

4 Marketing and Advertising

Introduction

In 2019, Toyota launched the WE campaign featuring the Corolla sedan. The bilingual campaign was targeted at young Latinxs and executed in broadcast, digital, and print platforms (Conill n.d.a). The campaign featured “cultural cues” intended to connect with the target market, such as a San Marcos blanket transformed into a trendy jacket and a mural created by the Mexican artist IT’S A LIVING (aka Ricardo Gonzalez) (Conill n.d.a). Conill, which bills itself as “the nation’s first Latino marketing agency,” developed the campaign (Conill n.d.b). The WE campaign is part of Toyota’s larger effort to woo Hispanic customers. As a Toyota executive explains, “Over 50% of Corolla buyers are multicultural and most importantly, the compact sedan segment is the top volume segment in the Hispanic market” (Martorana 2019). Toyota’s efforts to capture sales to Hispanic consumers illustrate how marketing and advertising are segmented along racial and ethnic lines. This chapter explores marketing and advertising from various perspectives such as multicultural marketing, images of ethnoracial minorities in ads, and aesthetic labor.

Multicultural Marketing

Marketing is aimed at identifying and satisfying customers. One approach to marketing treats customers as a homogeneous aggregate with similar desires and needs. Alternatively, **segmentation** is the process of dividing consumers into subgroups based on factors such as demographic characteristics and lifestyle. When segmentation is based on race and ethnicity, it falls under the rubric of multicultural or ethnic marketing. **Multicultural marketing**, which focuses on cultivating racial and ethnic minority consumers, is distinguished from marketing to the **general market**, or non-Hispanic white consumers (Bowman 2015, 2–3).

Ethnic marketing is based on the principle that each racial and ethnic group has a unique set of needs and desires in the marketplace. Distinct purchasing motivations and preferences are believed to emerge from broader underlying group differences, such as variations in culture,

experience, and physical attributes. As racial and ethnic groups are assumed to have a distinct set of priorities and preferences, marketers devise specific strategies to reach them. For example, marketers direct specific products and services to ethnoracial minority consumers, such as products that are associated with their culture, or are compatible with their presumed physical traits.

Marketers also target specific ethnoracial groups via advertisements. For example, print ads are tailored to particular groups by incorporating their language in copy. Marketers also attempt to reinforce consumers' affinity with brands by using models from their ethnoracial group in targeted ads (Pollay, Lee, and Carter-Whitney 1992). In what the sociologist Anthony Cortese (1999[2016]) terms **copycat ads**, virtually identical ads are produced for multicultural and general markets. The main difference in copycat ads is that models in the general market version are white, while those in ethnic market versions are minorities. Text in copycat ads aimed at ethnoracial minorities is also sometimes in the primary language of the targeted group.

African American Marketing

Although **multicultural marketing** did not become widely institutionalized until the 1960s, African Americans were approached as a distinct market segment decades before then. In the early 20th century, cosmetic companies like the Madame C. J. Walker Company and Poro College advertised special beauty and grooming products to African American consumers in black newspapers (Chambers 2001). In the 1940s, African American marketing became even more widespread. During this period, a large number of African Americans moved from the rural South to Northern cities as part of the Great Migration. As more African Americans became employed in wage-earning jobs, African American **buying power**, or the capacity to purchase goods and services, also increased (Chambers 2001). The concentration of African Americans in urban marketplaces meant that the success of products and services in major cities increasingly depended on sales to this group.

Some companies tried to entice black customers with ads that represented them in idealistic ways, such as physically attractive and upwardly mobile. For example, in the 1940s Pepsi Cola targeted advertisements to black customers by using black fashion models and hiring the musician Duke Ellington as a spokesperson (Estes 2013). However, incorporating positive visual and cultural representations of African Americans in ads presented a dilemma for companies. This approach to advertising posed a risk of alienating white consumers. The leadership at some firms worried that white consumers, especially Southerners, would be unwilling to purchase products and services from companies that appeared to be challenging the prevailing racial order. It is reported that The Nat King Cole

Show, starring the jazz singer and pianist Nat King Cole, ended partly because of such views. The television show, which debuted in 1956, was the first national variety program hosted by an African American. However, The Nat King Cole Show lasted barely more than one year. No national corporate sponsor stepped up to the plate, possibly due to the racially integrated nature of the show (Bates 2006).

By the 1960s and 1970s, political, economic, and cultural developments shifted approaches to African American marketing. Some marketers attempted to tap into the group's growing racial consciousness. In their view, black consumers were increasingly committed to nurturing racial pride, such as reverence for African heritage and respect for black physical traits like brown skin and afro-textured hair. To appeal to African Americans, companies attempted to symbolically link their brands to black pride and uplift by using tactics such as incorporating black models with Afros and using Swahili text in ads.

Over the next several decades, marketers continued to target black consumers. Dream in Black, a campaign for the global telecommunications company AT&T, exemplifies targeted marketing to African Americans in the early 21st century. The campaign has its own website, dreaminblack.att.com, that features black celebrities and other notable figures such as the singer-songwriter Jidenna and the journalist Don Lemon. Visitors to the website are also encouraged to post on social media using the hashtag #DREAMINBLACK, and to download a set of specially designed black-themed emojis, such as a brown hand clenched in a fist and a brown hand dropping a mic.

Menthol Cigarettes and Big Tobacco

Although marketing to African Americans takes place across the marketplace, in some industries, such as tobacco, it is especially common. The marketing of menthol cigarettes provides insight into African American marketing in the tobacco industry. Menthol is an organic compound that is naturally derived from peppermint and other mint plants. Since the 1920s and 1930s, menthol has been added to some brands of cigarettes. One estimate is that menthol cigarettes are preferred by 88.5 percent of African American smokers (Truth Initiative 2018). Targeted marketing is one factor contributing to the high use of mentholated cigarettes among African Americans (Gardiner 2004).

Through the 1930s, African Americans were not treated as a separate consumer market by the tobacco industry (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1998, 241). However, over the ensuing decades this changed. For example, cigarette companies began to increase ads in black media such as *Ebony* magazine in the 1960s (Pollay, Lee, and Carter-Whitney 1992). Black models and celebrity spokespeople, like the former New York Yankee Elston Howard, were also used in advertisements to

make menthol cigarettes more attractive to African American smokers (Gardiner 2004, S60; Pollay, Lee, and Carter-Whitney 1992, 51). As the movements for racial equality emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, menthol advertisements were specifically tailored to appeal to blacks with a growing black consciousness. Tobacco companies made donations to black organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League, to demonstrate their investment in the black community (Gardiner 2004, S61).

BiDil and Race-Based Medicine

The marketing of BiDil, a drug used to treat heart failure, illustrates how black consumers are targeted in the prescription drug industry (Bliss 2013; Ehlers and Hinkson 2017, xviii; Pollock 2017). The use of racial segmentation in the pharmaceuticals market is part of a broader race-based approach to medicine. **Race-based medicine, or racial medicine**, broadly refers to “an entire system of health and medical care delivery that uses race as a primary means of rationing and rationalizing care” (Ehlers and Hinkson 2017, xvii). More specifically, race-based medicine refers to the differential targeting of racial groups for diagnoses and treatment, including but not limited to pharmaceutical interventions (Ehlers and Hinkson 2017, xvii). The use of distinct pharmaceutical treatments for different racial groups is partly based on the belief that racial groups differ physiologically and thus require different treatments. Although this approach to disease and treatment is not new, it has experienced a resurgence with the emergence of new genomic technology.

When the makers of BiDil first pursued FDA approval, they did not make racial claims about its efficacy. However, when FDA approval was denied in 1997, data from a drug trial were reanalyzed. Finding that African American men in the trial had a positive response to the drug, a new race-specific patent for the drug was sought. After the patent was issued, FDA approval was also pursued and ultimately granted in 2005 (Dorr and Jones 2008, 445). When BiDil received FDA approval, it was specifically for the treatment of heart failure among patients who self-identify as black. It was the first drug approved by the FDA for a race-specific indication. Consistent with the race-specific indication, BiDil’s maker, Arbor Pharmaceuticals, specifically markets the drug to African Americans. The company uses African American models and a black celebrity spokesperson, the retired basketball player Shaquille “Shaq” O’Neal, to promote the drug.

Cultural Competence

It is not only goods and advertisements that are tailored to specific ethnoracial groups, services are also customized for particular racial and ethnic groups. For example, in the medical field it has become increasingly

common for healthcare providers to receive **cultural competence** training, or training that allows them to “offer health care services in ways that . . . speak to various patients’ particular social and cultural needs” (Wingfield 2019, 65). Although critical of the capacity for cultural competence training to fully address racial inequality in the healthcare system, some black healthcare workers believe that cultural competence is necessary for effectively working with a diverse base of patients. For example, a black cardiac monitor technician in Adia Harvey Wingfield’s (2019) ethnographic study of the healthcare industry notes, “It [cultural competence training] might make them [doctors and nurses] go a little bit more of the extra mile to make sure everyone is comforted and kind of on the same level” (108). Also reflecting on the importance of cultural competence, a black male technician describes how his familiarity with the language of the working class and poor black patients who are treated in the hospital where he works allows them to receive a higher level of care:

The verbiage [of patients] is more, I would say, inner-city geared. . . .
And a lot of times the nurses don’t pick up on it, and I just go, ‘Oh no,
he meant that, but he said that, you know?’

(Wingfield 2019, 119)

Hispanic Marketing

As Arlene Dávila (2001) outlines in her research on Hispanic marketing, the targeting of Hispanics as a distinct consumer segment became especially common in the 1970s and 1980s. Demographic developments, as well as changes in the media industry, contributed to this shift. The population of Hispanics in the United States increased due to factors such as the Cuban revolution in 1959 and the passage of the Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965. The sheer growth in numbers increased the buying power of Hispanics and made them an especially attractive group to marketers. A shift in the media industry also spurred growth in Hispanic marketing. In the 1970s and 1980s, Spanish language media grew. New national Spanish-language TV networks, as well as local newspapers, offered a fertile ground to cultivate Hispanic consumers.

Like other racial and ethnic consumer segments, Hispanic buyers are imagined as having a shared set of needs and desires that are linked to a common culture, shared experiences, and similar physical traits. Speaking Spanish, reverence for family and tradition, and strong faith are cultural characteristics that are often associated with Hispanic consumers (Korzenny and Korzenny 2005). Given their assumed cultural, experiential, and physical distinctions, Hispanic consumers are targets for specific products and services. For example, food manufacturers market traditional foods such as frijoles, chiles, mole, recaito, and sofrito to Hispanics. Similarly, media companies target Hispanic consumers with music by Latin



Figure 4.1 Magazines like *People en Español* are marketed to Hispanic consumers.

American singers such as Shakira and Enrique Iglesias. Spanish language media, such as television stations like Telemundo and Univision and magazines like *People en Español* and *¡HOLA!*, are also directed at Hispanic consumers (Figure 4.1).

Marketers not only direct certain products and services to Hispanic consumers, they also use specific text, images, and sounds to make products and services especially appealing to them. Ads directed at Hispanic consumers are often in Spanish. Spanish is used not only to communicate with Hispanic buyers but also to signal respect for, and emotionally connect with, them (Korzenny and Korzenny 2005). Models used in advertisements for the Hispanic market also typically have an appearance that is commonly interpreted as a “Latin look” (Dávila 2001, 109–116). Other marketing tactics, such as including Latin American music or traditional dress in ads, are also used to entice Hispanic consumers.

Although historically there has been an emphasis on Spanish language as a shared cultural trait among Hispanics, marketers increasingly recognize language variation and distinguish consumers who prefer or understand Spanish well from those who prefer or understand English well. Each subgroup is targeted through ads that use either Spanish or English. There is also growing recognition that some Hispanic consumers speak a mix of Spanish and English, so ads are tailored to include both languages. For

example, in 2011 the food and beverage company Nestlé launched *Construye el Mejor Nido* (Create the Best Nest), a special online platform dedicated to reaching Hispanic consumers (Nestlé USA 2011). The website includes an option to view text in English or Spanish and promotes Nestlé products through special offers, recipes, and cooking videos. Web pages for Nestlé products targeted at Hispanics, such as *Abuelita*, a Mexican hot chocolate drink, are also linked to the *Construye el Mejor Nido* platform.

Asian American Marketing

Targeting Asian Americans as a distinct market segment became increasingly common in the 1980s. At that time, marketing agencies focused on this segment opened in cities with large Asian American populations, such as San Francisco and New York (Shankar 2012). Like the Hispanic market segment, the Asian American market segment is a **panethnic market** category encompassing consumers with various ethnicities, such as Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Korean. When conceived of in this fashion, ethnonational cultural and other differences are deemphasized. The Asian American market category can also be disaggregated along ethnic lines—such as the Chinese American market or South Asian American market. In either case, marketers approach Asian American consumers as having unique desires and needs that require distinct products, services, and promotions.

As the anthropologist Shalini Shankar (2012) points out, to appeal to Asian American consumers, marketers aim to develop appeals that are **in-culture** and/or **in-language**. The former refers to messaging that includes symbols that resonate with Asian Americans, and the latter to promotions in the preferred languages of Asian American consumers. Marketers emphasize that signs that resonate with Asian Americans differ from both those for the general United States market and those for markets in Asian nations, such as Chinese consumers in China or Korean consumers in Korea (Shankar 2012). Advertisements developed for the general market in the United States are sometimes refitted for the Asian American market by changing the language from English to a language such as Mandarin, or by shifting cultural references to those that are believed to resonate with Asian Americans. For example, a marketing agency charged with the task of reproducing a general market ad for the Asian American market decided on a golf theme because of a sense of the game's popularity among some Asian American ethnic groups (Shankar 2012, 581–582).

One approach that marketers take to match the bicultural lives of some Asian American consumers is to create ads that are bilingual. An advertisement for the insurance company State Farm by Admerasia, a marketing company based in New York City that helps “brands breaking into diverse, influential and growing Asian American markets,” takes this approach (&agency n.d.). The commercial targets Chinese Americans. It

begins with an Asian couple sitting on a couch in their living room. With an expression of concern, the husband talks on the phone in Mandarin to a State Farm agent. As they chat, English subtitles flash across the screen. “Our smart home has some . . . bugs?” the man says. An Asian State Farm agent who is sitting in her office responds in Mandarin, “Like what?” In the next scene, the husband approaches the family’s garage and says in English to his automated garage door opening system, “Sal, open garage door.” The automated machine voice responds, “Okay, Dave,” as the garage door slams down on the hood of his car. The screen flashes back to the State Farm agent, who says, “State Farm’s got you” in Mandarin. The commercial continues with the couple experiencing more incidents that require calling State Farm. Although the agent always speaks in Mandarin, the husband switches between Mandarin and English (State Farm 2018).

Multiracial Marketing

The enumeration of the multiracial population in the United States was overhauled in the 2000 census. In prior censuses in recent decades, individuals who identified as multiracial had to choose either one racial group or the category “other.” However, in the years leading up to the 2000 census, activists fought to have a system of categorization that more fully acknowledged multiracial ancestry. They were successful. In 2000, individuals could choose all racial categories that they saw as constituting their ancestry. This change in the census contributed to a growing focus on the multicultural population as a viable consumer market. Marketers began to increasingly approach multiracials as a distinct consumer segment. The considerable buying power of multiracials—a purported 148.1 billion in 2002 (DaCosta 2006)—made them an attractive segment.

Products such as biracial dolls, greeting cards featuring biracial people, and curly hair grooming products are marketed to the multiracial population. For example, the Pattycake Doll Company organizes its dolls according to race and ethnicity. Along with “Dolls for Black Children” and “Dolls for Asian Children,” there is also the category “Dolls for Hispanic, Biracial & Multicultural Children” (Pattycake Doll Company n.d.). The latter category features dolls with light brown skin, brown hair, and wide eyes. Mixed Chicks, a line of hair products for consumers with curly hair, also targets multiracial consumers. The products are pitched to consumers by emphasizing the challenge of finding appropriate haircare products for people with multiracial ancestry.

Islamic Marketing

Islamic marketing focuses on marketing to Muslims (Lewis 2015). Islamic marketing is useful to consider in the context of ethnic marketing not only because Muslims are racialized in some contexts but also because the

Islamic market is sometimes further disaggregated into subgroups based on ethnoracial background, such as South Asian Muslims in the United Kingdom or black Muslims in the United States. The targeting of certain ethnoracial consumer groups, such as the Arab American market in the United States, also strongly emphasizes their Muslim faith.

There are marketing firms, as well as other organizations, like the American Muslim Consumer Consortium, that focus on Muslim consumers. Ogilvy Noor, a branch of the global advertising and public relations firm Ogilvy & Mather, specializes in Islamic branding. The firm envisions **Islamic branding** as rooted in sensitivity to **Sharia**, or the religious law of Islam (Hussain n.d.). In various industries, halal products and services are directed to Islamic customers. **Halal** refers to permissible objects to use, and permissible actions to engage in, according to Islamic law. Food brands such as Saffron Road advertise products as halal-certified. For instance, in 2010, Saffron Roads began selling its halal-certified foods at Whole Foods, a health-focused grocer. Descriptions for the brand's products, such as Organic Crunch Chickpeas and Road Simmer Sauce, include GMO verification and gluten-free status along with halal designation.

In the health and beauty industry, brands also direct halal products and services to Muslim consumers. Amara Halal Cosmetics, a company based in California, targets its halal beauty products, such as Mineral Press Blush and Bronzer and Natural Liquid Foundation, at Muslim women, as well as other consumers concerned with natural products (Amara Halal Cosmetics n.d.). The company assures customers that its "products are manufactured and packaged in California according to the Islamic Codes of Law" (Amara n.d.).

When brands target ethnoracial groups with a significant proportion of Muslims, they also often take into consideration Islamic values. In 2009, Asda, a supermarket franchise headquartered in Great Britain, launched a clothing line featuring South Asian designs. The line, which included items such as kurtas, dupattas, and salwar kameezes, was expected to be especially popular with South Asian customers celebrating the Islamic holiday Eid al-Fitr. "[W]e're expecting huge demand in the build up to Eid and Diwali celebrations," a spokesperson for the company remarked (Asda 2009).

When the giant retailer Walmart opened up a new supercenter in Dearborn, Michigan, in 2008, it set out to attract Arab Americans as customers. Dearborn has one of the largest Arab American populations in the United States. Along with hiring employees who speak Arabic and outfitting them with tags that read "I speak Arabic," the store also carries special foods from Middle Eastern nations, such as apricot paste from Syria and Saudi Arabian sweets (Habhab 2008). The supercenter also stocks foods specifically for Muslim customers, such as halal meat that is stored in a special section of the store.

Jewish Marketing

Jewish Americans are also a consumer segment targeted by marketers. Jewish Americans are a group defined in reference to religion and ethnicity. Jewish identity is commonly linked to Jewish faith, Jewish culture, and/or Jewish ancestry (Lugo and Cooperman 2013). A 2013 Pew study found that around 1.8 percent of the U.S. population identified as having a Jewish identity rooted in religion (Lugo and Cooperman 2013, 18). Marketing is sometimes specifically directed toward those who are Jewish by religion. For example, in the food industry, kosher food is marketed to those who are Jewish by religion. Kosher foods comply with the dietary standards of Jewish law. Brands that produce food that complies with Kosher dietary laws often use product names or food labels to indicate that food is kosher. Zabar's, a gourmet food emporium in New York City, sells "Soft Kosher Salami" and a "Kosher Cheese Collection." The cheese collection is promoted as "For our kosher-keeping customers—and everyone who adores great cheese!" (Zabar's n.d.).

Companies also market special products and services for people who are having Jewish weddings. Modern Tribe, a store that describes itself as "a new kind of Jewish gifts shop and Judaica store for people with innovative minds, spirits, & style," sells "Jewish Wedding Gifts + Supplies" and items such as shabbat candlesticks and mezuzot. The store also specifically markets to gays and lesbians who are having Jewish weddings. A subset of wedding products at the store are designated as "Gifts for Same Sex Weddings" (Modern Tribe n.d.). This section includes products such as a matzah tray decorated with rainbow glass and seder plates and mezuzot decorated with rainbows.

While in some cases advertising is specifically directed toward people who are Jewish by religion, in other cases it is directed toward people whose Jewish identity is rooted in culture or ethnicity. JDate, an online dating company, targets people who are both religiously and secularly Jewish. Some Jewish media is also aimed at Jewish consumers across the religious spectrum. Jewcy, an online magazine, does not define its target market in reference to religion. However, it does target Jewish consumers by age. It is promoted as "a platform for ideas that matter to young Jews today" (Jewcy n.d.).

Race-Gender Markets

A **racial-gender segmented market** presumes that consumers within a racial-gender group have a distinct set of needs and desires. One industry where race-gender marketing is common is the beauty industry. Women of color are often treated as a distinct market. Unique products and services, as well as special messaging about products and services, are directed at women of color. Some of these products and services involve altering

bodies to more closely align with a white standard of beauty. In the United States and Europe, as well as in former European colonies and other nations with a significant European or U.S. presence, racism and colorism contribute to standards of beauty that idolize white features (Hunter 2011, 145). Racism affirms the superiority of dominant racial groups, while **colorism** affirms the superiority of lighter-skinned people within subordinate groups (Hunter 2011, 145). In societies with racism and colorism, having a physical appearance closer to the dominant group affords privileges. These privileges are a form of what the sociologist Margaret Hunter terms **racial capital**, which is “a resource drawn from the body that can be related to skin tone, facial features, body shape, etc.” (Hunter 2011, 145).

Like other forms of capital, racial capital provides its possessors with rewards such as economic and social benefits. In various countries across the globe, light skin, straight hair, and other physical features associated with whites are forms of racial capital. In these contexts, features such as light skin provide benefits like prestige, higher-paying jobs, and higher-earning marriage partners (Hunter 2011, 145; Jha 2016). Beauty products and services that are marketed to women of color, such as chemical hair straighteners, skin-bleaching creams, and ethnic plastic surgery, allow buyers to purchase racial capital (Glenn 2009).

Texts and images used to market skin-bleaching creams frame them as products that will enhance the beauty of users by whitening their skin. Yet, marketing is also sensitive to the social stigma of skin-lightening creams. Social stigma can accompany their use because they violate ideals of natural beauty, ideologies of racial pride, and health alerts that the products are dangerous. Marketing for some products addresses these stigmas by emphasizing that they are not intended to lighten users' entire faces or bodies, but to simply correct isolated “dark spots” or to “even” skin tone (Hunter 2011). Some manufacturers also attempt to destigmatize skin-bleaching products by emphasizing that they are “natural” or “scientific” (Vijaya 2019, 234).

Marketing for ethnic cosmetic surgery, such as “Hispanic rhinoplasty” or “Asian eyelid blepharoplasty,” also sometimes emphasizes how procedures are not designed to Anglicize or whiten the appearance of customers. Instead, surgeries are marketed as procedures that enhance the beauty of patients while maintaining their “ethnic appearance” (Hunter 2011, 14). This approach is illustrated by a Beverly Hills plastic surgeon who specializes in “Asian Plastic Surgery.” His promise to patients is that surgery will “improve your appearance while preserving your cultural identity.” “We never try to westernize the Asian face and body through cosmetic surgery. Instead, we aim to help our Asian cosmetic surgery patients attain harmony and balance,” his website claims (Enhance Medical Center n.d.). Still, some ethnic cosmetic surgeries are explicitly promoted as helping racial and ethnic minorities to look more white. Another plastic surgeon who performs “Asian rhinoplasty” in Beverly Hills describes how he “has helped many

patients maintain ethnic identity with rhinoplasty, and assisted others in attaining a more Westernized appearance” (Dr. Batniji 2019).

Products and services in the beauty industry are also sometimes marketed to men from specific racial and ethnic groups. In her ethnographic research on the male grooming industry, the sociologist Kristen Barber (2008, 2016) documents how some hair salons selling beauty services to men are implicitly marketed as white spaces. Elements of their environment, such as a lack of ethnic magazines for clients to peruse and an absence of stylists with expertise in clipper cuts, illustrate how the idealized customers are white males. Other products and services in the male grooming industry are marketed to ethnoracial minority men. For example, Bevel, a line of shaving products created by Tristan Walker, an African American entrepreneur, and now manufactured by Procter and Gamble, is directed toward black male consumers. The razors and other products in the line promise to rid users of razor bumps, or pseudofolliculitis barbae, a skin condition associated with shaving that can be more common among people with curly hair. Most of the models and customer testimonials on the brand’s website feature black men. In promising to help customers “fight razor bumps,” the company emphasizes not only that skin irritation will subside but also that skin will have a more appealing appearance and feel (Get Bevel n.d.a). The company advertises that “96.8% of subjects showed an improvement in skin texture and skin tone” and “100% of subjects noticed that their skin felt softer and smoother” (Get Bevel n.d.b).

Dolls are another product type that is marketed along racial and gender lines (DuCille 1996). In 1967 Mattel, the maker of Barbie, introduced Colored Francie, their first black doll. Although Colored Francie had brown skin, her body was formed from the same mold as Barbie. Minority-owned toy companies like Olmec Toys, founded in 1985, introduced **ethnically correct dolls** with skin tones, as well as facial features, signifying the race of dolls (Chin 2001). Promotions for ethnically correct dolls often emphasize that having dolls that match their ethnoracial-gender identity promotes a positive self-concept for ethnoracial minority children (Chin 2001, 148).

In the 1990s, Mattel introduced its first ethnically correct fashion doll line. Shani and her friends, Asha and Nicole, each had different skin tones, ranging from light to deep brown. The lightest doll, Asha, also had brown hair, while Shani and Nicole had long black hair. Since that time, Mattel has further diversified its doll line, emphasizing that its toys empower girls. According to the company website, “We’re committed to making products that allow girls to play out their dreams while showing them they have choices. From our Inspiring Women series to highlighting underrepresented careers, our products encourage imagination, expression and discovery through play” (Barbie n.d.). Clicking a link leads to a page of products including an Asian veterinarian doll, a white scientist doll, and a black marine biologist doll.

Mattel now also makes dolls that embody the identities of ethnoracial minority women with disabilities, as well as Muslim women. One black

doll in the Fashionistas line wears two afro puffs and sits in a wheelchair. The company also sells a doll in the likeness of Ibtihaj Muhammad, a United States fencing champion who is black and Muslim. The Ibtihaj Muhammad doll wears a white fencing uniform and a white hijab.

Total Market

In recent years, there have been efforts to develop a new approach to the racial and ethnic segmentation of consumer markets. One strategy favors abandoning the **general market** and **multicultural market** divide in favor of one market—the **total market** (Bowman 2015, 3). Given the growing numbers of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States, and the **majority minority** population of some cities, the total market approach favors marketing to one consumer market that is racially and ethnically heterogeneous. Whereas the general market/multicultural market strategy involves directing different products and services to white and racial and ethnic minority consumers and using different campaigns, the total market approach involves developing products and services and messaging that are appealing to a racially and ethnically diverse set of consumers (Bowman 2015) (Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2 Armani Beauty’s Power Fabric Concealer comes in a range of skin tones from very light to deep.

Marketing for Fenty Beauty, a cosmetics brand which is a partnership between the superstar singer Rihanna and LVMH, is consistent with the total market strategy. When the brand debuted in 2017, 40 shades of foundation were in the line and commercials featured models with a range of skin tones. The Fenty Beauty website also emphasizes the for-everyone messaging in the narrative about Rihanna’s inspiration to establish the brand:

Rihanna was inspired to create Fenty Beauty after years of experimenting with the best-of-the-best in beauty—and still seeing a void in the industry for products that performed across all skin types and tones. She launched a makeup line ‘so that women everywhere would be included,’ focusing on a wide range of traditionally hard-to-match skin tones, creating formulas that work for all skin types, and pinpointing universal shades.

(Fenty n.d.)



Figure 4.3 Dolls from the American Girl “Truly Me” line.

Promotions for American Doll's "Truly Me" doll line are also in line with a total market approach. The doll comes with a wide range of skin tones, facial features, hair styles, hair colors, and hair textures (Figure 4.3). As promotional copy for the doll insists,

with our Truly Me dolls, your girl can get an 18 inch best friend that matches her own style and spirit as well as her own look. Truly Me™ dolls come in dozens of options; we have dolls with red hair and green eyes, brown hair and green eyes, brown hair and hazel eyes, and lots more.

(Truly Me n.d.)

Images of Race and Ethnicity in Advertising

The content of advertisements is a central concern in the study of race, ethnicity, and consumption. Questions of particular interest include how frequently ethnoracial minorities are included in advertisements, how they are portrayed, and how representations have changed over time. Ethnic marketing, or the tailoring of advertisements to specific ethnoracial minority groups, offers some insight on these issues. For example, through a multicultural marketing lens we might foresee that an advertisement aimed at an ethnoracial minority group would depict the group in an idealized fashion. However, another common approach to representations of race and ethnicity in advertisements is that they instantiate the beliefs and attitudes of the dominant ethnoracial group. Or, this perspective asserts that advertisements reproduce and disseminate dominant racial and ethnic ideologies.

Scholars who analyze racial and ethnic portrayals in advertisements from the perspective of dominant racial and ethnic ideologies also increasingly take account of gender (Baker 2005). In some cases, portrayals of gender in advertisements articulate prevailing gender ideologies, such as beliefs about appropriate gender roles (Goffman 1976). Bringing this perspective into the analysis of race, ethnicity, and advertisements, some scholarship emphasizes that advertisements articulate ethnoracial-gender ideologies, such as those relating to stereotypes about Latinx men or attitudes about Asian women (Baker 2005). From an intersectional vantage point, advertisements can be seen as a medium through which **controlling images**, or images that "make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural," are recreated and circulated (Hill Collins [2000] 2009, 77).

African Americans

A common outcome analyzed in studies of African American portrayals in advertisements is how frequently they are represented. According to the theory that attributes racial and ethnic portrayals to prevailing racial

ideologies, it is expected that African Americans will be less frequently represented than whites. However, if beliefs about black inferiority have dissipated over time, then it would follow that there would be greater parity in racial representations in ads. In the United States, African Americans became more present in advertisements in mainstream magazines over the course of the late 20th century. An analysis of advertisements in *Time* and *Ladies' Home Journal* found that a greater proportion of advertisements included African Americans in 1980 versus 1950 (Humphrey and Schuman 1984, 555–556). This shift in the visibility of African Americans in advertisements is consistent with general trends of more positive white racial attitudes about blacks over this period (Grady 2007).

Along with examining the frequency of blacks in advertisements, scholars also study the substantive nature of those depictions. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States, racist beliefs and attitudes were instantiated in advertisements that portrayed African Americans in a dehumanizing and often contradictory fashion, such as servile, unintelligent, cunning, oversexualized, asexual, or physically grotesque (Behnken and Smithers 2015). These marginalizing images often took on a gendered form, with black women portrayed as “aunties,” “mammies,” and “jezebels,” while black men were depicted as “Sambos,” “bucks,” and “uncles.”

Two brands, Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben's, illustrate how stereotypes of African American women and men were articulated in advertising during this era. Both brands are examples of what David Crockett calls **marketing blackness**, or “advertising and other promotional strategies that incorporate blackness representations in the form of signs” (Crockett 2008, 245–246).

The Aunt Jemima character, a southern black mammy figure, was the symbol of a pancake mix brand in the 19th century. In 1888, Charles Underwood and Christopher Rutt, two white male entrepreneurs, became owners of a flour mill. Reportedly, after Rutt saw a minstrel show with the Aunt Jemima character, the two businessmen decided to use the Aunt Jemima figure to represent their pancake flour brand (Behnken and Smithers 2015). The entrepreneurs banked that Aunt Jemima, an amalgamation of stereotypes of black women including heavy in girth, joyful, simple, asexual, service-oriented, and domestic, would be a symbol that appealed to white consumers. When Underwood and Rutt later sold the company to the owners of the R. T. Davis Milling Company, the Aunt Jemima character stayed on as the symbol of the brand. Nancy Green, an African American woman who was formerly enslaved, was hired to become the spokesperson. In 1913, the company was renamed Aunt Jemima.

The Uncle Ben caricature is a male complement to Aunt Jemima. Uncle Ben is an elderly, warm, and docile black male character who became part of the branding for the Converted Rice company in the 1940s (Bowman 2015). Although the character was reportedly based on an actual African

American rice farmer in Texas, the moniker “Uncle” is consistent with the once oft-used dehumanizing honorific for black men in Southern communities.

Over the course of the 20th century, dehumanizing representations of blacks in advertisements declined. One study found that in 1950, 62 percent of advertisements in two widely circulating magazines showed blacks in subordinate roles to whites, but by 1980, a majority of ads showed blacks and whites in equal status roles (Humphrey and Schuman 1984). Moreover, the later ads that depicted blacks and whites as having equal status were more likely to show blacks and whites in face-to-face interactions (Humphrey and Schuman 1984).

Interracial intimacy between blacks and whites is represented in a 2013 Cheerios commercial that features a black father, white mother, and Gracie, their biracial daughter. The commercial begins with the father and daughter sitting at the kitchen table with a box of Cheerios. As the father pushes two Cheerios across the table, he says, “Gracie, you know how our family has daddy and mommy.” “And me,” Gracie replies as she pushes another Cheerio into the cluster. The mother who is standing by the sink looks over as the husband says, “Pretty soon, you’re going to have a baby brother.” He pushes another Cheerio across the table to make a group of four. Gracie looks at her father and says, “And, a puppy,” as she slides a final Cheerio into the cluster. “Deal,” the father says as the mother flashes a surprised look. The word “Love” appears on the screen as the commercial ends (News Today 2014).

A 2014 Cheerios ad for the Canadian market also features an interracial family—André and Jonathan, two white fathers, and Raphaël, their black daughter. “Most of my life, I thought that . . . it would never be possible to . . . have a child, given that I am gay,” one father says as the names of each family member are displayed on the screen. As the commercial continues, the couple narrate their family story, including how they first met one another and then adopted Raphaël (Slate 2018; Stern 2014). Advertisements depicting interracial gay families are rare, though they have been produced for other organizations, such as the Administration for Children’s Services in New York City (NYC Seeks 2013).

Along with advertisements becoming more likely to include representations of blacks and whites as having equal status over the course of the 20th century, they also became more likely to depict blacks in higher-status occupations. One study of magazine ads (Humphrey and Schuman 1984) found that in 1950 every single representation of blacks at work depicted them in low-skill jobs, such as porters and cooks. However, by 1980 only 14 percent of the occupational representations of black showed them as low-skill workers.

The shift in occupational representations of black workers is illustrated by the upward mobility of the Uncle Ben caricature. In 2007, Uncle Ben was promoted to chairman of the company. The redesigned brand website

highlighted his new job in a special section titled “Ben’s Office.” Print ads also featured the new corporate Uncle Ben. In one ad, he stands in an executive suite with dark-paneled wood. He is wearing a navy suit, silk bowtie, and a crisp white shirt with gold cufflinks. The ad also features a notebook with the heading “From the Desk of Uncle Ben Chairman.” While the Aunt Jemima character representing the Quaker Oats pancake mix has not undergone an occupational shift, her appearance has become less stereotypical over the years. In various makeovers since the 1960s, she has slimmed down, lost the bandana covering her head, and adopted a softly curled straightened hairstyle.

Although there is evidence of a decline in dehumanizing portrayals of African Americans in advertisements over the course of the late 20th century, some scholarship analyzing representations in later years still finds instances of negative stereotyping. An analysis of television advertisements in the 1990s found that portrayals of African Americans and whites conformed to racial and racial-gender stereotypes. For example, whites were more likely than blacks to be portrayed in images of romantic and domestic fulfillment. White men were also more often represented as powerful, while black men were more often depicted as aggressive (Coltrane and Messineo 2000).

In 2018, H&M, a global clothing retail company based in Sweden, was accused of reproducing negative black stereotypes in a promotion for a boy’s hoodie on its online site. The hoodie was printed with the words “Coolest Monkey in the Jungle” and modeled by a black boy. In response to the image, the rap stars The Weeknd and G-Eazy canceled partnerships with H&M and critiqued the brand on social media. On Instagram, G-Eazy reposted an edited version of the ad where the hoodie reads, “Coolest King in the World.” In the post, he urged the company to “get on track and become racially and culturally aware” (Chervokas and Rothman 2018).

Another common representation of blacks in contemporary advertisements is as cool (Crockett 2008, 255–261). In ads featuring black models and celebrity spokespeople, brands rely on distinct vernacular like urban slang, visual imagery like graffiti, musical genres like rap, and stances like the cool pose to communicate that their products are hip. As Juliet B. Schor elaborates in her analysis of marketing to children, African American culture is often used in advertisements to give brands an image of “pushing the edge” (Schor 2004, 48).

Native Americans

A common stereotype of Native Americans depicted in advertisements is as **noble savages**, or a people who are close to nature and uncorrupted by civilization (Behnken and Smithers 2015; Merskin 2001; O’Barr 2013). This stereotype takes on gendered and contradictory forms, so that

Native American men have been conceived in the popular imaginary as brave and savage warriors, lazy alcoholics, and wise chiefs, while Native American women have been mythologized as beautiful princesses and sexualized “squaws.”

These stereotypes have been used to sell products and services in a form of what can be called **marketing Native Americanness**. From the 18th through the early 20th centuries in the United States, beliefs about Native Americans as traditional and untouched by modern life were materialized in commercial life through **cigar-store Indians**. These carved figures of “authentic” Native Americans costumed with feather headdresses, moccasins, and other traditional clothing were placed in front of tobacco stores to attract white customers (Behnken and Smithers 2015; O’Barr 2013). Tobacco advertisements also relied on images of Indian princesses to sell their products (Behnken and Smithers 2015) (Figure 4.4).

Caricatured images of Native Americans were also common on advertising trading cards in the late 1800s (Behnken and Smithers 2015; O’Barr 2013). To attract customers during this period, retail establishments



Figure 4.4 Wooden Native American figure in front of a tobacco store.

and manufacturers produced trading cards. One side of the cards often featured a multicolor artwork, while the other had promotional copy. Some cards included stereotypical images of Native Americans, such as stoic portraits of Native American men in traditional dress, or depictions of Native American men holding spears ready for battle. Advertisements also reproduced negative stereotypes through the use of imagined Native American dialect, speech patterns, and other forms of communication. Promotions included tropes like “Indian talk,” characterized by omitting words when speaking in English and using phrases like “heap-big.” Ads also depicted Native Americans communicating with one another through smoke signals (O’Barr 2013, 28–30).

Into the 21st century, companies continue to use stereotypical images of Native Americans to sell their products. Until it rolled out a new logo in 2020, Land O’Lakes, an agricultural cooperative based in Minneapolis, used the image of a Native American maiden in its logo. In one version of the logo, a Native American woman wearing two long black braids and traditional dress kneels in front of a pristine lake waterfront. She holds a Land O’Lakes product in her outstretched hands. Copy beneath her image reads, “Where simple goodness begins.”

Sports franchises like the Washington Redskins, a National Football League team from the D.C. metro area, also use stereotypical Native American imagery in their merchandise (Fenelon 2017). The team logo depicts a brown-skinned Native American man with a feathered headdress in profile. Some activists contest Native American imagery in the team’s logo along with the team name “Redskins,” which is a derogatory term for Native Americans. The official online store for the team sells scores of products featuring the logo, including hats, T-shirts, bedding, cups, USB chargers, lighters, and flasks.

Another major sports team that uses stereotypical Native American imagery in its merchandise is the Chicago Blackhawks. The Chicago Blackhawks are a professional hockey team that is part of the National Hockey League. The team logo is the profile of a Native American man wearing a headdress made of red, green, yellow, and orange feathers. His face is marked with red and white paint. The online store for the team features this image on products such as banners, baseball hats, sweatshirts, and pajamas.

The Blackhawks’ online shop also sells a special Pride Collection that incorporates LGBTQ symbolism into the products. Some of the merchandise features the Native American head logo and the word “Love” written in rainbow colors, while other products feature a rainbow version of the Native American head logo. Advertising copy for one T-shirt in the collection encourages fans to purchase the fashion item to demonstrate their commitment to inclusion: “Celebrate hockey’s diversity and your commitment to respect and equality with our new NHL Pride T-shirt. #HockeyIsForEveryone” (Chicago Blackhawks n.d.).

Asian Americans

Advertisements have also portrayed Asian Americans in stereotypical and conflicting ways such as foreign, uncivilized, incompetent, licentious, asexual, threatening, or wise. Representations of Asian Americans are also gendered: Men in ads have appeared as effeminate and skilled in martial arts, while women have been represented as submissive, cunning, and exotic (Lee and Joo 2005). During periods of high anti-Asian sentiment, such as the threat of the “yellow peril,” derogatory depictions of Asian Americans in advertisements have been especially common. In the 19th and 20th centuries, some trading cards featured caricatured “Chinaman” images of Asian Americans with exaggerated features, such as deeply slanted eyes (Behnken and Smithers 2015). Ads featuring Asian Americans as foreign “others” align with an ideology of **Orientalism** that emphasizes Western superiority and Eastern inferiority. Over the course of the 20th century, as ideologies about Asian Americans shifted, so did portrayals of the group in advertisements.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans began to take hold. **Model minority** refers to a minority group in the United States that has purportedly achieved success, such as high levels of education and high incomes (Cheryan and Bodenhausen 2011). The **model minority myth** asserts that Asian Americans have higher degrees of socioeconomic success than other racial and ethnic minorities because of intact families and a cultural emphasis on hard work (Cheryan and Bodenhausen 2011). Analyses of advertisements in the 1990s and early 2000s show that the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans is projected in ads (Lee and Joo 2005). Asian Americans tend to be portrayed in business and science magazines, in business settings and relationships, and in ads for technology-based products. They are also less commonly represented in family and social contexts (Taylor, Landreth, and Bang 2005; Taylor and Lee 1994).

In an analysis of advertising campaigns in six magazines from 1999 to 2000, Minjeong Kim and Angie Y. Chung (2005) find that Orientalism continues to characterize representations of Asian women in ads. For example, a Virginia Slims campaign emphasizes the “otherness” of Asian women by depicting a white model in Western clothing, hair, and makeup styles, while presenting an Asian model in clothing, makeup, and a hairstyle meant to resemble traditional Asian culture (Kim and Chung 2005, 79–83). Contemporary advertisements featuring white men and Asian women have also been criticized for reproducing racial-gender stereotypes about Asian Americans. Groups such as the Asian Pacific American Media Coalition have criticized ads for reinforcing stereotypes of Asian women as exotic “playthings” for white men and of Asian men as unfit for romantic partnership (Farhi 2012).

Latinxs

Portrayals of Latinxs in advertising have also reproduced marginalizing stereotypes such as being exotic, sexual, lazy, or foreign. Gendered forms of these representations include portrayals of Latinx men as Latin lovers, lazy, and thieves. In 1967, Frito-Lay, a manufacturer of chips and other snack foods, introduced the Frito Bandito caricature to represent the brand. The campaign continued to 1971. Originally introduced in television commercials, the character was later brought into print advertisements. The character draws on stereotypes of Mexican men as thieves or “banditos” (bandits) (Behnken and Smithers 2015). In the ads, Frito Bandito tries to steal Frito corn chips from various unsuspecting prospects. He speaks in heavily accented English, sports a thin black mustache with two long tails, and wears a large yellow sombrero. A brown holster holding two pistols is also wrapped around his chest.

In one commercial, Frito Bandito walks up to a white man who is lounging in his backyard and eating a bag of Fritos corn chips (chuckies-jamochashake 2016). “Hello Señor, I am the Frito Bandito. Oh, don’t be afraid. I am not going to steal your Fritos corn chips. I buy them from you, okay?” Frito Bandito says to the man as he reaches into his pocket and pulls out several gleaming silver coins. “See, I give you silver. No silver? Okay, I give you gold,” Frito Bandito continues as he retrieves a bag carried by his donkey. “You no like gold neither? Eh, maybe you like better some leads,” Frito Bandito says as he pulls two guns out of his holster. As the scene cuts to the white man who is now in his kitchen, a voiceover says, “Citizens, protect yourself. Never buy one bag of crunchy Fritos Corn Chips, always buy two and hide one for you. Who knows, there may be a Frito Bandito in your house.”

Stereotypical portrayals of Latinx men in advertisements have also depicted them as lazy, such as representations of Mexican American men taking a siesta, or afternoon nap, with their face covered by a giant sombrero (Daniels 2018). A common gendered stereotype of Latinx women is as a sexualized and exotic temptress. In 1944, the United Fruit Company introduced Miss Chiquita to represent the brand. Miss Chiquita was featured in advertisements as well as personal appearances. The character, a dancing and singing banana, drew on tropes of the enticing and flamboyant Latina. In early commercials, Miss Chiquita sang the brand jingle wearing a red hat, flowing skirt, and flouncy top. Miss Chiquita still represents the company, which is currently owned by the Switzerland-based Chiquita Brands International Sàrl. The current blue and yellow logo for the company includes an outline of Miss Chiquita wearing a ruffled top with a basket of fruit on her head.

Constructing Race and Ethnicity

Marketing and Advertising Professionals

Racial formation theory asserts that racial categories are not naturally existing phenomena. Instead, racial categories, and the meanings attached to them, are shaped by social, economic, and political forces (Omi and Winant [1986] 2014). Advertisements are cultural artifacts that project images of racial and ethnic groups. As **cultural intermediaries**, advertising and marketing professionals play a fundamental role in the social construction of race and ethnicity by determining how products and services are racially and ethnically framed (Dávila 2001; Molnar and Lamont 2002; Peñaloza, 2018). Decisions they help make, such as what racial and ethnic groups should be used in print advertisements and how people of different racial and ethnic groups should interact with one another in commercials, determine how race and ethnicity are projected in ads.

The role of advertising professionals in shaping the racial and ethnic content of advertisements is illustrated by the career of Tom Burrell. In 1971, Burrell founded Burrell Communications Group, an advertising agency in Chicago, Illinois. The firm is a pioneer in multicultural marketing, especially marketing to African Americans. Like other advertising executives, Burrell developed a specific vision of how his target markets should be approached. In his view, products and services directed at African Americans should depict African Americans in an affirming manner. He called this marketing philosophy **positive realism**. “If we could just show black life, portray it in a positive, realistic way . . . people will come to the product,” Burrell explained (Chambers 2017). The advertisements that Burrell’s agency produced for companies like McDonald’s in the 1970s enacted the positive realism philosophy by depicting African Americans in humanizing ways, such as highlighting black fathers (Chambers 2001, 370). The content of these ads was not a direct reflection of the realities of African American life. Instead, the ads contained **idealized representations** of African American life that were expected to resonate with African American consumers.

While advertising and marketing professionals construct race and ethnicity through their role in the production of ad content, they also construct race and ethnicity through their role in constructing images of racial and ethnic groups as consumers. In **consumer societies**, racial and ethnic groups are defined in relationship to how they consume goods and services in the market. For example, racial and ethnic groups are imagined as liking or disliking certain goods and services, having a lot or a little money to spend on goods and services, and rejecting or embracing particular uses for goods and services. Professionals working in multicultural advertising play an important role in defining racial and ethnic minorities as consumers. Through activities such as conducting market research on racial and ethnic minority consumers and distributing findings about racial and ethnic demographic trends, multicultural marketing specialists define categories

of “ethnic” consumers—the black consumer, the Hispanic consumer, the Asian American consumer, etc. (Dávila 2001; Lamont and Molnár 2001; Mora 2014; Shankar 2012).

The Asian American Advertising Federation, 3AF, is a professional organization with a mission to advance Asian American advertising and marketing. One section of their website includes resources about the Asian American market, such as a report on Asian American media consumption and a webinar on Asian American grocery shoppers. A summary of one report uses U.S. census data projections and other statistics to present Asian Americans as a desirable market segment. It notes that

the Pew Research Center projects that the U.S. Asian population will grow to be 14% of the total population by 2065, based on U.S. Census data. While the majority of growth in the U.S. is coming from new immigration, the buying power of U.S.-born Asians is simultaneously on the rise.

(Changing Media n.d.)

The Culture Marketing Council (CMC) is a professional trade organization focused on Hispanic marketing. In “The Hispanic Consumer” section of the CMC website, studies with titles such as “The Why? Behind the Buy: Hispanic Market” and “Latino Shop: Emerging Cultures Are Shaping America, and Latinos Are Leading the Way” are summarized. Collectively, the market research featured in this section paints Hispanics as an important and growing segment of consumers. This view is further reinforced by the organization’s claim that “Hispanics are the new mainstream and are now at the heart of every successful and effective marketing campaign” (Hispanic Consumer n.d.).

In her research on the institutionalization of panethnicity, G. Cristina Mora (2014) elaborates how the marketing of Spanish-language media helped to establish the Hispanic/Latino category from the 1960s to the 1990s. To appeal to advertisers who were reluctant to promote products in Spanish-language media because they were unsure that it would allow them to reach a cohesive set of consumers, executives at Spanish-language media companies emphasized that immigrants from Spanish-speaking companies constituted a viable market. Practices such as using census data to develop statistics about “Hispanic buying power” and “Hispanic disposable income” helped to convince advertisers that Spanish-speaking immigrants were an ethnically distinct group that shared similarities across nationality and generation (Mora 2014, 131).

Reviewers of Cultural Works

In cultural fields, the racial and ethnic meanings of cultural products are also produced by another set of intermediaries—reviewers. Although

reviewers are not directly paid to promote cultural works, their interpretations of books, music, and other cultural products encourage or discourage others' consumption. In her research on book reviews, Phillipa Chong (2011) analyzes how reviewers create ethnoracial meaning around works of fiction through **reading difference**, or using an author's race and ethnicity as a tool for evaluation. For example, reviewers refer to an author's race and ethnicity to establish the authenticity of works. This approach is illustrated by a review of the novel *A Free Life*, by Ha Jin, in which a critic contextualizes the experiences of the novel's protagonists, the Wu family, by referencing the author's background. The critic writes,

Much as Jin himself did, the Wus came from China to study, not to stay, but they realized after the Tiananmen Square massacre (as Jin did too, he's said in interviews) that they couldn't go home again and be themselves, since both their selves and their native land had changed.
(Chong 2011, 72)

Analyzing reviews of books by George Lamming, a Barbadian novelist, Wendy Griswold (1987) also finds that reviewers sometimes construct racial meaning around cultural texts. Griswold views cultural meaning as **fabricated**, or humanly made, and deriving from the presuppositions of reviewers along with the symbolic capacities of texts. In contrast to reviewers from the West Indies and Great Britain, it is American reviewers who are most likely to interpret Lamming's novels as being about race. American reviewers are more likely to report Lamming's race in reviews and to focus on race as a theme in his novels (Griswold 1987, 1092, 1097). For example, one reviewer from the United States views Lamming as chiefly absorbed by the "overriding fact of color" (Griswold 1987, 1101).

Adoption Marketplace

Within the privatized adoption market, intermediaries also construct race and ethnicity. In this marketplace, where parental rights are transferred from birth parents to adoptive parents, adoptive parents pay a fee to adoption providers who assist in the process. When adoptions are **transracial**, or involve children and parents from different ethnoracial groups, the marketing practices of adoption providers sometimes reproduce racial and ethnic boundaries. As intermediaries who establish rules for adoption, and discursively frame the process, adoption providers play an important role in shaping conceptions about the worth of different types of children. Elizabeth Raleigh (2018) shows in her ethnographic research on transracial adoption that in some cases the marketing practices of adoption providers reinforce, and even deepen, ethnoracial divides. More specifically, she asserts that their practices reproduce a racial hierarchy in which whites stand firmly at the top; Asians and Latinxs assume an "honorary white" position; and, blacks, especially African Americans, are ensconced at the bottom.

Acknowledging the greater willingness of white parents to adopt Asian and Latinx, rather than black, children, one adoption provider comments, “We have twenty-five families. Say, probably about twelve are open to babies who are Hispanic or Asian, and probably only four are open to babies who are African American” (Raleigh 2018, 134). Another reflects that the mostly white parents at her agency “are hoping to adopt a White child or a White/Asian child or a White/Hispanic child” (Raleigh 2018, 138). At the same time, among black children, biracial and African-born children are often preferred over those born in the United States. Illustrating the biracial preference, one adoption provider notes that some white parents will say, “We will do a biracial child as opposed to a full African American child” (Raleigh 2018, 148). The preference for black children born overseas is sometimes grounded in a belief they are engaging in a “humanitarian act” (Raleigh 2018, 159). Reflecting on this phenomenon, one adoption provider says,

It is more along the lines of ‘We are saving one of those children in Haiti.’ It looks better. Adoptive parents perceive it as ‘It looks better because we saved a child,’ rather than having a child who is born here who is African American.

(Raleigh 2018, 158–159)

Raleigh argues that the ethnoracial hierarchy articulated through adoptive parents’ preferences for children is reproduced via the marketing practices of adoption providers. **Tiered pricing**, or charging different fees for the adoption of children from different races, is one mechanism that reinforces the racial hierarchy. Some adoption agencies firmly reject “**the dark-skinned discount**” and charge the same fees regardless of a child’s race. As one adoption provider reflects,

We really feel that, since adoption is not about buying a baby, there should not be different pricing dependent upon what race child families are open to. Families are paying for a service, and all of our families receive the same service, so we feel that our fee schedule should reflect that. To our thinking, it feels a little demeaning to have different pricing for different babies.

(Raleigh 2018, 140)

However, racialized pricing is common in the field. For example, at one agency the fee for adopting a white child is \$22,000 but \$14,000 for a black child (Raleigh 2018, 137). At another, fees for white babies range from \$35,000 to \$40,000, and \$20,000 to \$25,000 for biracial babies (Raleigh 2018, 137). While some adoption providers rationalize these fee differences as a mechanism to encourage the adoption of “difficult to place” children, or as a procedure to encourage adoption among less wealthy minority parents, Raleigh asserts that tiered pricing “reproduces and widens the racial hierarchy” (Raleigh 2018, 133).

According to Raleigh, other marketing practices, such as keeping separate placement statistics for black and biracial children, as well as allowing adoptive parents to make a request for a child of African descent who has white and black birth parents as opposed to two black birth parents, also reinforce the racial hierarchy. Even the discursive practices of adoption providers can reinforce notions of ethnoracial difference. For example, some adoption providers promote the adoption of foreign-born black children by emphasizing that they do not have what is imagined as a black “look.” Critical of this practice, one adoption provider describes how she became “irate” upon seeing another agency promote the adoption of Ethiopian children by emphasizing that “these children are not African looking; they do not have the big lips or the wide nose” (Raleigh 2018, 158).

Encoding and Decoding Meaning

Advertisers and other intermediaries play an important role in attaching racial and ethnic meanings to products and services. However, as the cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1980) reminds us, while professionals like advertising creatives **encode** advertisements with meanings, consumers may or may not **decode** these texts in the manner intended. Instead, how consumers decode advertisements and other texts depends on their personal background and experiences. Hall offers three modes of decoding texts: the dominant-hegemonic position, the negotiated position, and the oppositional position. A consumer who interprets an advertisement from a **dominant-hegemonic position** accepts the intended meanings encoded by its producers. In stark contrast, a consumer who takes an **oppositional position** rejects the intended message of an advertisement and interprets it in an alternative fashion. A consumer taking a **negotiated position** accepts some aspects of the intended message of an advertisement, but also makes sense of it in a fashion that reflects the particularities of their own cultural background and experiences.

When consumers reject the meanings of an advertisement encoded by its producers, conflict can ensue. In October 2017, Dove, a personal care brand, posted a three-second GIF on Facebook. The GIF, promoting Dove body wash, featured three women of different skin tones removing a T-shirt that matched their skin color. As each woman removed her T-shirt her appearance changed and she transformed into the next woman. The first transition was from a black woman to a white woman.

The ad set off a furor on social media after some viewers interpreted the GIF as sending a message that Dove soap could wash away blackness. For some viewers, the ad evoked imagery from soap ads from an earlier era. A 19th-century ad for Pears soap depicts a black boy in a tub being bathed by a white child. After being washed, the black child’s body turns white (Bullen 2017). A spokesperson for Dove apologized, claiming that in fact the intended message of the GIF was to promote diversity. The ad “was

intended to convey that Dove Body Wash is for every woman and be a celebration of diversity,” she explained. “[B]ut we got it wrong and, as a result, offended many people” (Astor 2017).

A backlash in China over an ad by the luxury fashion company Dolce and Gabbana, designed by Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana, also illustrates how consumers can interpret ads in an oppositional fashion. In November 2018, the Italian brand posted three videos on Weibo, a Chinese social media network, to promote an upcoming runway show in Shanghai. In one video a male voiceover announces in Mandarin, “Welcome to the first episode of ‘Eating with Chopsticks’ by Dolce and Gabbana.” “With Chinese folk music playing in the background,” an Asian woman wearing a sparkling red dress sits down at a table (Xu 2018). She looks down at a large pizza, which she then attempts to awkwardly eat with chopsticks. In subsequent scenes she uses chopsticks to eat a large cannoli and giant bowl of spaghetti, while the voiceover explains “how to ‘properly’ eat the [Italian] dishes” (Xu 2018).

Some viewers interpreted the video as mocking Chinese culture (Rivas 2018). “Filled with disgusting stereotypes and prejudice. This is racial discrimination,” one person wrote on Twitter (Rivas 2018). Another Twitter user commented, “The Dolce and Gabbana chopsticks campaign is so cringey (and racist)” (Rivas 2018). After coming under fire for the ad, and another indiscretion allegedly involving Gabbana insulting China, the designers apologized in a video posted on the company’s YouTube channel: “We love your culture and we certainly have much to learn. That is why we are sorry if we made mistakes in the way we expressed ourselves” (Dolce and Gabbana 2018).

Aesthetic Labor

Aesthetic labor includes the stylistic dimensions of a worker’s activity, such as “deportment, . . . accent, voice, and attractiveness” (Williams and Connell 2010, 350). Research on aesthetic labor in the modeling industry and in service jobs elaborates how consumers figure into the racial and ethnic groups that are hired to represent brands.

Models

Ashley Mears’s research on the modeling industry accounts for how the conventions of one group of intermediaries, modeling agents, influence the race and ethnicity of models who are hired for various fashion jobs (Mears 2011). Like other cultural markets, the modeling industry is divided into two distinct **fields**, or systems of social positions with unique logics for gaining various types of capital (Bourdieu 1993). The commercial side of the fashion industry relies on a market, or fashion-as-commerce, logic, while the editorial side is guided by an aesthetic, or fashion-as-art, logic.

Accordingly, in the commercial side of the market, **economic capital** or money is sought, while on the other side of the market, **symbolic capital**, or prestige, is pursued.

When choosing models for commercial jobs, such as Victoria's Secret or Old Navy print advertisements, bookers rely on a different set of **conventions**, or shared practices and understandings that routinize cultural production (Becker 1974, 770–774), than when they select models for editorial jobs, such as runway shows for brands like YSL or Gucci. In the commercial sector, bookers choose models who are aspirational while also relatable to a wide and diverse consumer base. This includes not only models who are larger in size than those in high fashion, but also models who are more often racial and ethnic minorities. As a casting director explains about why he selects Asian models, “. . . I've had designers say, 'Listen, like all of my buyers, all the stores I sell to, are in Japan. So get me Asian girls!'" (Mears 2011, 180). However, conventions in editorial fashion dictate that models are chosen for the edginess of their **look**, or their appearance and personality, in order for fashion insiders to gain prestige with one another. Models favored for editorial work are not only thinner than those on the commercial side, but they are also more often white. The logic of the commercial side is common, everyday beauty, while that of the high-fashion world is elevated, unattainable beauty (Figure 4.5).



Figure 4.5 Asian model in an advertisement in front of a Tiffany & Co. mall store.

Various rationalizations are given for less diversity in high-fashion. One rationalization is that models are selected to match the demographics of consumers, and the buyers of high-fashion are mainly white. As one stylist explains, “They put a white face, because those are the ones that buy the clothes” (Mears 2011). Racial ideologies related to physiognomy are also used to justify the lack of diversity among high-fashion models, such as that it is difficult to find Asian models tall enough, or black models with posteriors small enough, to fit garments (Mears 2010, 38). More broadly, racial ideologies that define whiteness as the epitome of rarefied beauty contribute to nonwhite models being seen as incompatible with high-fashion modeling. Racial and ethnic minorities who are selected for editorial jobs have appearances that resolve this incompatibility. This includes models who have an **ethnicity lite** look, or a physical appearance that is close to white—such as very light skin—or, on the other end of the spectrum, models with an exotic appearance, such as deep brown skin, which reinforces the otherness of nonwhite models in this sphere (Mears 2011).

Service Workers

It is not only models who get work based on appearance: Some employees who hold service jobs are hired for brand representation. Workers who are hired in this capacity are selected to perform aesthetic labor. Aesthetic labor is common among frontline service workers in industries such as high-end retail and hospitality. When employers hire service workers to perform aesthetic labor, they seek out individuals who have a **habitus**, or set of internalized dispositions (Bourdieu 1984), that fits with the company image. Many upscale brands are defined by a specific **lifestyle**—such as rustic, American chic, or creative, global jetsetter. Service workers who have face-to-face and voice-to-voice contact with customers are expected to embody the brand lifestyle to help entice consumers into purchasing products and services. For example, in high-end retail, the dress, speech, and grooming of frontline floor workers are expected to be consistent with the brand. These workers function as walking advertisement of sorts that give real-life form to brand ideals and fantasies.

Along with middle-class status, the sought-after aesthetic that some brands seek workers to embody is white (Williams and Connell 2010, 350). When a white aesthetic is valued, workers from ethnoracial minority groups may be denied employment based on stereotypes that how they talk or look is incompatible with the brand image (Williams and Connell 2010, 367).

In jobs where whiteness is part of the brand aesthetic, **colorism** can also play a role in hiring. Racial and ethnic minorities whose bodies are closer to white, such as those who are lighter skinned, can be favored for jobs.

Commenting on colorism at the trendy clothing store where she works, one manager explains,

There are always the debates and things about how people are promoting diversity, but they won't go with the very Black African Americans. They'll go with the lighter. Or, like I said, maybe half of our staff was non-White, but they look Caucasian still so you wouldn't know their actual—you wouldn't know their nationality unless you asked.

(Walters 2018)

In 2004, the clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch agreed to a \$40,000,000 settlement after they were accused of discriminating against Hispanic, black, and Asian American job seekers who were viewed as not fitting the brand image. The lawsuit claimed that

Abercrombie implements its discriminatory employment policies and practices in part through a detailed and rigorous 'Appearance Policy,' which requires that all Brand Representatives must exhibit the 'A&F Look.' The 'A&F Look' is a virtually all-white image that Abercrombie uses not only to market its clothing, but also to implement its discriminatory employment policies or practices.

(Gonzalez v. Abercrombie, and Fitch 2003)

In 2015, Abercrombie & Fitch lost a Supreme Court lawsuit filed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) that also asserted that the company was engaged in discriminatory hiring related to its brand image. In this case, a practicing Muslim woman who wears a headscarf was denied employment because of the prohibition of wearing "caps" in the company's look policy. Abercrombie and Fitch was found guilty of discriminatory hiring on the basis of religion (EEOC v. Abercrombie & Fitch Stored, Inc. 2015).

In global contexts where the dispositions of workers vary from customers, companies sometimes resocialize workers to adopt the look and sound of customers. Eileen Otis (2016) finds that this is the case for some Western-based luxury hotel companies that have properties in the Global South. These companies want to ensure that service workers, many of whom are local ethnoracial minority women, "look familiar and sound understandable" to customers, many of whom are white, Western, and male (Otis 2016, 913). In this market, what the sociologists Christine Williams and Catherine Connell (2010) term "looking good and sounding right" often involves an aesthetic that is middle class, white, and Western. In one international hotel in Beijing, Chinese women are required to perform a form of feminized labor that is familiar to white, Western, male customers. **Body rules**, or the principles governing aesthetic labor,

include requirements such as workers meeting a 5-foot-2-inch minimum height requirement and using English names in their interactions with customers.

Product Inequality

How are race and ethnicity associated with what products come to the marketplace and the level of promotional support that they receive? These issues are addressed in the sociological literature on markets for creative goods. In their research on the publishing industry, Clayton Childress and Jean-Francois Nault (2019) find that literary agents select books for publication via **cultural matching**. Or, these intermediaries “demographically match themselves to fiction manuscripts” along lines such as race. Intermediaries rely on race to select manuscripts because it functions as a proxy “for symbolic proximity and distance from manuscripts” (Childress and Nault 2019, 2). Questioned about how he would respond to a manuscript with a black male main character, one white agent raises concerns about racial fit:

I just don't think I'd know what to do with it. Even if I really liked it, the fit is probably wrong, and you want great manuscripts to find someone [i.e., an editor] who can really understand them and champion them and do them justice.

(Childress and Nault 2019, 14)

However, ethnic fiction deeply resonates with some ethnoracial minority intermediaries. As a British-Arab agent explains,

[It didn't start] consciously, I don't think. . . . [But] it was clear that I'd built up a list of authors who were in some way straddling cultures, or writing out of a sense of cultural dislocation. Maybe in literature I was looking for something which reflected, in some way, my own experiences of living between different cultures.

(Childress and Nault 2019, 13)

Although cultural matching may be practiced by intermediaries across ethnoracial groups, it can contribute to macro-level inequalities when, as in the book industry, there is less diversity among intermediaries than the population of cultural products to be evaluated (Childress and Nault 2019, 20). The art market is also a field with underrepresentation of cultural products associated with ethnoracial minorities. For example, one study of a major auction house found that there were no works by African-born artists in major contemporary sales until the 21st century (Banks 2018). The introduction of work by African-born artists in the auctions might have been stimulated by the increasing legitimization of contemporary African art by intermediaries.

Research on the film industry analyzes product inequality through the lens of racism. Maryann Erigha (2019) argues that a new system of Jim Crow operates in Hollywood whereby a set of economic and cultural beliefs about black films leads them to receive limited promotion or never even be produced (Erigha 2019, 114). The economic and cultural rationalizations that lead to this inequality are characterized by the belief that “black is unbankable”—in other words, black films are “economically risky” and “culturally unappealing to foreign audiences” (Erigha 2019, 54). Although these beliefs are widespread, Erigha offers counterpoints describing cases where black films have been hits and gained a global audience.

Nancy Wang Yuen’s (2016) research on Hollywood offers insight into product inequality through analyzing the underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in films. Engaging theory on colorblind racism, Yuen describes how racial stereotypes, such as that Asian Americans are “unexpressive,” contribute to the lack of diverse films in Hollywood (Yuen 2016, 56). Yuen also elaborates on how the perception that movies with minorities do not sell legitimates not hiring minority actors. This belief is articulated by a film studio executive when he describes how casting relates to ticket sales:

When I’m in a meeting about a big film, if the script doesn’t call for a black or minority character, it really doesn’t cross our minds to put somebody black in it. It’s not racism, though I’m sure that’s what everyone wants to call it. But all-white movies sell. There’s no blacks in *Saving Private Ryan* or *There’s Something about Mary*, and they sold at the box office. So there’s not a lot of incentive to make changes. It’s wrong, but that’s the reality (Yuen 2016).

Yuen asserts that the “blame the market” justification for not casting minority actors is problematized by the reality that film is a high-risk industry where even “having white stars does not guarantee profit” (Yuen 2016, 62).

Summary

This chapter analyzes race and ethnicity in marketing and advertising. It examines how ethnoracial minorities are targeted in a distinct fashion. Multicultural marketing is based on the premise that ethnoracial minority consumers can be most effectively reached through marketing that directs specific products and services to them, and designs specific messaging to appeal to them. This chapter also explores representations of race and ethnicity in advertisements. In particular, it highlights how images of racial and ethnic groups in advertisements can both reflect and reinforce dominant racial and ethnic ideologies. In addition, this chapter explores

race and ethnicity in marketing and advertising through themes such as encoding and decoding advertisements, aesthetic labor, and product inequality. The next chapter examines the links between race, ethnicity, and consumption by examining neighborhoods.

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