The Perception of Threat in Fictional Workplaces by African-American College Students: A Look Into How Mass Media Affect Social Identity Expectations in Novel Contexts

Master’s Thesis

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Abstract

The following study was conducted at The Ohio State University involving 94 African-American college students to measure their reactions to the depictions of other African-American young men and woman in the workplace, a novel context. The social identity perspective (Tajfel, Billing, Bundy & Flament, 1971; Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Turner & Oakes, 1986; Hogg & Reid, 2006) is used as an overall framework for its focus on social identities and self-categorization, the necessity, inevitability, and regulating power of these concepts, and how the resulting creation of in-groups and out-groups influence our social behaviors and attitudes. Literature on the impact of mass media on these social identities is discussed to tie in the social psychological and the communication aspects, and leads into the creation of the author’s hypotheses. The author looked at how the variables of media condition and employment status influenced perceived threat to the participants themselves as well as to the characters, admiration of the characters, and participants’ perception of the characters as representatives of themselves racially. Overwhelmingly, media condition but not employment status had a significant effect on the dependent variables when two-way ANOVAs were conducted to test the hypotheses. To further explore the data, multiple regression analyses were conducted as well. The implications of the findings are discussed in the latter part of this paper.
This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my MomMom, Amelia Anne Roach, who cheered and prayed me through the first year of this experience, but had to go away before she could see me finish.

Thanks for believing I could make history.
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Chapter One: Introduction

“They say since everybody’s doin’ it, it’s normal/…/You ain’t thin enough, you need a new diet/You need a psychic, everybody does it, you should try it/Spring Break, hit the beach whatchu ‘sposed to do/Be careful what the media impose on you/You learn how to find peace from a TV show/You learn how to ride clean from the videos/If thirty seconds of commercial have you mixed up,/Call now, we can have your whole life fixed up!”

--from “Fall Back ft. Trip Lee” on the album Rebel by Lecrae (2008)

These lyrics from the recently-released song “Fall Back” by popular Christian hip-hop artist, Lecrae, warn of the dangers of allowing the mass media to negatively affect one’s perceptions of the social norms that exist and how closely they need to be followed. They express the concern of an older member of the community about how exposure to the lives of characters on television and in music directs the youth. It is no secret among scholars in the communication field that the media does an efficient job of influencing our thinking about what is “normal” in certain settings or for certain groups of people, such as teenagers, Asians, the wealthy, the elderly, African-Americans, and virtually any and every group depicted in the media (i.e. Cheryan & Monin, 2008; Paek & Shah, 2003; Merskin, 2001; Davis & Gandy, 1999; Mastro, Tamborini, & Hullett, 2005; Milkie, 1999; Ward, 2004).
Paek and Shah (2003) point out specifically how powerful the media can be in determining our attitudes and beliefs about race. In their 2003 article on the stereotyping of Asian Americans in American magazine advertisements, they state that “media help to define what race is and what meanings the imagery of race carries, and...ways to classify the world in terms of racial categories” (Paek & Shah, p. 227). This indicates that, like the artist Lecrae, these authors believe the various arms of the media are in a position to tell its consumers who they are supposed to be on the basis of certain common characteristics, such as age in the aforementioned song lyrics or race in Paek and Shah’s (2003) piece. Would it not, then, be worthwhile to understand and be concerned with what the media encourages one to think about oneself, or better yet, what it could encourage an entire generation to think about itself? The importance of such a subject becomes emphasized when one considers that research has often shown younger media consumers to be particular susceptible to its influences, whether good or bad.

Milkie (1999), for example, found in her study involving 60 white and black teenage girls that, although the majority of the participating girls found the images of women portrayed in popular magazines to be unrealistic, the self-images of the white girls still suffered harm as a result of their exposure to the images. This was particularly because they believed that others in their social environments would judge them based on how the women in the magazines looked. In line with the more contemporary thinking about media effects, Milkie (1999) also proved that the presence of these inaccurate images did not automatically affect all of the participants’ self-images; there was a moderating factor that could serve as a buffer against these negative effects. The black girls’ perceptions of themselves as members of a minority group in terms of who was
shown in the magazines allowed their own critical interpretations of the inaccurate portrayals to counteract what the white girls were experiencing. In other words, because they rarely saw women who looked like them, the black girls did not identify with them nor did they believe the significant people in their social circles would judge them based on an image to which they could not live up (Milkie, 1999).

This study revealed three important findings: a. that media consumers can get information from the media about who they should be or who they are expected by others to be, b. that the media is most effective when consumers can identify with it in some personally significant way, along such lines as race and ethnicity, and c. that the outside experiences that are brought to the table during media consumption can work against potential media effects. So, although Lecrae may have good reason to be concerned about the levels of media intake amongst the younger generations and what they are learning through this intake, there are more than likely some members of that population who are going to be less affected by what they see than others. What factors are most active in working against potential media effects on one’s self-image and perceived expectations? What factors allow a person to be reliant on information gleaned from the media in their real lives?

We as human beings have a natural tendency to categorize ourselves and those around us into groups in order to understand our social environments, our roles in those environments, and the behaviors of others within the environment (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971; Hogg & Reid, 2006). A characteristic of human nature is that in order for us to function in a society, we have to be able to categorize people in our social realm into in-groups and out-groups,
into “us” and “them” (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). We have to create definitions and form boundary lines out of distinguishing characteristics that help us tell one group and its members from another (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). [The process of self-categorization helps us to form a functional social identity.] The in-group that we find most salient at a given time is often determined by the context or the situation in which we find ourselves. Not only is the salience of a group membership context-dependent, but so are the group norms that we associate with that membership. Some group memberships, such as race- and gender-based memberships, tend to remain salient in several different contexts because of how central such memberships can be to our self-concepts. When we are not sure what the norms are for the in-group that is most salient in a given context, we search for examples, or group prototypes, by which to model our behavior and the expression of our attitudes.

This adherence to the group norms demonstrated by prototypes is often what takes place in novel contexts, such as the professional workplace for current college students. College students have likely had minimal experiences in work environments through part-time employment during high school; however, the experiences working those jobs are not likely to be comparable to the careers they anticipate finding themselves in once they earn their degrees and enter the professional world for good. Therefore, college students might be motivated to search for some relevant group leader or prototype after which they can model themselves in future scenarios. At the very least, they might be open to the influence of a perceived group leader, whether or not they are consciously searching for one.
At the same time, there are some group associations (i.e. race, ethnicity, gender) that tend to be quite central to our sense of self in various contexts, as was mentioned earlier; thus, the maintenance of the social identity created on the basis of that self-categorization takes high priority. With regard to the present study, this means that college students could be motivated to find an exemplar who not only shows them how they are expected to behave in a professional setting, but also how they are expected to behave in a professional setting as a member of their racial in-group, for example.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Social Identity Perspective

The social identity perspective is one that has been developed by scholars and authors from numerous fields in the recent past, notably in the early stages by Turner, Tajfel, and their colleagues (see Turner & Oakes, 1986; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971; Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Abrams, Wetherell, Cochrane, Hogg, & Turner, 1990). This perspective approaches social and communication research with the aim of understanding how our interactions with one another are directed by and simultaneously create both the identities we develop for ourselves and those we develop for others (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Abrams et al., 1990; Hogg & Reid, 2006). These identities tell us what behaviors and thoughts are “right” or “normal” in certain situations as we represent the various social groups to which we belong (Abrams et al., 1990). We often assign identities by categorizing ourselves and those with whom we interact into distinct social categories or groups, into “us” and “them,” a practice that is common and some would argue necessary in societal function because of how vital it is to the individual’s self-definition (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Wilder, 1990; Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Matheson et al., 2003; Hogg & Reid, 2006). Hogg and Reid (2006) in particular argue that one’s social identity makes up a portion of one’s self-concept, and thus is very important to a person’s understanding of who he or she is. They cite Tajfel (1972) who defines social identity as “the individual’s
knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and
In more scientific terms, we tend to place those around us into either our in-group (the “us”) or our out-group (the “them”) in settings where group memberships are salient (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Abrams et al., 1990; Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Davis & Gandy, 1999). For example, a female university student will find herself in several settings throughout her academic career. If she is attending a gathering of students from several departments within her college, she might classify other students from her department as members of her in-group because that is the group membership that is relevant. Thus her identity in that setting would be based on her being a part of that specific department. If, though, the gathering is of students from her department alone for the purpose of sharing ideas and interests, she might consider those students with interests similar to her own as her in-group, even though they all belong to the same department. Perhaps her department is one that is notoriously male-dominated and gender representation stands out more than it normally would; in that case, her gender might be especially salient to her, and she would think of her female colleagues as members of her in-group. In that case her identity would be based on her perception of herself as a female in a “man’s world.” If we take the last scenario even further, we would begin to look at how that identity influences her behaviors and attitudes, how she perceives the people around her. How does she believe a woman in her position should speak with her peers? How should she dress for such a gathering? Does this identity restrict her at all from saying or doing what she feels most comfortable saying and doing? How much does she believe that this
particular identity influences how her colleagues look at her? How much does this identity influence how she looks at herself?

Because we will see ourselves and others as members of so many social groups in our lifetime, it is reasonable to doubt that all of these group memberships will have equal weight in our lives and have the same amount of influence on our behaviors and attitudes or how we account for the behavior and attitudes of other people. Which social identities are we most likely to refer to in order to define or understand ourselves and others? An identity’s salience, or one might say how often an identity is salient, is determined by both how accessible that identity is in an individual’s mind, and how well it “fits,” or explains, a situation (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Chronically accessible identities are those that have a lot of personal value in our lives, and are related to several aspects of our self-concept, so they are often at the front of our minds. We easily call upon them to determine how we want to or ought to be. Situationally accessible identities have importance within particular contexts (Hogg & Reid, 2006). It is possible for one identity to be both chronically and situationally accessible. If we go back to our example of the female university student, her identity as a woman is very likely to be a chronically accessible one that has gained much personal significance throughout her life and is strongly related to many different parts of her self-concept, whether she is in the presence of her colleagues or not. At the same time, being in an environment like her academic department where her gender makes her a minority and is thus emphasized causes her identity as a woman to become accessible for new reasons. Gender and race are two social categories that have been shown to produce identities that are both chronically and situationally accessible, and thus very strong (Hogg & Reid, 2006).
Sometimes the social identities we assign to ourselves or others are based off of longstanding, easily familiar group memberships, such as our belonging to a certain family, or our being of a particular ethnicity, or our being the employee of a company for decades of our lifetime. Researchers have found, however, that sometimes our human tendency to rely on social categorization is so strong that we will cling to group memberships even when they are fleeting or vaguely defined.

In Tajfel et al. (1971), for example, Tajfel and his co-authors conducted a series of social experiments with intergroup behavior to understand in part how people function in groups, and how they perceive their in-group as opposed to their out-group. What they discovered, among other notable findings, was that even when “irrelevant classifications” were used to define their group and the out-groups, participants tended to favor their in-group over their out-group, at times even denying benefits to the out-group that could have been shared between the two (Tajfel et al., 1971, p. 150). They learned, then, how often discrimination is a product of social categorization, and how strong and pervasive group mindsets can be: “The articulation of an individual’s social world in terms of its categorization into groups becomes a guide for his conduct in situations to which some criteria of intergroup division can be meaningfully applied” (Tajfel et al., 1971, p. 153).

Social identities have been shown to begin forming as far in advance as early childhood (Kalish & Lawson, 2008). We recognize the specific others in our lives, such as our mother, our father, or our teachers, and the roles they play; we begin to expect certain behaviors from them and we expect them to look a certain way, while also understanding that they expect us as their children or their students to behave in a certain manner (Kalish & Lawson, 2008). Research also suggests that as children, we learn to
expect things from groups and not just specific individuals such as our parents or our teachers. For example, we learn that our playmates that are female should wear certain clothes and play with certain toys that are different from those of our male playmates (Kalish & Lawson, 2008). As we grow older, these social categorizations tell us not only how people should look and behave, but give us ideas of how people perceive us. Davis and Gandy (1999) noted that there are instances in which we identify as a member of a group or identify with members of a particular group, but then there are also those instances in which others assign us to a group by identifying us with its members. To put it simply, we can identify with a group ourselves, and we can be identified with a group by outside others.

The discussion of social identities, group memberships, and how we are influenced by them can become complicated, but one way to simplify it is to break the social identity perspective into its two main theories: the social identity theory, and the self-categorization theory (Abrams et al., 1990; Hogg & Reid, 2006).

*Social Identity Theory*

The social identity theory is one that deals with intergroup occurrences and behaviors, such as discrimination, prejudice, or cooperation. Hogg and Reid (2006) call it the “social identity theory of intergroup behavior” (p. 9; see also Turner et al., 1987). The social identity theory is often used to study the comparisons one makes between oneself and one’s in-group and/or out-group in an effort to create and understand one’s identity or justify one’s choices (Kerpelman et al., 1997; Milkie, 1999; Ward, 2004). Research has shown that people are more likely to compare themselves with fellow members of their
in-group as a protective strategy, rather than compare themselves to an out-group among which they are more likely to appear “wrong” or whose standards might seem less attractive or attainable (Milkie, 1999; Ward, 2004). It fits well with other theories such as the identity control theory, which will be discussed in greater detail later, that seek to understand the identity formation process (Kerpelman et al., 1997). Kerpelman and her colleagues (1997) suggest an identity control system through which people, particularly adolescents, seek to evaluate their identities in order to either maintain them or adjust them as they see necessary. Within this system is an ingredient called the comparator, an intrapersonal mechanism that compares one’s self-perception with identity standards. Comparators serve a vital function in that the resulting comparison either allows the individual to feel comfortable with his or her current identity, or motivates him or her to adjust it (Kerpelman et al., 1997). Although Kerpelman and the social identity scholars use different terminology, their ideas about how social identities develop seem similar.

*Self-Categorization Theory*

If the social identity theory is an intergroup theory that explains interactions between in-groups and out-groups, then the self-categorization theory is more of an intragroup theory that helps to explain why an individual sees him or herself as a member of the in-group, and how that self-categorization influences his or her life. It deals with how members interact with each other and think about their own group. It also helps to explain how they determine what is prototypical for people who belong to the group, how the perceived norms for their group are communicated, and how those norms influence their behaviors and attitudes by looking at the social cognitive processes that take place.
(Abrams et al., 1990; Hogg & Reid, 2006; Kalish & Lawson, 2008). Simply put, the self-categorization theory can be referred to as the “social identity theory of the group” (Hogg & Reid, p. 9; see also Turner et al., 1987). It answers the question of how a particular group is defined in the minds of its members. What is the group’s identity?

**Definition, Types, and Use of Norms**

In simple terms, norms can be defined as “a standard or rule that is accepted by the members of the group” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 631). To go a little further, they can be understood as shared behavioral attributes, along with patterns of thoughts and feelings, belonging to certain groups and situations; therefore, *group norms* in particular are regularities in attitudes and behavior that characterize a social group and differentiate it from other social groups (Hogg & Reid, 2006). The question could be raised as to why norms need to exist in the first place, and as a possible answer, one could consider the suggestion made by Ethier and Deaux (1994) that “identification of oneself with other people who share common attributes is an important aspect of self-definition” (p. 243). As an example, we could look back on the group of friends that we socialized with in high school. As diverse a group as that might have been, there were at least a few things that we held in common, such as a common set of values, a common background, or even a common stance on how strict our parents’ rules were. We could also look at a more stable and consistent group, such as one based on ethnicity. People in the same ethnic group recognize norms amongst themselves concerning background and heritage, family structure, group involvement, and numerous other factors (i.e. Hispanics in Ethier & Deaux, 1994). In either case, association with the in-group helps the members to define
themselves during the time period in which the membership is salient, whether it is a
temporary period (such as the duration of high school) or one of permanence (such as the
lifetime that one spends being a member of an ethnic group).

Research on social identity and norms tends to agree that there are two types of
norms present in a society: prescriptive norms and descriptive norms (Eagly & Chaiken,
1993; Hogg & Reid, 2006; Morrison & Miller, 2008). Descriptive norms reflect the
common attitudes and behaviors of the group, or what the members actually think or do;
prescriptive norms on the other hand reflect the desirable attitudes and behaviors that
members of the group believe they ought to hold and do (Morrison & Miller, 2008).
Descriptive norms can be thought of as representative of the “average” attitude, in that it
is closest to what “everybody else is doing.” Prescriptive norms are different in that they
represent the “desirable” attitude, how group members in an ideal scenario would think
and act. For example, the prescriptive norm within our society with regard to the
homeless population might reflect the attitude that those of us in a more fortunate
position should not ignore them and in fact should help them when we can. However, the
more common the sight of a homeless man or woman on the street is, the more common
it also becomes to pass them by without noticing or to decide not to share our money or
resources with them every time we have the opportunity. These actions would reflect the
descriptive norms in our society.

Communication of Norms
Prescriptive and descriptive norms are not different from one another in how they are
communicated. According to Hogg and Reid (2006), “we construct and modify our
normative beliefs through information from other people—people we interact with or who influence us more indirectly through mass media” (p. 13). This statement mentions that there are both direct and indirect ways by which to communicate a group’s norms. Direct communication of norms involves group norms being intentionally talked about or nonverbally signaled (Hogg & Reid, 2006). If, for example, a new intern at a business firm is taken aside by a superior to have the dynamics of the office explained to him or her (i.e. “Interns are always the last to take their breaks during the day”), the norms are being explicitly and directly laid out for him or her. The indirect communication of norms is basically observational, in that a group member infers what the norms are from what is said and done among the group (Hogg & Reid, 2006; i.e. If the intern notices him or herself getting dirty looks from others around the office when he or she takes the first break available). As was mentioned in the above statement, indirect communication of norms can come through sources that we do not have direct contact with, such as the characters on a television program or the host of a radio show.

**Normative Pressures**

We have already discussed the role of normative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in helping us to identify with others in our in-group and thus helping us to self-define as well (Ethier & Deaux, 1994). Within the realm of intragroup interactions, there also exist normative pressures that vary based on the importance, salience, accessibility and fit of the in-group membership, as was mentioned earlier in this review (Hogg & Reid, 2006). If a woman is in a setting, such as a public debate on the issue of women’s rights, where her gender group membership is particularly important, salient, accessible, and fitting,
she may feel more pressure to understand how other women involved in the debate expect her to behave or what opinions they expect her to express, and behave or express herself accordingly. She is far less likely to be thinking about the women in another state and how they might judge her actions during the debate. This is because the ability for group members to exert normative pressure depends on two factors: the group’s capacity to administer rewards and punishments, and the perception that one is being monitored by the group (Wilder, 1990). We are sensibly less concerned with the judgments of those whom we believe will never know of our actions, beliefs, or opinions.

Normative pressures also root from the group’s need to “survive” or maintain a particular image; this survival is basically a reference to a group’s ability to remain distinct from its out-group (Tajfel et al., 1971; Billig & Tajfel, 1973). A group is mainly able to do so by ascribing to the metacontrast principle, which says that in order for a group to remain distinct, it needs to maximize the ratio of intergroup differences to intragroup differences (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 10). Members of the group must be able to be seen as more different from members of out-groups than they are from each other. A certain level of entitativity is required—the property of a group that makes it appear to be a coherent and distinct entity that is homogeneous and well-structured, has clear boundaries, and whose members share a common fate (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 10). If this entitativity is lost in the eyes of the members, the group boundaries, and thus the group, dissolve. There is no longer any reason to distinguish the previous in-group from its out-group. Thus, members to whom the group is especially important find it important to also make sure its homogeneity is preserved, and often this is exhibited through the normative pressures placed upon one another.
Normative pressures are very present in the dynamics of intragroup interaction, and although research shows that there are some group members that are less susceptible to them, are less willing to comply to norms, and are willing to step outside of their in-group’s box to defy norms they do not agree with (Morrison & Miller, 2008; Packer, 2008; Hornsey, Majkut, Terry, & McKimmie, 2003), other research shows that normative pressures do a pretty good job of keeping group members in line. With this in mind, it would be reasonable to believe that not even the newness of novel contexts could keep the normative pressures assigned to familiar in-groups from appearing within them. Normative pressures could, for example, exist and have an influence in the minds of young African-American college students as they anticipate their entry into the professional arena. They might feel the pressure to conform to the norms of not only their new work environment, but to remain loyal to the norms of other, more longstanding group memberships, such as those based on their race. If they have never had any experience in merging the two memberships (that of being a professional, and a young African-American), or have had at least very little experience doing so, it is reasonable to believe that they would be concerned with understanding how to do so, and would be open to different sources of information that could explain how to do so. Because of the media’s overall influence on today’s society, it is likely that the media, particularly television, would be one of those sources.

Influence of Mass Media on Social Identities

It is believed among scholars in the communication and psychology fields that the mass media plays a significant role in providing social information to its viewers that could be
applied to the formation of social identities, especially among African-American youth (Stroman, 1984; Davis & Gandy, 1999; Milkie, 1999). In Carolyn Stroman’s (1984) article, she reviews the different lines of thought about how much the media affects the thinking and self-concepts of African-American children. She asserts that there is some basis to the concerns of parents and social scientists about how much the television depictions of African-Americans are influencing the children of the oncoming generation. There are media effects present that are both positive and negative (Stroman, 1984). One of those positive effects that she mentions is that “television may be providing Black children with needed knowledge about the world that is not available in their immediate environment” (Stroman, 1984, p. 93). This is one of the assumptions that the current study is making: that the television’s portrayal of African-Americans in the workplace can inform the thinking of college students about their social identities at work. Stroman (1984) also suggests that such portrayals could result in negative effects if the portrayals themselves are in line with negative stereotypes or provide the viewers with negative role models to follow. At the same time, Stroman says that although “television has been shown to have an impact on the socialization of Black children…it must be recognized that television has not had an unduly powerful influence on Black children as some critics have suggested” (1984, p. 94). That is to say that research suggests the significant impact that the television has on the social identities of Black children, but that it also suggests these impacts do not take place in isolation. Mass media’s patrons have individual temperaments, experiences, needs, and existing beliefs with varying strengths; all of these factors and many more will impact how a person receives the information they encounter while watching television (Stroman, 1984).
Milkie (1999) addresses the influence of such factors when she discusses “interpretive communities” in her article on the influence of media images on Black and White girls’ self-images. In particular, she deals with the influence of individuals’ social groups on how they interpret information from different sources. She states that “readers create meaning, but do so on the basis of the ‘interpretive communities’ to which they belong. Because the members of such communities have the same purposes and goals, the meanings constructed from the texts will be shared” (Milkie, 1999, p. 191). This description of an interpretive community is very similar to that of an in-group. Thus, Milkie’s (1999) statement suggests that the in-group to which one belongs, and which is particularly salient at the time of the viewing, can determine how one responds to what one is exposed to.

Hypotheses

The social identity perspective tells us how important the definitions of in-groups and out-groups are to our understanding of how our social world functions, as well as how we determine what it means to be a member of the in-groups that are situationally and/or chronically significant. Those in-groups that are frequently both situationally and chronically significant tend to remain at the forefronts of our minds, even when we are trying to navigate our way through a novel context, such as the professional workplace for a recent graduate. We might become concerned with how well those significant memberships fit in with the novel context, or how threatened they might be within it. Much of what we learn about the social settings in which we interact with others, whether they are of our in-group or our out-group, can be deemed to come from the mass media;
this possibility is heightened when we are talking about settings with which we have little to no personal experience, and thus have little information on.

With these things in mind, four hypotheses were created to predict how African-American college students would react to the viewing of television shows featuring characters who share the same racial group membership as they are depicted in settings that are both novel and familiar. Predictions were made in terms of how threatened participants would feel the characters’ ethnic identities were in the various settings, and how threatened they felt their own ethnic identities would be in the same scenarios. These predictions also take into account how much personal experience the participants might have with the novel/workplace settings via their current employment status.

H1: Perceived threat to the characters’ ethnic identities will be affected by what media condition participants are in and by the participants’ employment status.

H2: Perceived threat to the participants’ own ethnic identities will be affected by what media condition participants are in and their employment status.

H3: Whether or not participants see characters as a representative of their racial and age in-groups will be affected by what media condition participants are in, but not by their employment status.

H4: Participants’ admiration for the characters will be affected by what media condition participants are in, but not by their employment status.
Chapter Three: Methods

Participants. A total of 101 African and African-American undergraduate and graduate students participated in our study on the campus of a large, Midwestern university in exchange for a chance to win a $25 gift card to various local restaurants. Seven participants were not included in the data set because they did not complete or return a portion of the experiment; thus 94 of our original 101 participants were included in the analysis. Fifty of the participants were female; 44 were male. Assuming that age and level of education would be related to how much participants relied on information from the media to recognize norms for the workplace (Stroman, 1984), participants were asked to indicate how old they were and what their academic classification was. 80 of the participants were undergraduate students; of those, 10 were freshmen, 19 were sophomores, 25 were juniors, and 26 were seniors. 12 of the participants were graduate students (two of the participants did not give us their academic classification). The average age for these participants was approximately 21 years of age, which corresponds with the fact that the mean academic classification for these participants came to 3.25, indicating third-year or junior status. We also foresaw that employment status might affect how realistic the mention of work and the workplace depictions were; direct experience with real-life work settings could also act as an alternative source of information to buffer any threat the participants might perceive to themselves because of the media depictions (Davis & Gandy, 1999). Thus, during the pretest, participants were
asked to indicate what their current employment status was. Of the 94 participants, 30 were not currently working at all, and 63 were, with 11 participants working full-time and 52 working part-time (one participant did not give his or her employment status).

Volunteering participants were able to begin the experiment as soon as they made themselves available, and were randomly assigned to a condition upon arrival. Ten of the participants were placed in the Living Single Casual Condition; 17 participated in the Girlfriends Casual Condition; 12 participants were in the Living Single Work Condition; 21 were in the Girlfriends Work Condition; 16 served in the Living Single Mixed Condition; and 18 fell into the Girlfriends Mixed Condition.

**Stimulus Materials.** Six episodes, three from *Living Single* and from *Girlfriends*, were selected by the experimenter based on their content, the amount of scenes enacted in the workplace, and the degree to which the conversations between the characters dealt with work-related matters. From each set of three, the experimenter chose an episode in which the majority of the scenes and the conversations were centered on the workplace; these were categorized as the “work condition.” Two more episodes were selected to make up the “mixed condition,” in which some of the scenes and conversations had to do with work-related matters or were enacted in a place of work, and some had to do with their personal lives outside of work. Lastly, two episodes were chosen from each sitcom that had little to nothing to do with the characters’ work lives. These episodes were labeled the “casual condition.” The casual condition served as a control.¹

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¹ For each category, the episodes were labeled more specifically by the sitcom from which they came. Thus, the “work condition” episode from *Living Single* was the Living Single Work Condition; the “work condition” episode from *Girlfriends* was the Girlfriends Work Condition.
The experimenter also took note of how much racially-charged discussion took place in the characters’ conversation, and its presence or absence was noted in the label given to the conditions (for example, in the “work condition” episode from *Girlfriends*, discussion of race issues was heavily involved in the conversations between the characters, so it was titled “Girlfriends Work Condition—Race Discussed.” The opposite was true of the “casual condition” episode from *Girlfriends*, so it was titled “Girlfriends Casual Condition—No Race Discussed”).

The episodes were approximately 20 to 25 minutes long each, and each participant was randomly placed in one condition and given the corresponding episode to watch. Each episode will be described below; Table One also gives a brief description of the plots within each episode.

**Living Single Casual Condition—No Race Discussed (LSCCNRD)**

This episode of *Living Single*, entitled “Great Expectations,” features all six of the African-American main characters—Khadijah, Maxine, Synclaire, Regine, Kyle and Overton—as they try to figure out a way to enliven their normally drab Friday night. Regine offers to get all of the women into an exclusive nightclub through one of her connections, while Kyle and Overton decide that they can depend on their own “juice” to get in. Each character puts a lot of effort into figuring out what kind of image they want to portray when they go out and what kind of man or woman they’d like to meet. In the course of the evening, Khadijah hits it off with the DJ, Regine gets into a few altercations with women who have on the same “exclusive” dress she’s wearing, Maxine repeatedly runs into the “wrong” kind of men, and Kyle’s approach of flashing his money and high-
maintenance lifestyle backfires. Overton is satisfied to spend some time with Synclaire, on whom he has an ongoing crush. There is no discussion of anyone’s career or life at work, nor is there any significant discussion of race within the episode. The only shown character of another race is a white woman against whom Regine plots because they are wearing the same dress.

Girlfriends Casual Condition—No Race Discussed (GCCNRD)

This episode, entitled “Fried Turkey,” features especially the main characters Joan, Davis, and a guest character named Preston. Other characters are shown more toward the beginning and the end of the show. Joan has planned an elaborate, themed Thanksgiving dinner for her friends, but at the last minute, all of her friends are called away to other events. So, Joan spends Thanksgiving at her friend Davis’ restaurant instead. While there, she meets a friend of Davis’ named Preston, who is an attorney like Joan. She invites him to come back to her house for an authentic holiday dinner that includes a fried turkey, which Preston mentioned he loves and Joan is too proud to admit she cannot prepare. Davis offers to tag along out of concern for what might happen between the two strangers. When they arrive at the house, Joan and Preston constantly drop hints with Davis that they want to be left alone, and when Davis finally accepts them, another character, Mya, shows up at the door. One by one, all of the friends that Joan had originally invited over for dinner fill the house, making it impossible for Joan and Preston to be alone like they want. The show culminates with a small patio fire caused by all of the inexperienced chefs trying to fry the turkey, and Preston and Joan having to part with a hug as he prepares to fly back out of town.
“Fried Turkey” did not include any significant racially-based discussion, and briefly displayed one white guest character, Kelsey Grammer, as a patron of Davis’ restaurant. Other white patrons were seen in the background, but were not given speaking parts. Work-based discussion consisted only of each of the characters recognizing Preston because of his nationally-known legal career.

**Living Single Work Condition—No Race Discussed (LSCWNRD)**

The episode entitled “Quittin’ Time” served as the work condition video from *Living Single*, and depicts an altercation at work between Khadijah and her cousin, Synclaire. Khadijah owns and publishes an urban magazine, “Flava,” and Synclaire has been hired as her personal assistant. When Synclaire witnesses Khadijah promoting another staff member, she confronts her employer about why she has not been given more responsibility around the office. Khadijah offers to hear her out, if she can tell her what responsibilities exactly she would like to be given, knowing that Synclaire more than likely has not thought her request through. Synclaire goes home to discuss what she would like to do, and asks her friends what drew them to each of their current careers. In the midst of the discussion, she realizes she would like to be promoted to office manager, but when she takes her decision to Khadijah in the morning, it is not received well as Khadijah does not think Synclaire is ready to handle such a position. Synclaire quits as a result and tries out different types of employment, while Khadijah struggles with Synclaire’s hard-nosed, old-fashioned replacement. In the end, the two come to a compromise that allows Khadijah to have her former assistant back and gives Synclaire more responsibility around the office.
“Quittin’ Time” did not include any significant racial discussion, and showed one white character as a potential employer who interviews Synclaire for a job after she quits working for the magazine. The majority of the scenes took place in a professional setting of some sort, except for the brief scenes at the characters’ personal homes in which discussion of their careers still took place.

Girlfriends Work Condition—Race Discussed (GFWCRD)

“Friends, Colleagues, Brothers,” which is the episode chosen for this condition, highlighted a conflict at work between the main characters Joan and William, who both work as attorneys for the Swedelson & Associates law firm. The conflict first begins when Joan feels like she is being overlooked in the discussion of a case with her colleagues, even though she is one of the junior partners. After going home and discussing her suspicions with some of her female friends, she decides to try out a different image at the next staff meeting, but comes out with the same results. To make the conflict worse, one of her friends, William, cuts her off while she is trying to make a point and makes the point instead of her, thus getting the credit for the idea he proposed. Joan protests his actions in front of everyone and storms out of the meeting. In her office later, she and William have a heated discussion about why she thinks William should have empathized with her more because she was the only African-American female attorney, and he is the only African-American male attorney at the firm. According to Joan, this association automatically demands certain protections from one another. William asserts that Joan’s problems in the boardroom are not coming from her race or her gender, but from the fact that she does not know how to speak her colleagues’
language or how to compete for attention the way they do. Joan takes his suggestions into the final meeting and stands up for herself more, earning a position of high responsibility on the next case. In addition, when someone attempts to cut her off, William steps in to give her the floor again.

This episode included prominent and relevant racial discussion and featured a more diverse cast of characters, made up mostly of Joan and William’s boss and employees. All but one of the scenes took place at the law firm; in the one scene that takes place at Joan’s home, the characters are discussing how to handle her problems at work.

Living Single Mixed Condition—No Race Discussed (LSMCNRD)

In “Full Court Press,” the episode chosen for this condition, three of the main female characters, Khadijah, Synclaire, and Regine, are involved in a car accident when Khadijah’s car is damaged at an intersection by an elderly driver. Maxine, an attorney, offers to take the case on for Khadijah. Wanting to avoid a long, drawn-out legal battle, Khadijah offers to meet with the other driver at her office to settle outside of court, and takes Maxine along for safe measure. Upon arrival, the other driver is escorted by one of the city’s best injury lawyers, and Khadijah brings Maxine in from the wings. When Maxine’s pride makes the procedure more complex than necessary, however, Khadijah fires her and decides to handle it herself again. At the court date, Khadijah realizes that she is in over her head, and luckily, Maxine is present to bail her out, which she does while earning a nice payout for her client.
As a subplot in the episode, the two main male characters, Kyle and Overton, feel as though they are allowing themselves to get out of shape after being unable to carry a heavy object together. To resolve this, they begin working out at a local gym but run into all types of obstacles, such as pride, pretty women, and technologically advanced workout machines.

“Full Court Press” does not involve any racial discussion, but does feature a more diverse cast of characters. Since the major plot deals with a legal case that Maxine is handling, a good portion of the scenes either involve her discussing her legal profession, or actually show her practicing law.

**Girlfriends Mixed Condition—Race Discussed (GFMCRD)**

In the episode chosen for this condition, “Never a Bridesmaid,” the main plot involves the attorney Joan and her personal assistant and friend, Mya, who is planning a ceremony to renew her vows with her husband. Joan has offered to help plan the affair, and soon gets caught up in creating a wedding that fits her own fantasy more than Mya’s. The tension increases when Joan visits Mya’s home on the other side of town to meet Mya’s mother and the other bridesmaids, who all come from the “hood,” a different social background than Joan’s. Joan voices her opinions, which counter all of the pieces that have already been put in place, and makes it apparent that she thinks Mya’s ideas are not classy enough. The conflict reaches a climax when Mya and Joan are at work together the next day, and Joan tries unsuccessfully to apologize by pointing out how she was trying to help. Mya responds by showing Joan how the problem lies in her thinking that “help” needs to be given in the first place, and explaining how frustrating it is for her to
have to teach another African-American woman why the life she lives isn’t a sob story when she already has to convince people of other races. On the day of the wedding, Joan gives Mya a real apology and their friendship is repaired.

As a subplot, Toni, Lynn, and William discuss interracial dating after noting how many interracial couples there are in the city where they live. Toni believes interracial dating is the reason she has such a hard time finding a man, but William presents another point of view by talking about how difficult it is for him to attract an African-American woman because of how far removed he is from certain stereotypes. Thus, Toni and Lynn make it their mission to reconcile African-American men with their female counterparts, beginning by helping William get a date at Mya’s wedding.

This episode has plenty of racial discussion highlighting class separation within the African-American community and interracial dating, but lacks any prominent characters of another race. Although none of the discussion deals with the workplace, some of the scenes take place at the law firm where Mya, Joan, and William work.

Procedure. Each participant was instructed to complete a pretest by giving basic demographic information and filling out the Ethnic Identity Scale (Phinney, 1992). Afterward, they were given one of six selected sitcom episodes to watch. The two sitcoms used were Living Single and Girlfriends, both of which are relatively contemporary television shows with which most of the participants seemed to be familiar. Both shows depict the lives of young, adult, African-American males and females as they interact with each other and members of both their racial in-groups and out-groups.
Viewing took place either on the experimenter’s laptop or on a desktop computer in one of the facility’s computer labs.

After the viewing, they were given a questionnaire that corresponded with the episode they watched in terms of the characters they observed. The questionnaires ranged in length from three to six pages, depending on how many characters were featured in the condition. They were first asked to rate the positivity or negativity of the portrayals of men and women, and black and white characters from “very negatively” to “very positively.” These items were adapted from Fujioka’s (2005) Affective Evaluation of Portrayals Scale. This was measured to see if their perceptions of positivity versus negativity influenced whether or not they would see a threat to the characters as a threat to themselves. Next, they were asked a series of questions about each featured character to determine how much they felt the characters’ ethnic identities were threatened within the workplace. This portion of the questionnaire was adapted from Ethier and Deaux’s (1990) Perceived Threat Scale. Following this section, participants were asked to indicate whether they felt as though each character was a representative of the participants’ race, gender, and age group. They were also asked to indicate whether they admired how each character represented its race, gender, or age group. They did so each time with the use of a scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly disagree.” These items were used to measure whether or not the participants thought of the characters as prototypical for each social category. Finally, they were asked to imagine that they worked where the characters worked, and were given Ethier and Deaux’s (1990) Perceived Threat Scale again to measure how much threat they perceived to their own ethnic identities in each
hypothetical scenario. With these items, the participants were reminded of what each character did for a living and where they worked.
Chapter Four: Results

The following results were determined based on the aforementioned hypotheses. In order to test these four hypotheses, the experimenter conducted a series of one- and two-way ANOVAs, and conducted further analyses to examine the results from the ANOVAs that appeared especially interesting. Because media condition surfaced as a significant variable in support of all but one of the hypotheses, the means for each of the dependent variables across conditions are shown in Table One. It is also important to note that the dependent variables were constructed using only the responses regarding characters one and two in each condition. This decision was made because of the varying numbers of characters observed across conditions, which ranged from two to six characters. Each condition did feature at least two characters prominently.

Perceived Threat to the Character’s Ethnic Identity: Hypothesis One predicted that the perceived threat to the ethnic identities of characters one and two would be affected by both the media condition and the participants’ employment status. A two-way ANOVA was conducted with media condition and employment status as the independent variables, and partial support was found for this hypothesis. No significant interaction was found between the media condition and employment status (F (5, 75) = .778, p = .569). However, a main effect was found for media condition (F (5, 75) = 7.551, p = .001). Closer examination of the means using pairwise comparisons indicated that participants felt as though the characters’ ethnic identities were more threatened when
they viewed the *Girlfriends* Work Condition in which race was discussed (M = 3.99, SD = 0.82) than they were when they viewed the *Living Single* Work Condition in which race was not discussed (M = 2.32, SD = 0.80, p<.001). Threat to the character’s ethnic identity was highest in both of the conditions in which race was explicitly discussed (*Girlfriends* Work Condition: M = 3.99, SD = 0.82; *Girlfriends* Mixed Condition: M = 3.97, SD = 0.94).

*Employment status* had no significant effect on perceived threat to the character’s ethnic identity (F (1, 75) = .229, p = .633).

*Perceived Threat to the Participant’s Own Ethnic Identity:* Hypothesis Two predicted that perceived threat to the participant’s own ethnic identity while viewing the episodes would be affected by which *media condition* they were in and their *employment status*. To test this hypothesis, a two-way ANOVA was conducted with *media condition* and *employment status* as the independent variables, and partial support was found. There was no significant interaction between *media condition* and *employment status* (F (5, 81) = .279, p = .924). However, a main effect was found once again for *media condition* (F (5, 81) = 2.82, p = .021). Upon closer inspection with pairwise comparisons between *media condition* and threat to own ID, it was found that participants felt as though their own ethnic identities would be most threatened in the positions of the characters they viewed in the *Girlfriends* Mixed Condition where race was discussed (M = 7.54, SD = 2.47); they felt least threatened in the positions of the characters observed in *Living Single*’s Mixed Condition (M = 4.49, SD = 2.48, p < .001).

*Representation:* Hypothesis Three predicted that participants’ perception of characters as representatives of their social in-groups based on race and age would be
affected by the *media condition* they are placed in, and the participants’ *employment status*. To test this hypothesis, a two-way ANOVA was conducted with *media condition* and *employment status* as the independent variables. No support was found for this hypothesis. There was no significant interaction between *media condition* and *employment status* (F (5, 78) = .754, p = .586). Neither *media condition* (F (5, 78) = .469, p = .798) nor *employment status* (F (1, 78) = .312, p = .578) affected whether or not participants saw the characters as representatives of their racial and age in-groups. No further examinations were made concerning the means related to *representation*.

**Admiration:** Hypothesis Four predicted that participants’ admiration of the characters would be affected by what *media condition* they were placed in, but not by the participants’ employment status. A two-way ANOVA was conducted with *media condition* and *employment status* as the independent variables. Full support was found for this hypothesis. There was no significant interaction between *media condition* and *employment status* (F (5, 80) = .764, p = .578). There was a main effect found for *media condition* (F (5, 80) = 2.647, p = .029). Examination of the means through pairwise comparisons showed that participants admired characters one and two more when they viewed the mixed episode of *Living Single* when no race was discussed (M = 6.10, SD = .346) than when they viewed the mixed episode of *Girlfriends* where race was discussed (M = 4.43, SD = .483, p < .006).

There was no significant effect found for *employment status* (F (1, 80) = .358, p = .551).

**Exploration:** After testing the four main hypotheses and analyzing the results, a few patterns seemed to emerge among the pairwise comparisons between media
condition and the dependent variables. In order to understand how strong these patterns actually were and better understand what they might mean, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Three new variables were created: discussion of race (i.e. race discussed, no race discussed), setting (i.e. casual, mixed, or work), and program (i.e. *Living Single* or *Girlfriends*). Conditions were grouped accordingly in each variable. These three variables were used as predictors, and run with *threat to own identity* and *threat to character’s identity* separately. The linear combination of discussion of race, setting, and program was significantly related to *threat to character’s identity*, $R^2 = .339$, $F(3, 84) = 14.35$, $p < .001$. The same linear combination was significantly related to *threat to own identity*, $R^2 = .184$, $F(3, 90) = 6.78$, $p < .001$. Although the linear combinations were significant, with regard to the regression conducted with *threat to character’s identity*, only the discussion of race ($p = .05$) and the type of program ($p < .05$) were statistically significant; with regard to the regression conducted with *threat to own identity*, only the type of program being watched was marginally significant ($p = .06$).
Chapter Five: Discussion

*Hypothesis One: Perceived Threat to the Character’s Ethnic Identity.* With respect to this variable, it was predicted that perceived threat to the character’s ethnic identity would be influenced by which media condition the participants were placed in, as well as by their employment status, which would give the experimenter some idea of how much personal experience they might have with workplace scenarios. Partial support was found for this hypothesis in that whether the participants were currently working or not had no significant effect on whether or not they perceived a threat to the characters’ ethnic identity. Media condition, on the other hand, had a very significant effect on how much threat they perceived to the characters’ ethnic identity. What this tells us with some certainty is that in the instance of this experiment, how much the participants felt the characters they observed could maintain and/or express their ethnic identities had little to nothing to do with the direct experiences they have had themselves in the professional arena. This could have been because their direct work experiences are not on the same level with the type of jobs they would aspire to obtain once they have finished their degree, which is something the experimenter anticipated. Thus, how participants felt about the “safety” of the characters’ ethnic identities were largely based on what they were seeing right then and there on the screen.

Upon closer inspections of the means that were mentioned with regard to this variable, two findings stand out. The conditions with the two highest means for perceived
threat to the character’s ethnic identity were the only two conditions that involved racial discussion (GFWCRD: M = 3.99; GFMCRD: M = 3.97). This could indicate that the specific discussion of racially-based tensions or problems among the characters leads viewers to believe that the characters involved in the discussion are at a greater risk for having their ethnically-based social identities threatened. If one believes this, one might shy away from getting involved in racial discussions around the workplace in the real world. First glance would have one think that these high means are a reflection of the amount of racial discussion in the episodes. However, the condition with the third highest mean was the third *Girlfriends* condition, which involved no racial discussion, and depicted entirely casual scenes. Was it possible that the television show *Girlfriends* just victimized its characters more often? In order to understand the answer to this question, and how both racial discussion and the type of program actually influenced this variable, the aforementioned exploration took place. Interestingly, the fact that participants were watching *Girlfriends* as opposed to *Living Single* had a weaker but more significant effect on the amount of threat that was perceived (β = .310, p = .042), while the presence of racial discussion had a stronger but only marginally significant effect on the perception of threat (β = .343, p = .051). Thus it is possible that the show *Girlfriends* simply appears more threatening to its viewers than *Living Single*, but the influence of specific racial discussion did play a notable role.

**Hypothesis Two: Perceived Threat to the Participant's Own Ethnic Identity.** This hypothesis predicted that the amount of threat the participants perceived with regard to their own ethnic identity after viewing the various episodes would be influenced by media condition and current employment status as well. Once again, this hypothesis only
found partial support after the analysis took place, and it found it along the same lines that the first hypothesis did. There was no significant effect between the perceived threat toward the participants themselves and their current employment status, indicating once again that personal experience did not actually affect their thinking of how safe their ethnic identities would if they were in the shoes of the characters at work. Once again, though, there was a significant effect on perceived threat by media condition. In this case, the three Girlfriends conditions drew the highest means for perceived threat, although the second highest mean came from a condition in which no race was discussed (GFCCNRD). Exploration was done again to find out whether or not racial discussion, setting, and type of program were having an unknown impact on the results. This time, only the type of program being watched had a marginally significant effect on how threatened the participants felt ($\beta = .306$, $p = .055$); none of the other variables had a significant effect on perceived threat to oneself. This makes sense considering the conditions that garnered the two highest means were from the same sitcom, but did not have the same amounts of racial discussion.

**Hypothesis Three: Representation.** With this hypothesis, it was predicted that whether or not participants identified characters as representatives of their race and age group would be influenced by media condition and employment status; this hypothesis failed to garner any support. More than likely, this was a result of the participants’ interpretation of the item that asked about representation. Most of the participants answered at the extremes based on whether or not the characters were visibly the same race as they were; they answered similarly to the representation item concerning age. If
this were truly the case, it would explain why it did not matter what media condition the participants were placed in, or what their employment status was.

_Hypothesis Four: Admiration._ Finally the fourth hypothesis predicted that the participants’ admiration for the characters would be based upon the media condition they were placed in, but not on their employment status. This hypothesis was fully supported, as a main effect was found for media condition, but not for status. What was surprising about what came out of this hypothesis was the direction in which admiration for characters went as opposed to perceived threat to the character’s ethnic identity. The characters from the Living Single Mixed Condition in which no racial issues were discussed received the most admiration from the participants, while the characters from the Girlfriends Mixed Condition in which race was discussed received the least admiration. These results are almost exactly opposite what was found with regard to the amount of perceived threat to the characters’ ethnic identities; the only difference is that the Living Single Mixed Condition received the second to lowest mean scores on threat and not the lowest.

This appeared interesting to the author because prior to seeing the findings, it was expected that participants would feel a greater sense of admiration for the characters that they believed had to face more adversity with regard to their ethnicity while at work. Instead, the opposite appears to be true: the participants seem to have the least amount of admiration for the characters that they indicated dealt with the highest threat to their ethnic identities. It is not immediately clear what may have caused this unexpected discrepancy, but the author is interested in looking further into the literature on intragroup attitudes to arrive at a possible explanation.
References


*Journal of Black Studies, 15*(1), 79-100.


Appendix A: Pretest

The Ohio State University
School of Communication

Thank you for participating in our research study. For the purposes of matching your forms with one another while still protecting your anonymity, please provide the following information.

Mother’s Maiden Name: _________________________________________________

Favorite Movie: ________________________________________________________

Favorite Color: _________________________________________________________

Please provide the following information as clearly as possible:

1. What is your age? _____________________________________________________

2. What is the participant’s classification? _________________________________

3. What is your gender? _________________________________________________

4. What is your race/ethnicity? __________________________________________

5. What is your employment status? (Circle One)
   
   Full-Time  Part-Time  None

Please circle the number that best indicates how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am happy that I am a member of the ethnic group I belong to.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel a strong attachment to my ethnic group.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Sample Questionnaire

The Ohio State University
School of Communication

For the purposes of matching your forms with one another while still protecting your anonymity, please provide the following information.

Mother's Maiden Name: __________________________________________________

Favorite Movie: _________________________________________________________

Favorite Color: __________________________________________________________

Please consider the group mentioned in each item, and indicate how positively or negatively you viewed its portrayal in the media clips (1 = very negatively, 7 = very positively).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very negatively</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Very positively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In the TV sitcom “Girlfriends,” I feel African-Americans were depicted…</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In the TV sitcom “Girlfriends,” I feel Caucasians were depicted…</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In the TV sitcom “Girlfriends,” I feel men were depicted…</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In the TV sitcom “Girlfriends,” I feel women were depicted…</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please consider the group mentioned in each item, and indicate how accurately you viewed its portrayal in the media clips (1 = not accurately at all, 7 = very accurately).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not accurately at all</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Very accurately</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In the TV sitcom “Girlfriends,” I feel African-Americans were depicted…</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In the TV sitcom “Girlfriends,” I feel Caucasians were depicted…</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In the TV sitcom “Girlfriends,” I feel men were depicted…</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In the TV sitcom “Girlfriends,” I feel women were depicted…</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keeping in mind the media clips that you just viewed, please express your opinions by answering the following questions to the best of your ability. Please indicate your level of agreement by choosing a number on the scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel that Joan has to change herself to fit in at work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel that Mya has to change herself to fit in at work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Joan tries not to show the parts of her that are ‘ethnically’ based.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>4. Mya tries not to show the parts of her that are ‘ethnically’ based.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Joan often seems like a chameleon, having to change her colors depending on the ethnicity of the person she is with.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>6. Mya often seems like a chameleon, having to change her colors depending on the ethnicity of the person she is with.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Joan’s ethnicity seems to be incompatible with the people she encounters and the things she does at work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mya’s ethnicity seems to be incompatible with the people she encounters and the things she does at work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Joan cannot talk to her colleagues at work about her family, friends, or culture.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Mya cannot talk to her colleagues at work about her family, friends, or culture.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Joan cannot talk to her family or friends about her colleagues at work or about what she does at work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Mya cannot talk to her family or friends about her colleagues at work or about what she does at work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I feel that Joan is a representative of my gender.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I feel that Mya is a representative of my gender.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I feel that Joan is a representative of my race.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I feel that Mya is a representative of my race.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I feel that Joan is a representative of my age group.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I feel that Mya is a representative of my age group.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I admire Joan for the way she represents her gender.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I admire Mya for the way she represents her gender.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I admire Joan for the way she represents her race.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I admire Mya for the way she represents her race.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I admire Joan for the way she represents her age group.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I admire Mya for the way she represents her age group.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now imagine that you are in Joan’s position in the following scenarios. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by choosing a number on the scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).
Imagine that, like Joan, you are employed as an attorney at the law firm, Swedelson and Associates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel that I would have to change myself to fit in at work.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I would try not to show the parts of me that are ‘ethnically’ based.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I would often feel like a chameleon, having to change my colors depending on the ethnicity of the person at work that I am with.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. My ethnicity seems incompatible with the people I would encounter and the things I would do at work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I could not talk to my colleagues at work about my family or culture.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I could not talk to my family about my colleagues at work or about what I do at work.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now imagine that you are in Mya’s position in the following scenarios. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by choosing a number on the scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Imagine that, like Mya, you are employed as an executive assistant at the law firm, Swedelson and Associates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. I feel that I would have to change myself to fit in at work.</td>
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<td>6. I could not talk to my family about my colleagues at work or about what I do at work.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Tables
Table 1: Description of the plots within each condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Casual Condition</th>
<th>Mixed Condition</th>
<th>Work Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living Single</td>
<td>Four female and two male characters decide to spend a night out on the town to liven their normally dull weekend.</td>
<td>A lawyer tries to help her friend, a magazine publisher, by representing her when she’s rear-ended by an elderly woman. Two of the male characters try to get themselves back in shape by rejoining a gym, and find the task to be greater than they anticipated.</td>
<td>A magazine publisher’s assistant, who also happens to be her cousin, quits and looks for another form of employment when she is denied a promotion and more responsibility around the office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girlfriends</td>
<td>One female character (Joan) tries to have a romantic Thanksgiving dinner alone with a male character (Preston) at her home, but is interrupted by a mix of other characters dropping in.</td>
<td>A lawyer gets into a fight with her friend, who is also her executive assistant, when she disagrees with her wedding plans. Two female characters try to help their friend with a medical ailment caused by stress by taking her with them to their yoga classes.</td>
<td>A female junior partner feels overlooked among her colleagues at the law firm, and becomes even more upset when another African-American lawyer fails to stand up for her in a meeting. She attributes her “mistreatment” to being an African-American female.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Mean Responses for the Casual, Mixed, and Work Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat to Own ID</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>7.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to Character’s ID</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation*</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiration</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Threat to Own ID: The ANOVA was significant, F (5, 88) = 4.370, p = .001. Participants felt their ethnic identity was more threatened when they viewed GFMCRD (M = 7.54, SD = 2.47) than it was when they viewed LSMCNRD (M = 4.49, SD = 2.48, p<.001).

Threat to Character’s ID: The ANOVA was significant, F (5, 82) = 8.55, p = .001. Participants felt that the characters’ ethnic identities were more threatened when they viewed GFWCRD (M = 3.99, SD = 0.82) than they were when they viewed LSWCNRD (M = 2.32, SD = 0.80, p<.001).

Representation: The ANOVA was not significant, F (5, 78) = .469, p = .798.

Admiration: The ANOVA was significant, F (5, 80) = 2.647, p = .029. Participants admired characters one and two more when they viewed the mixed episode of Living Single when no race was discussed (M = 6.10, SD = .346) than when they viewed the mixed episode of Girlfriends where race was discussed (M = 4.43, SD = .483, p < .006).
Table 3: Perceived Threat Based on Discussion of Race, Setting, and Type of Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Threat to Character’s ID</th>
<th>Threat to Own ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of Race</td>
<td>.343*</td>
<td>.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting (i.e. Work, Casual,</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>-.162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>.310*</td>
<td>.306*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Threat to Character’s ID: R_ = .339, F(3, 84) = 14.35, p < .001. Perceived threat to the character’s ethnic identity was significantly influenced by both the discussion of race within the episodes (p = .051) and which program was being watched (p = .042).

Threat to Own ID: R_ = .184, F(3, 90) = 6.78, p < .001. Perceived threat to one’s own ethnic identity was significantly influenced only by which program was being watched (p = .055).