward the advertising featuring a spokesperson from an out-group. Although HIS Asians (Caucasians) evaluated the Asian spokesperson more positively (negatively) in both the pilot study and the main experiment, reactions to the advertising featuring the spokesperson were less systematic. In the pilot study, the HIS Caucasian participants provided fewer positive cognitive responses to the advertising but did not evaluate the advertising itself more negatively. Similarly, in the main experiment, HIS Asian participants provided more positive cognitive responses and fewer negative cognitive responses to the Asian ad, but did not evaluate the advertising itself more positively. Finally, HIS Caucasian participants in the main experiment evaluated the Asian ad less positively, but did not provide either more negative cognitive responses or fewer positive cognitive responses to the Asian ad. In total, these findings produce full support for the effects of identity salience on group-based evaluation of spokespersons (Hypotheses 4a and 4c) and partial support for the effects of identity salience on group-based evaluation of advertising (Hypotheses 4b and 4d).

A likely explanation of the more systematic effects of identity salience on spokesperson evaluation than on advertising evaluation is that the spokesperson is a more natural extension of one's in- or out-groups. As a result, any group-processing biases that are amplified by identity salience are automatically applied to members of one's in-group or out-group. The transfer of these biases to advertising including members of an in-group or an out-group is much less automatic and could be interpreted as a second-order transfer.

### Quasi-Experimental Limitations

Although quasi-experiments contain treatments, outcome measures, and experimental units, they do not use complete random assignment (cf. Stouffer, 1950; Campbell, 1957). As a result, it is possible that individuals in different conditions within a quasi-experiment may differ on dimensions other than those of theoretical interest. In the case at hand, it is possible that Asian and Caucasian participants differed in important ways beyond ethnicity and that participants drawn from the two universities may have possessed consistent differences. To address this threat to statistical conclusion validity, every attempt was made to ensure that no unintended differences existed between participants in different conditions. As reported earlier, no such differences were found. This is consistent with Cook and Campbell's (1979) suggestion that for quasi-experiments, when a target population (e.g., the

Asians and Caucasians in our study) has been specified, it is appropriate to draw up a sampling frame and select instances such that the sample is representative of the population within known limits of sampling error. This again, was meticulously attended to in the design of both quasi-experiments.

### Conclusions

In summary, the results of this research suggest that identity salience is an important factor in the development of judgments toward identity-related stimuli. Moreover, this project documents several of the ways that one's identity can become momentarily salient, notably by way of exposure to identity primes that stimulate processing of identity-related information and through the distinctiveness of one's identity in the social environment. These central findings have important substantive implications across several domains.

In an advertising context, this research suggests that the use of spokespersons who share a social identity of the perceiver does not guarantee favorable response from consumers, even if the depiction of the spokesperson is positive. Specifically, it was found that in-group spokespersons influence consumer response to targeted advertising only to the extent that the consumer's identity is salient, and this may require the confluence of several distinct social and contextual variables. In the absence of the combinatorial influence of social distinctiveness and identity primes, the presence of similar or dissimilar individuals in advertising appears to have limited effect on consumer evaluation of the spokesperson or the advertising. This finding should temper the conclusions reached in prior research that argues for an across-the-board favorable consumer response to advertising that features same-identity actors or spokespersons (see Whittler, 1989, for a review). It is argued that a change in responsiveness to targeted advertising is due to changes in the overall media to which consumers are exposed. Although much of the previous research on target marketing was conducted when the use of non-Caucasian actors in television advertising was very unusual, current advertising has increased the use of non-Caucasian actors to the point that some minorities are actually over-represented in advertising relative to their composition in the general population (Taylor & Stern, 1997; Wilkes & Valencia, 1989). As a result, in today's multicultural environment, ads that once garnered attention through their use of non-Caucasian actors may no longer do so.

The present research is also important because it increases attention to contextual sources of identity salience. Although previous research has analyzed the influence of both individual difference variables (Deshpandé et al., 1986) and situational factors (Stayman & Deshpandé, 1989) on consumer response to identity-oriented information in marketing, very little attention has been directed toward the influence of contextual or stimulus factors (see Wooten & Galvin, 1993 and Forehand & Deshpandé, 2001, for notable exceptions). The dearth of research focused on contextual variables is unfortunate given that they may be of greater practical value to marketers than either situational or individual difference variables. First, because consumers are often alone when exposed to advertisements, nonsocial identity primes may be a more frequent cause of identity salience than are their social counterparts. Second, marketers have much more control over stimulus factors than social or individual difference factors. Compared with influ-

encing a consumer's social situation or the consumer's enduring associations with a particular social identity, it is relatively easier and cost effective to manage whether identity primes are included in a message or whether an advertisement is presented in a context in which identity primes are frequent.

Another key practical application of this research is to persuasive communication contexts (e.g., political campaigns or health and behavior interventions) in which minorities are used. One risk that arises from the use of minorities in these communications is a potential backlash from the majority group. Specifically, individuals may dismiss these persuasive communications as irrelevant to them personally to the extent that the communications become associated with salient minorities. Because most public policy interventions in the United States focus on some subsegment of the population, this could result in a diminished effectiveness of the interventions. However, in this project, participants in the majority (nondistinctive participants) did not react negatively to communications targeted to a minority. This suggests that the use of minorities in political or health interventions can improve the response of minority audience members without necessarily turning off the majority audience.

Some caution is still warranted in the generalization of the current findings to these other substantive domains. Although the current results certainly apply to the particular immediate social contexts in which the samples were drawn, it is risky to generalize them to other in-group or out-group dichotomies or to other regions. The generalizability of the findings to other domains is questionable because the meaning associated with one's distinctiveness is affected not only by one's numerical representation in the community but also by the differential status of the majority and minority groups (Grier & Deshpandé, 2001). As a result, the findings of this research might shift if the majority views the identity in question more negatively. Future research therefore should assess the influence of identity salience on other identities and in larger cultural contexts.

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