

Ethnic Identity in an Online World

Thesis

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By
Elly Grekin B.A.
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Thesis Committee:
Osei Appiah, Advisor
Dan McDonald

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Abstract

This study investigated whether peoples perceptions of a dating website change based on the image that was featured on the site. It examined the impact that a dating website featuring images of couples of different races has on Black participants and whether their level of ethnic identification affected their perception of the site. Online dating has become an increasingly growing market. The Internet offers access to a much larger market of potential romantic partners than can any other offline media, such as a newspaper or magazine. Most mainstream websites are using characters and cultural cues that cater to white audiences without realizing that a significant number of Black, Hispanic and Asians are also using online methods in order to try and find dates. One hundred and twenty black participants were randomly assigned to view one of six different images of a dating website: a site featuring 1) a Black couple; 2) a Black man and a White woman; 3) a White man and a Black woman; 4) a White couple; 5) an ethnically ambiguous couple; 6) a control condition. The researcher had digitally manipulated the image of the couples that were used in the website while all of the other visual features of the site remained constant. The participants evaluated the website based on (1) identification with characters; (2) attitude toward the website; (3) compatibility of the couple featured on the website (4) perceived sexual intimacy between the couple on the website.

Results indicated strong Black identifiers had a more positive attitude toward and related more strongly to the website featuring a Black couple than they did the website featuring a White couple. They also perceived the Black couple as being more sexual intimate than the white couple.

These findings show that strong ethnic identifiers are affected by the race of the characters on websites. Since there are a large number of ethnic minorities using these online dating websites, these websites should think of using images of Black couples or interracial couples on their sites as well as the images of white couples in order to appeal to a larger market and potentially interest people that would not otherwise pay attention to their site.

Dedication

Dedicated to my Bubby.

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Thanks to my mom for always having an ear and a mouth ready for me when I call.

Vita

2001.....Herziah High School
2003.....Associates degree Cinema and Communication, Dawson College
2006.....B.A. Specialization in Communication, Concordia University
2009.....M.A. Communication, The Ohio State University

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Numerous advertising studies have examined audiences' attitudes towards ads of varied racial composition (i.e., ads containing all black models, all white models, or models of both races). Most of these advertisements look at how members of the majority population view ads featuring ethnic-minority models in general-audience media. What has not been addressed in much detail is how ethnic minorities, specifically Blacks who are now being heavily targeted through media, view advertisements featuring majority models, minority models or mixed race advertisements. An aspect that researchers have not looked at in much detail in the past is how the particular object that is being advertised is likely to influence evaluations of the advertisement. If the object (or in this particular case, the company) seems to fit with the cultural and racial ideals that the person has, then they are more inclined to see themselves benefitting from the product and appropriating a positive position towards it. If, however, they cannot relate to the people, images or advertisement at all, then they will have a hard time picturing themselves using the product and will not support it. In the case of a dating website, it is important for people to be able to look at the featured couples and see themselves identifying with the characters portrayed on the screen. They will then be more inclined to want to use the site and become like the people shown. If, on the other hand, they cannot identify with those people, specifically identifying with them racially (either people of a different race, or people dating someone of a different race) then they will not be inclined to use the services being promoted.

As previously mentioned there are many studies that have examined ethnic minorities and their perceptions of media, however there are not as many that focus on these minorities and their perceptions of online media. About 7.5 million people, 36% of all Black adults, now have Internet access compared to only 23% of Blacks having been online in 1998 (Spooner, Rainie, 2000). As the number of Black internet users increases it is important to understand their opinions of these online sites. Since they are an increasing market, it is important to think of them when creating sites and when making creative decisions. While most dating sites are non-denominational in terms of race, culture or interest, the images that appear on these sites are mainly images of White heterosexual couples. These images, while mainstream, may not appeal to the majority of the websites users and so the importance of this study is to make sure that it is understood how people accept information and how it affects their use of certain media.

This study is important to the industry of online dating because there is not a lot of research done on dating websites and the perceptions that people have about them. This is very important for advertisements of these websites because it can help define how people perceive others on the sites based on the images that are created for them. The images on these web pages are what make people initially attracted to the site (if they do not previously know of it by reputation) and so it would seem to be important to understand different evaluations that people have towards these websites based on their impressions of the images. There is almost no research done that touches on different races and their uses and perceptions of online dating sites when the majority of the users of these sites are from racial minorities. This implies that these businesses can benefit

from understanding more about what these minority groups look for in a dating site and what they don't like or relate to.

These concepts also contribute to the study of interracial dating because they indicate the growing acceptance of interracial couples, which seems to be something that, though not considered mainstream, has definitely become more commonplace and more acceptable. This study can help define whether the impression that it has become more acceptable is accurate. It can also help us to understand if people who will not participate in interracial dating, might not be bothered by others doing it. This would also be good to know because that would mean that tolerance levels of interracial relationships are increasing.

Chapter 2: Literary review

It is not surprising that with the rapid expansion of the Internet and our growing dependency on it for human interaction, that online dating has become a growing market. A recent study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (Madden & Lenhart, 2006) a nonprofit research organization, estimated that out of 10 million Internet users who are single and looking for a partner, 74% have used the Internet to find one. The Internet can offer access to a much larger market of potential romantic partners than can any offline media, such as a newspaper or magazine ads (Gunter, 2007). It also has the interactive capacity that allows users to engage in rapid, repeated correspondence with each other without sharing any of their personal information or their identity. This allows users to engage in virtual relationships with potential partners from a safe distance and to discontinue such alliances whenever they choose ("Online", 2002). Many people feel that this is a safer and less time consuming way to meet people than having to go on blind dates and meet people without knowing anything about them beforehand (Couch & Liamputtong, 2008). There are many reasons why people use online dating sites in order to meet others. People feel they have no time to go out and meet people (Moonan, 2008), they feel as though they have exhausted the pool of eligible people in their circle (Frenkel, 2007), they use them as part of a new trend in physical and emotional therapy (Stone, 2008), as well as many other personal reasons. Psychologist and hypnotherapist Jo Robinson (2008) believes

that the internet provides emotional resilience for people who have recently gotten out of a serious relationship.

Dating and socializing sites such as *Match.com* attract more than 4 million visitors per month (Greenspan, 2003). Pew Internet & American Life Project found that an estimated two million married Internet users in America met their spouses online, that is about half the total number of people who married last year (Gamerman, 2006).

The idea that Internet dating has become so popular is hardly surprising. On the Internet, it is very easy to meet new people who are very similar to yourself without having to leave your house (Cooper & Sportolari, 1997; McKenna & Bargh, 2000). People also like the fact that they can get to know each other in advance by looking at profiles and chatting instead of wasting their time by having to meet them all in person (Couch, 2008).

Jeff Gavin, a lecturer in psychology, believes that couples who meet and get to know each other online have the potential to develop stronger relationships with each other than couples who meet in a more traditional way ("Online", 2002). Engaging in an online courtship has many benefits. Men tend to be more open with their feelings in a chatroom than they would be in a bar, women tend to be more openly sexual and flirtatious because they have more control over how they present themselves (Valkenburg & Peter, 2005). Relationships that might take months to develop in traditional, real world dating can take only weeks or even days to form online (Rosen, Cheever, Cummings, Felt, 2007). Online dating usually begins with a flurry of e-mail messages, each more intimate than the last. Andrea Baker, an associate professor of sociology at Ohio

University, believes that people who interact online take the time to get to know each other better before meeting than they would in traditional interactions (“Online”, 2002). They search out areas of compatibility and areas of interest so the success rates of these relationships can very well be higher than traditional relationships. These online relationships focus less on physical attractiveness and people have more control over how they present themselves (Cooper & Sportolari, 1997; Levine, 2000). As a result, distance and personal space can easily be maintained (Cooper & Sportolari, 1997) and these relationships can grow to have much greater levels of self-disclosure much sooner than traditional relationships (Levin, et al., 2007). Greater self disclosure can happen because there are no physical or visible barriers such as stuttering (McKenna & Bargh, 1999) or visible shyness and no one can be judged if they are less physically attractive or have less social skills (McKenna, Green & Gleason, 2002). These are all common reasons for people to not be able to develop relationships to the point of intimate disclosure in a traditional setting. Therefore without those barriers, it should be much easier for them to self-disclose in an online situation. This aspect is even more important in Internet dating because the people who are involved anticipate future interaction, which increases the depth of communication (Walther, 1994; Walther, 1996; Walther & Parks, 2002).

Online daters share some characteristics with traditional daters including the qualities they look for in a potential partner (Rosen, et al, 2007). However, they are also different in the importance they place on attractiveness and communication style. Although both groups felt physical appearance was the least important quality in a potential date, online daters felt it was more important than traditional daters, perhaps because online, this information was limited to only the posted photographs while

traditional daters are able to see the person live (McKenna, Green & Gleason, 2002). Online daters also felt that communication style was more important than did traditional daters, which makes sense given that the primary mode of gathering information for online daters is via written communication. People who find it easy to express themselves and to form real relationships in a traditional setting will not need to express their true selves over the internet. The more personal issues that someone has which keeps them from relating to people in traditional interactions, the more need they will have to express themselves and form connections over the Internet (McKenna, Green & Gleason, 2002).

Racial similarities and cultural cues

While men and women use the Internet to the same degree, the same cannot be said for people of different ethnicities. Even though there are many new more distinct dating websites, known as niche dating sites (Stone, 2008), such as a dating website for Christians (Christiansingles.com), for Jewish people (jdate.com), for Black people (blacksingles.com), and many others, the top dating websites are actually non specific in terms of race or ethnicity (e-harmony.com, match.com and chemistry.com). Although few population statistics are available, DatingResearch.com (2004) reported the match.com members were primarily male (60%), over 30 (54%), and had attended college (79%). While these demographics help narrow down who uses these websites, it says nothing about what race and ethnic group to which most of these users belong. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project (Spooner & Rainie, 2000) 36% of all Black adults, about 7.5 million people, now have Internet access compared to only 23% of Blacks having been online in 1998. Of these online Blacks, 13% of them

participate in online dating versus only 10% of online White users and 14% of online Hispanics. This is an important difference in terms of how many users are actually using the web to meet others. These non-racially specific websites are using characters and cultural cues that cater to White audiences without realizing that a significant number of Black, Hispanic and Asians are also using online methods in order to try and find dates.

Perhaps being exposed to these cues that are aimed at White audiences might make these racial minorities less inclined to use the non-racially specific websites instead of the ones geared specifically towards their race or ethnicity. This could on the other hand, indicate that they are willing to date outside of their specific ethnicity or race in order to find love by using these sites (Cornwell & Lundgren, 2001).

The problem with the race and ethnicity specific dating websites is that they tend to segregate the users to their specific subculture and exclude people who do not belong to their subgroup. It is not an intentional segregation, only an accidental one, done out of ignorance for the actual demographic of the websites users. Perhaps users are just as interested in dating people of other cultures and races as they are their own. Since the images on these mainstream sites tend to revolve around White couples, it leads us to wonder whether the people from other races use these websites because they are interested in dating interracially. If so, then how important is the featured image on these websites? If these sites featured images of interracial couples, would they be viewed as more favorable by people of these ethnic and racial minorities?

Implications of mainstream websites

Some researchers argue that when there are symbols, characters and values within an advertisement or webpage that are taken from the intended audience, the audience will better identify with the message or product (Pitts et al., 1989). Studies have also shown that the more similarities a person finds with a character within a viewed media, the more they are going to like it and perceive themselves to be the intended audience (Aaker, Brumbaugh & Grier, 2000). This is especially true for members of a group with strong levels of ethnic identity. The race of a person within an advertisement or image on a website can be extremely important for people to feel a sense of connection to them (Whittler, 1989). In terms of the dating websites, when the companies choose to use predominantly White images on their site, they are risking not connecting with a large group of online users. With the majority of users on these dating websites being Black or Hispanic (Spooner & Rainie, 2000) these dating websites should understand the implications of continuing to use mainly White images on their sites. There has been a lot of research that has shown that Whites do not respond negatively to advertisements or products that are promoted by Black models. In fact, they seem to be less affected by a model's race or ethnicity and instead they focus on similarities between themselves and the source that are less race or ethnic specific (e.g., values, dress, lifestyle, appearance) (Appiah, 2001a). While other studies have shown that when viewers feel a high level of similarity between themselves and the characters on the advertisement they relate more to the product or service being advertised, Black audiences who identify with Black characters were found to believe more strongly that they were the intended target audience of those media and relate to it more favorably (Aaker et. al., 2000; Appiah,

2001a, 2001b; Whittler, 1989; Whittler & Spira, 2002). Therefore, in terms of a dating website, Black internet users who identify with Black characters should be more inclined to relate to and use a website that features images of Black couples over a website that features a White couple.

Interracial relationships

There are different theories as to why interracial relationships occur. According to Harris & Kalbfleisch (2000), demographics (i.e. socioeconomic status, education, occupation, residence) and mutual attraction contribute to the initiation, development, and maintenance of an interracial relationship. Conversely, Kouri and Lasswell (1993) hypothesize that interracial relationships occur *because* of racial difference, where at least one partner finds the racial differences in the other appealing. Based on data analysis, Murstein, Merigihi & Malloy (1989) surmise that individuals involved in interracial romantic relationships are sometimes forced to justify their relationship to themselves, their family, and a race-consumed society. This concern is behaviorally manifested when partners choose a racially different partner who is more attractive than themselves, whose attractiveness level makes up for the racial difference in the relationship.

With the increase of people of different ethnicities and races being exposed to each other in work related and social situations, the potential for interracial relationships is inevitably going to rise (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000). Although the numbers of interracial daters continues to increase, research on race, ethnicity and gender has generally found that Whites date outside their group less frequently than members of the

other ethnic and racial groups do (Yancey, 2002). The Whites who do choose to be involved in an interracial couple are most likely to be involved with Asians, followed by Hispanics and then by Blacks (Qian, 1997). Yancey (2002) also found that White, Black, and Latina women are less likely to date outside their group than are their male counterparts, while Asian American women are more likely to do so than are Asian American men.

While intermarriage remains an important marker of the strength of racial boundaries, dating relationships are becoming increasingly important (Feliciano, Robnett & Komaie, 2009). With divorce rates rising, people are spending less time in marital relationships; men and women are marrying later in life and an increasing proportion of adults spend more of their lives single (Schoen and Standish, 2001). While not everyone will marry in their lifetimes, nearly all will enter into dating relationships, which makes dating an important area of research.

Social distance

Social distance is the concept of people from different groups, such as social class, race and ethnicity being inherently separated by their differences. There are instances when the people from these different groups do interact and the more interaction there is, the smaller the social distance and the easier it is for these groups to relate to each other and get along (Akerlof, 1997). For individuals of any racial group to be comfortable dating someone of a different race, there has to be a small amount of social distance between the two groups (Lewis & Yancey, 1995). Members of different

groups that have sufficiently reduced social distance between each other can easily enter into a dating relationship (Hardey, 2004). An assessment of who is willing and likely to engage in interracial relationships is imperative for evaluating who tends to support interracial social interactions (Yancey, 2002). However, it is more difficult to interracially date if someone is constantly surrounded by people of their own race. The racial and social attitudes of these individuals who live racially segregated lives may be irrelevant in predicting whether they would inter-date as their lifestyle does not provide them with any opportunities to do so.

Who does inter-date

Phua and Kaufman (2003) found that most male internet daters prefer to date within their own race or Whites, and that Blacks are the least preferred group. White women are less likely than White men to inter-date but if they do choose to get involved with someone of another race, they are more likely to date Blacks than any other ethnicity (Sakai and Johnson, 1997). This would mean that while White men are more likely than White women to get involved in an interracial relationship when they have the opportunity to do so, of those interracial relationships they would be least inclined to date someone Black.

It has also been argued that Americans with higher levels of education are more racially progressive (Farley, Steeh, Kryson, Jackson and Reeves, 1994). If this observation is correct then highly educated Americans should exhibit more acceptance of interracial mixing than Americans who are less educated. Other studies say that

individuals tend to look for others from within their socioeconomic status and the higher the individuals status, the more likely they will be to interracial date (Tzeng, 2000). Yancey and Yancey (1998) found people who are looking to enter into interracial relationships are no more concerned with the socioeconomic status of their potential partners than the individuals who date partners of their own race. Much of the research that has been done on interracial dating is at odds and so it is important to look at it again from a new standpoint in order to understand who is willing to date interracial and if people are not, then what is their reasoning behind it.

There are many studies that show that racial attitudes among Whites have become increasingly tolerant (Schuman et al., 1997), and most White Americans do not object to inter-racial marriage (Ludwig, 2004). Interestingly, intermarriage rates do not mirror these positive attitudes. Currently, only about 4% of White Americans marry non-Whites (Qian and Lichter, 2007). If people are supposedly so accepting of interracial relationships, why are they not participating more? According to Gallagher (2003) many people, when responding to a survey, may be inclined to cover how they truly feel about these relationships in order to not appear racist. It could also be that people are open to others getting involved in these relationships but do not want to do so themselves (Feliciano, Robnett & Komaie, 2009). Thirdly, it is also possible, as I mentioned earlier, that there is little contact for some people between groups and so they do not have the opportunity to date someone of a different race. On the other hand, while there is a growing number of people willing to get involved in interracial relationships, there are still many people who are not interested at all (Wilson, McIntosh, & Insana, 2007).

Although only 5% of all marriages in the United States today cross ethnic or racial boundaries, the trend toward more inter-relationships is increasing and likely to continue to rise (Pugh, 2001). It's a number that continues to rise as more Black women begin to date men from other races. Black men are more likely to date, marry and cohabitate with women of a different race or culture, according to the report, at a rate more than double that of Black women and White men. Historically, Black men and women have very different experiences with regard to intimate relations with Whites and this could affect the reason for the gender divide today (Feliciano, Robnett & Komaie, 2009).

This paper deals more specifically with interracial dating rather than marriage. There is a difference between people who are willing to date interracially and people who are willing to marry. The higher willingness to date other races may occur because dating is a less serious relationship than marriage (Fujino, 1997). The people who are willing to date interracially might be so because they are interested in trying something new, experimenting to see what it would be like (Yancey, 2002).

This information is important to take note of because it is hard to get numbers on how many people are dating and what nationality they are. Marriages have to be registered so it is easier to keep track and since there are many less married interracial couples than there are dating couples it would seem like this information is a good place from which to start (Levin, et al., 2007).

Social Identity theory

Henri Tajfel (1974) introduced the social identity theory which defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his membership of a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to this". Basically, the social identity theory discusses the idea that individuals belong to different groups based on different parts of their identity. These groups provide characteristics that define a member's self-concept by giving the members normative attitudes and behaviors that go along with being members of this group (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995).

In order to maintain a high self image and to have high self worth, it is important for people to create differences between members of their group and those in other groups (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). People focus on the positive associations from within their group and the negatives of their out-groups in order to increase their level of contentment within their group and to increase their self-esteem (Tajfel, 1978). This is often labeled as creating in-group and out-group associations. They focus on these differences in order to ensure that their association with their group is not arbitrary and that they do have reason to be linked to the group and its ideals (Grant, 1993). Not only is it important for them to prioritize positive evaluations of their group, but it is also common to associate an out-group with negative identifiers and beliefs (Jackson et al., 1996).

Belonging to a group and placing value on the importance of this group to an individual, are termed social identities (Tajfel, 1978) and are used in social comparisons to promote positive self-distinctiveness (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). It is the idea that people

place much of who they perceive themselves to be and the beliefs that they hold to the basic beliefs of their in-group versus their out-group (Abrams & Hogg, 1990) and thus associate themselves more closely with others from within their group. Each person belongs to many different groups and each group helps the person to define a different part of their identity. These groups can be anything from gender, religion and political affiliation to education level or work group (Boehling, 2004). In terms of this research, people who identify strongly with their race will place a lot of importance on the websites that feature images of people like themselves (i.e. Black).

Research suggests that arbitrary categorization is enough for people to generate an out-group distinction (Ryan & Bogart, 1997). It is not important that the group be significantly different, they must just be different in some small respect than the members of the in-group, for example, one person having green eyes when everyone else has brown eyes. This difference is sometimes enough to bring about in-group favoritism (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). When one group is singled out as being different than the others for whatever reason, it becomes salient and important to the members of that group. The differentiation between the groups becomes more important to those members and gets amplified (Hogg et al. 1995). This is important for intercultural and interracial social contexts because many people create differences based solely on race and ethnicity (Coover & Murphy, 2000). In this regard, people who might think of people of different races or ethnicities as belonging to different groups, might come to believe that there are larger differences between themselves and the members of these out-groups than actually exist. Therefore, in order to maintain their positive identity, people have incentive to

make in-group—out-group distinctions that are deemed as more positive toward the in-group (Grant, 1993; Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish, & Hodge, 1996; Kelly, 1990).

As was just mentioned, one significant in-group out-group distinction is race. Race of the source is a salient communication characteristic, especially for persons for whom racial identity is central to their concept of self (Appiah, 2004). These in-group out-group distinctions are important for the members of these groups. In terms of different ethnic or racial groups, the members of these out-groups identify more strongly with their group, in order to feel a sense of belonging. Blacks as a group should feel a connection to other Blacks or things that are related to Black culture. It has been found that Blacks rate Black characters more positively (Appiah, 2002; Whittler, 1991), and show an increased likelihood of purchasing products promoted by Black characters (Whittler, 1989). Studies also indicate that Blacks are more likely to identify with Black television characters (Appiah, 2001a) and recall more content from Black characters (Appiah, 2002). Due to the fact that there is less than one half of a percent of websites that are targeted towards Blacks (Hoffman, Novak, & Schlosser, 2001), websites that are targeted towards Black audiences should have a greater impact on Black viewers' attention to and perception of the websites than websites targeting a non-distinct, white audience (Appiah, 2003). It would therefore make sense that Blacks involved in online dating would prefer websites that feature Black characters and would feel more connected to it based on the racial implications and their in-group-out-group identification.

Ethnic Identity

The definition of ethnic identity is how members of an ethnic group relate to their subgroup as a subset of the larger society (Berry 1980). It deals with a person's knowledge of his or her membership within the social group and the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Phinney, 1992). Even though members of ethnic minority groups often preserve the language, customs, values, and social views of their ethnic groups, degree of affiliation may vary within the minority culture (Green, 1999).

There have been several different types of research that have looked at ethnic identification as a contributing factor in consumers purchase behavior, media use (Donthu & Cherian, 1992), and evaluations of ads (Green, 1999). Researchers have come to believe that when targeting Black audiences, advertisements become more appealing to them when race-specific cues are used (Appiah, 2001a).

An individual's identification with his or her ethnic group is likely to play an important role in how information is processed and how marketing-related decisions are made (Green, 1999). People who relate strongly with their ethnic identity tend to present many behaviors and attitudes that are specific to that ethnic group, such as customs, language, product use, foods, etc. This should lead to a preference for portrayals of characters that depict these cultural values. On the other hand, people who do not relate very strongly to their ethnic identities would be more inclined to demonstrate a preference for characters that depict their cultural values (Appiah, 2004).

As mentioned earlier in the social identity theory, Black audiences may prefer media and advertisements that make use of Black characters. However, when Black characters are used in the media in order to target a specifically Black market, it will not

necessarily have a large influence on the Black audience unless they process the ethnic cues and relate to them as part of their self concept (Forehand, 2001). Researchers have come to find that the strength of Blacks ethnic identification will influence Black audiences and their perceptions of media. Strong ethnic identifiers are more inclined to see the race of the character as a positive cue, thereby identifying with the character which allows them to pay more attention and show more favorable attitudes towards the source and the message (Appiah, 2003). Therefore, while it was found that Blacks who identified more strongly with Black culture responded more favorably to Black models in advertisements, it was also found that Blacks who don't identify very strongly with Black culture as likely to show no in-group preference (Appiah, 2004).

The strength of ethnic identity has been shown to influence Black audiences and their evaluations of products and websites. Though many Blacks identify with some aspects of Black culture, they do not all do so to the same degree (Green, 1999). People who have weak ethnic identity have behavior that is more diluted by cultural norms and the dominant culture (Donthu & Cherian, 1992). Blacks with weaker ethnic identities do not relate as much with Black culture and so do not find things that are geared towards Black audiences as any more appealing than those geared towards White audiences. Unlike weak ethnic identifiers, strong ethnic identifiers may see the race of the source as a positive cue confirming similarity and thereby pay more attention to and show more favorable attitudes toward the source and the media (Appiah, 2004).

In terms of online dating websites, Blacks with strong ethnic identities should have a greater favor for a website featuring a Black character. The Black characters on the website should allow Black users to see themselves as identifying with the characters

and seeing themselves as potentially using the website. That might include a website featuring an interracial couple. There is still a Black individual on the website for them to identify with, and amid growing acceptance of interracial dating, the person of another ethnicity should not affect their liking for the site. However, due to the strength of their ethnic identification, the appearance of another race may play a role in how much they like the website.

Blacks with weak ethnic identity, on the other hand, should not have a preference of race of character on the website. For the Blacks who do not relate strongly to their ethnic identity, they have nothing drawing them to the Black characters any more than to any other race and so must find other ways to create in-group - out-group distinctions that make them like or dislike a character and therefore, like or dislike the webpage. This means that on a dating website, they will find reasons to like (or dislike) all of the sites whether there is an image of an interracial couple, a black couple or a White couple based on things other than racial cues.

Hypotheses

H1 -Blacks with strong ethnic identity will perceive a dating website that features a Black couple more positively than they would a website with a White couple or an interracial couple.

H2 - Blacks with strong ethnic identity will identify more strongly with a dating website that features a Black couple than they would a website with a White couple or an interracial couple.

H3 -Blacks with strong ethnic identity will perceive the featured Black couple on a dating website as getting along better than they would the featured White or interracial couple on a website.

H4 - Blacks with strong ethnic identity will perceive the featured Black couple on a dating website as having more sexual intimacy than they would the featured White or interracial couple on a website.

H5- Blacks with weak ethnic identities will display no difference in attitude towards the website, identification with the website, perceptions of how well a couple is or how sexually intimate a couple is based on the racial makeup of the couple.

Chapter 3: Methods

Subject and Design

Approximately 120 Black undergraduate students from the Ohio State University were recruited to participate in this study. Subjects were recruited from courses in the School of Communication at the Ohio State University as well as being recruited from the Office of Minority Affairs. Participants were asked to participate voluntarily in exchange for \$10. College students are generally regarded as the most active group on the Internet, and as such, they are the most likely to spend time conducting research and purchasing products online (Abraham & Appiah 2006). They are also young and educated, which makes them more open to interracial dating (Cooper et al., 2003).

The experiment employed 6 different website designs differing by race of the couple on the site (Black couple, White couple, Black man and a White woman, White man and a Black woman, an ethnically ambiguous couple and a control couple) to test the hypotheses for the Black website users. The four dependent variables included 1) identification with characters; 2) attitude toward the website; 3) compatibility of the couple featured on the website 4) perceived sexual intimacy between the couple on the website.

Procedure

Prior to participating in the study, participants were told that the purpose of the study was to see what kind of impression the dating websites gave them and to learn more about the format of websites they like best, which would enable researchers to improve the look, style and content of their website. This experiment was actually

investigating the impact that the website had on people and their perceptions of the site based on the image that was presented on the site.

Participants were seated at a computer and given one of the six separate conditions. They looked at the page for whatever length of time they needed and then they answered some questions regarding the website that they just looked at, as well as some personal information including their personal dating history and race/ethnicity. As they left they were told the true purpose of the study, they were thanked for their involvement and then given \$10 for their participation.

Stimulus Materials

The study used an experiment to examine the extent to which preconceived attitudes towards interracial couples affects consumers' responses to online dating websites featuring images of interracial couples. Six different versions of a dating website were created by a Professional Web designer. While the website was based on a real dating website, the name of the company was fictitious. Each web page acts as a separate condition. Each condition has the same static text describing specific attributes of the website. For instance, this content displayed information such as what makes this site different from other sites, as well as a positive match that occurred between two of the websites users. There was also a testimonial from the match. The race of the characters in the ads were the only changing factor; they alternated between a White couple, a Black couple, an interracial couple featuring a Black man and a White woman, an interracial couple featuring a White man and a Black woman, an ethnically ambiguous couple and a control couple.

The content of the webpage was the same for each condition with the only changing factor being the image in the top left hand corner. For the first condition, the characters used in the testimonial ads were a Black couple with their picture placed on the left side of the web page. Over the picture “This Week’s Featured Couple: David and Michelle” was placed and beneath the picture was a testimonial on how they met. On the right hand side of the webpage was a quick search icon, some information on the website and then information on membership. The second condition used an image of an interracial couple featuring a Black man and a White woman. The layout for this condition was the same as the previous condition with the exception of the image being of the interracial couple and the testimonial being from them. The third condition used another interracial couple, this one featuring a White man and a Black woman. Like all the other conditions, the text of the testimonial was placed directly under the image. The fourth condition was of a White couple. The fifth condition featured an ethnically ambiguous couple and the sixth condition had a couple of stuffed panda bears embracing as the image. The same testimonial was used for all the conditions and remained consistent.

Measurement Instrument

The dependent variables are 1) identification with characters; 2) attitude toward the website; 3) compatibility of the couple featured on the website 4) perceived sexual intimacy between the couple on the website.

Similarity Scale

Participants were asked to evaluate the degree of similarity that they shared with the characters featured on the webpage. Similarity was judged based on five scales which

are: overall lifestyle, cultural background, dress, appearance, and basic values (Appiah, 2006; Whittler, 1989). The similarity scale used was an average of the mean scores from each of the five scales.

Attitude Toward the Website

Subjects were asked to provide their attitude toward the dating website that they had just viewed. An index was created by averaging the mean scores of eleven, 7-point semantic differential scales. These scales incorporated the following: boring/interesting, bad/good, negative/positive, useless/useful, worthless/valuable, poor/outstanding, not for me/for me, weak/strong, not appealing/appealing, not attractive/attractive, and not likable/likable (Appiah, 2001a; Appiah, 2006; Bush et al., 1979; Desphande & Stayman, 1994; Green, 1999).

Other Measures

Subjects were asked to indicate how strongly they identified with the characters on the website (Aaker, et. al., 2000; Appiah, 2006) on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from not at all (one) to very strongly (seven). Subjects were also asked to choose from a list of given racial and ethnic groups.

Interracial dating. An important aspect of this study is whether people are willing to date interracially. Participants were asked to respond to two questions dealing with their willingness to date interracially and their openness to other dating interracially. These things were measured with the following statements 1) I am open to dating someone of another race or ethnicity; 2) I think people should be free to date who they choose. Subjects were asked to respond to these statements on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from completely disagree (one) to completely agree (seven).

Out-group contact. Subjects were questioned on their association with people from other races. Subjects were asked to indicate their level of personal contact with people from other races. Subjects were asked (a) how much contact they have had with each of the following populations or areas in a formal setting (b) how much contact they have had with each of the following populations or areas in a social setting. These were followed by a list of people (women, children, whites, educated, urban dwellers, etc...) and they were asked to rate them on a seven point scale ranging from no contact at all (one) to a lot of contact (seven).

Dating websites. Subjects were asked to provide their attitude towards dating websites. This was measured using a seven, 7-point semantic differential scales: boring/interesting, bad/good, negative/positive, useless/useful, worthless/valuable, not for me/for me, not likeable/likeable. This was adapted from Appiah's attitude toward website scale (2006).

Ethnic identity. Students were asked five statements assessing their level of ethnic identity including their feelings about ethnic attachment, their ethnic background, level of happiness with their ethnicity, ethnic pride and sense of ethnic belonging. Each item was measured using a 7-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). An ethnic identity scale was created by averaging out the mean scores of the five items and high and low ethnic identifiers scored either above or below the median for their racial group. These measurements were based on Phinney's Multigroup measure of ethnic identity (1992).

Chapter 4: Results

The results of this experiment are presented and discussed according to the hypotheses presented earlier. A series of two-way analyses of variance for all hypotheses are provided below with follow-up analyses conducted to examine significant findings. The same analyses were conducted for all four dependent variables.

Attitude toward the website: it was predicted that Blacks with strong ethnic identity will perceive a dating website that features a Black couple more positively than they would a website with a White couple or an interracial couple. A significant interaction between race of couple and ethnic identity ($F(5, 106) = 2.66, p < .05$) was found. Follow-up analyses using one-way ANOVA indicated that blacks with strong ethnic identities had more positive attitude towards the web site after viewing the black male, black female couple ($M = 4.85, SD = .82$) than they did the white male, white female couple ($M = 3.23, SD = .1.27, p < .01$), or the couple featured in the control condition ($M = 3.76, SD = 1.36, p < .05$). Blacks with strong ethnic identity also evaluated the dating web site more positively after viewing the white male, black female couple ($M = 5.27, SD = 1.07$) than they did the black male, white female couple, ($M = 4.15, SD = .95, p < .05$), the white male, white female couple ($M = 3.23, SD = 1.27, p < .001$) or the couple featured in the control condition ($M = 3.76, SD = 1.36, p < .01$). Blacks with strong ethnic identities had a more positive evaluation of the dating site after viewing the ethnic ambiguous couple ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.34$) than they did after viewing the white male, white female couple ($M = 3.23, SD = 1.27$). In contrast, blacks with weak

ethnic identities displayed no difference in their attitudes toward the dating site based on the race of the couple featured in the site.

Identification with the website: It was predicted that Blacks with strong ethnic identity will identify more strongly with a dating website that features a Black couple than they would a website with a White couple or an interracial couple. A marginally significant interaction between race of couple and ethnic identity ($F(5, 106) = 2.00, p = .08$) was found. The examination of the means using one-way ANOVA found that strong Black identifiers did relate more strongly to the website featuring a Black couple ($M = 4.71, SD = 1.60$) than they did the website featuring a White couple ($M = 1.57, SD = .54, p < .05$), the White man, Black woman ($M = 2.90, SD = 2.47, p < .05$), the Black man, the White woman ($M = 3.09, SD = 1.51, p < .05$), the ethnically ambiguous couple ($M = 3.00, SD = 1.34, p > .05$) and the couple featured in the control condition ($M = 3.76, SD = 1.36$). In contrast, blacks with weak ethnic identities displayed no difference in their identification with the couple based on the racial makeup of the couple featured in the site. These results support the hypothesis.

Relationship between the couple: It was predicted that Blacks with strong ethnic identity will perceive the featured Black couple on a dating website as getting along better than they would the featured White or interracial couple on a website. A marginally significant interaction between race of couple and ethnic identity ($F(5, 105) = 1.91, p = .09$) was found. The examination of the means demonstrated that Blacks with strong ethnic identities perceived the couple featured in the control condition as getting along less well together ($M = 4.72, SD = 1.90$) than the Black couple ($M = 6.28, SD = .76, p > .01$) the interracial couple featuring the White man and Black woman ($M = 6.44,$

$SD = 1.13, p > .01$) the interracial couple featuring the Black man and White woman ($M = 6.46, SD = .69, p > .01$) and the ethnically ambiguous couple ($M = 6.30, SD = .82, p < .05$). Blacks with weak ethnic identities displayed no difference in perceptions of how well the couple got along based on the racial makeup of the couple. The hypothesis was not supported.

Levels of sexual intimacy: It was predicted that Blacks with strong ethnic identity will perceive the featured Black couple on a dating website as having more sexual intimacy than they would the featured White or interracial couple on a website. A significant interaction between race of couple and ethnic identity ($F(5, 107) = 2.36, p > .05$) was found. The examination of the means using one-way ANOVA demonstrated that strong Black identifiers perceived the Black couple as being more sexual intimate ($M = 4.86, SD = 1.21$) than either the White couple ($M = 3.43, SD = 1.13, p > .05$), the ethnically ambiguous couple ($M = 3.20, SD = 1.81, p > .05$) or the couple featured in the control condition ($M = 3.64, SD = 1.50$). Blacks with weak ethnic identities displayed no difference in perceptions of how sexually intimate a couple was based on the racial makeup of the couple. These results partially support the hypothesis.

Exploratory Analyses: number of Blacks in image.

Additional analyses were run in order to study the relationship between high Ethnic identifiers and the number of Black people featured in the webpage couple.

Attitude toward the website: It was thought that the high ethnic identifiers would like the website more when it featured two Black people (a Black couple) over the website featuring only one Black person (either interracial couple) or no Black people (White couple). A significant interaction between race of couple and high ethnic identity

($F(2, 72) = 4.082, p < .05$) was found. Follow-up analyses using one-way ANOVA indicated that blacks with strong ethnic identities had more positive attitude towards the web site after viewing the site featuring two Black people ($M = 4.76, SD = .81$) than they did either site featuring one Black person ($M = 4.73, SD = .1.13, p < .01$), or the site featuring no Black people ($M = 3.39, SD = 1.08, p < .05$).

Identification with the website: It was predicted that Blacks with strong ethnic identity will identify more strongly with a dating website that features two Black people (a Black couple), than they would a website with one Black person (either interracial couple) or no Black people (the White couple). A significant interaction between race of couple and ethnic identity ($F(2, 72) = 5.996, p < .05$) was found. The examination of the means using one-way ANOVA found that strong Black identifiers did relate more strongly to the website featuring two Black people ($M = 4.88, SD = 1.55$) than they did the websites featuring one Black person ($M = 3.00, SD = 1.93, p < .05$), and no Black people ($M = 1.80, SD = .92, p < .05$).

Relationship between the couple: No significant main effects or interactions were found.

Levels of sexual intimacy: No significant main effects or interactions were found.

Exploratory analyses: gender.

Additional analyses were run in order to study the relationship between Black female high Ethnic identifiers and the number of Black people in the featured couple. It was thought that perhaps the strength of ethnic identity in Black females might have an effect on their reactions to the different websites.

Attitude toward the website: No significant main effects or interactions were found.

Identification with the website: No significant main effects or interactions were found.

Relationship between the couple: No significant main effects or interactions were found.

Levels of sexual intimacy: No significant main effects or interactions were found.

Mean Responses and Standard Deviations for
Black High Identifiers

	BM - BF	BM - WF	WM - BF	WM - WF	Ethnic. Amb	Control
Att. Web	4.85 (.823)	4.15 (.95)	5.27 (1.07)	3.23 (1.27)	4.56 (1.34)	3.76 (1.36)
Identity	4.71 (1.60)	3.09 (1.51)	2.90 (2.47)	1.57 (.54)	3.00 (1.70)	2.2 (1.55)
Get Along	6.28 (.76)	6.46 (.69)	6.44 (1.13)	5.83 (1.33)	6.30 (.82)	4.72 (1.90)
Sexual Int.	4.86 (1.21)	4.46 (1.29)	4.40 (.97)	3.43 (1.13)	3.20 (1.81)	3.64 (1.50)

Mean Responses and Standard Deviations for
Black Low Identifiers

	BM - BF	BM - WF	WM - BF	WM - WF	Ethnic. Amb	Control
Att. Web	4.13 (1.34)	4.27 (1.56)	4.49 (1.33)	4.60 (.89)	3.71 (1.00)	4.27 (1.18)
Identity	3.0 (1.76)	3.25 (1.49)	3.46 (1.98)	3.42 (1.93)	2.78 (1.86)	2.56 (1.01)
Get Along	5.67 (1.37)	5.13 (1.89)	6.08 (1.03)	6.50 (.67)	5.89 (1.17)	5.44 (1.23)
Sexual Int.	3.75 (1.49)	3.63 (1.77)	4.77 (1.24)	4.42 (.90)	4.44 (1.59)	4.56 (1.59)

Mean Responses and Standard Deviations for
Black Female High Identifiers

	0	1	2
Att. Web	3.314 (.68)	4.815 (1.187)	4.617 (.905)
Identity	1.83 (1.169)	3.00 (2.138)	5.00 (.894)
Get Along	6.00 (1.265)	6.71 (.611)	5.67 (1.506)
Sexual Int.	4.17 (1.329)	4.73 (1.10)	4.33 (1.211)

Mean Responses and Standard Deviations for
Black Female Low Identifiers

	0	1	2
Att. Web	4.091 (.129)	4.673 (1.406)	4.479 (1.582)
Identity	2.00 (0.00)	3.64 (1.963)	3.00 (1.732)
Get Along	6.50 (.707)	5.73 (1.794)	5.86 (1.069)
Sexual Int.	4.50 (.707)	4.27 (1.489)	4.29 (.951)

Chapter 5: Discussion

The results of this study provide information on how Black people with strong ethnic identification respond to a website featuring images of couples of different races. More specifically, it was hypothesized that Blacks with strong ethnic identity will perceive a dating website that features a Black couple more positively and will identify with it more than they would a website with a White couple or an interracial couple. It was also predicted that strong Black ethnic identifiers will perceive the featured Black couple on a dating website as getting along better and as having more sexual intimacy than they would the featured White or interracial couple on a website. As predicted the Black ethnic identifiers did respond better to the black couple than to the White couple in most of the conditions however they did not respond more favorably to the Black couple over the interracial couple in most of the situations. Strong Black identifiers had a positive attitude towards the website featuring the interracial couples as well as the black couple alone which was not anticipated.

The initial findings showed that when high Black ethnic identifiers were asked about their attitude towards the website, they felt very positively towards the interracial couple featuring a white man and a black woman. One explanation for these findings may lie within the social identity theory. Since over half of the participants of this study were women, it is possible that these women identified more strongly with the Black woman in all of the websites, and so the appearance of a Black woman in an interracial couple would allow them to identify with her as a Black woman, and not necessarily

identify with the couple. This identification with the woman in the interracial couple could give them a more positive attitude towards that site based on her race alone.

Another possible reason is the participants' high willingness to interracially date. Since the participants were all open to interracially dating ($M = 5.42$) it is possible that they see themselves as potentially getting involved interracially or are already involved interracially. This would give them another reason to identify with the characters on the page which would result in a more positive image of the website. People are also more accepting of other people getting involved in interracial relationships ($M = 6.59$) which could explain the participants reactions to the interracial couples. It is not saying that they themselves have to necessarily take part in an interracial relationship, but they do accept others and would be willing to be part of an online community that accepts these relationships.

Another possible explanation for these findings may be founded on historically racialized ideas about Black and White in terms of gender that continue to dominate popular culture. In the past, Black men and women have not shared the same experiences with regard to intimate relations with Whites. Due to the fact that White men were in power during slavery, they had full access to the bodies of Black women (Collins, 2004) and so Black women were never considered a "forbidden fruit" for White men (Romano, 2003). There still can be some of that mentality within our society and Blacks who identify strongly with their ethnic identity would appreciate the historic significance of a positive relationship between a White man and a Black woman.

On the other hand, sexual relationships between Black men and White women were considered wrong and immoral and there were severe repercussions for those Black

men who chose to get involved with white women (Collins, 2004). The attitude towards the website featuring the Black man and the White woman interracial couple was not as positive as either the Black couple or the other interracial couple and that may be due to the thought that those Black men who do choose to be involved with White women are doing so for the “forbidden fruit” aspect (Romano, 2003). They may be perceived as trying to prove something rather than being in a relationship built on love and trust. Strong ethnic identifiers may not identify with men who would be in that type of relationship and so might not relate to these characters as much as with the others.

It was also found that the relationship between both interracial couples seemed to be stronger than any of the other conditions. This could be the case because interracial couples must deal with a lot more negative stigmas and feedback from people and so they must have a stronger foundation for their relationships than any other type of relationship (Murstein, et al., 1989).

According to the findings, blacks with weak ethnic identities displayed no difference in their attitudes toward the dating site based on the race of the couple featured in the site. These findings supported the hypothesis. According to the social identity theory, the weak ethnic identifiers do not use race as a classifier of in-group identification and so they do not necessarily relate to the Black image over any of the others. This makes sense seeing as how Blacks who did not really identify with their ethnic identities were not affected by the race of the couples on the website and so did not change very much in their perceptions of the website no matter the race of the couple.

Additional analyses were run to test the relationship between high ethnic identifiers and the number of Black characters featured on the webpage. The findings

suggest that Blacks who identify strongly with their ethnic identity do have a more positive attitude towards and identify more strongly with the webpage featuring two Black characters than the webpage featuring only one Black character (either interracial condition) or no Black characters (the White couple).

These findings suggest that the more Black characters shown within a webpage, the more positively the strong ethnic identifiers felt about a website. This falls in line with the earlier arguments that Blacks who relate strongly to their race would feel more of a connection to Black characters in advertisements and webpages than they would to White characters.

Analyses were also run to test whether there was any correlation between gender and the race of the characters. These analyses were testing whether the strength of ethnic identity in Black females might have an effect on their reactions to the different websites. These results were not significant in any way.

In addition to adding to the significant literature about the effects of ethnic identity on perceptions of racially targeted media, this study helps add to the understanding of the growing acceptance of interracial dating and online dating media use. There is not a lot of research done on dating websites and peoples perceptions of those websites.

These concepts also contribute to the study of interracial dating because they seem to hold fast to the belief that there is a growing acceptance of interracial couples. This would be good to know because that would mean that tolerance levels of interracial relationships are increasing. With the results showing peoples positive reactions towards

the interracial webpages, this study does help to show that these relationships have become more acceptable.

This study can be helpful to a number of different people. It can be useful to people who own their own websites and who wish to cater their sites to specific people. By altering the images that are portrayed on the website, they can alter the perception that people have of their site. It can also more specifically be helpful to people who work with dating websites. These sites can reach millions of people and there is so much competition between the sites that it is important for them to gear their site towards the people that they would like to have on their site and to make sure that the people who choose to use their website, are happy about what they find when they log on. The images on these web pages are what make people initially attracted to the site (if they do not previously know of it by reputation) and so it would seem to be important to understand different evaluations that people have towards these websites based on their impressions of the images.

There are a few limitations to my study. First of all, some studies have been done that believe that education does have an effect on how accepting people are of people from other races as well as their chances for being open to trying new things, such as dating websites. This would affect my findings because the participants, being from a university, would not be representative of a larger more diverse audience, however it is important to start somewhere and in the future if someone were to reproduce the study with a more general group of participants and they had the same findings, then it could help negate the idea that education does have an effect.

Another limitation is that the students must come to a lab in order to fill out the survey and look at the images. It might have more ecological validity if they were allowed to do it at home, where they could perhaps load up a website with the images and then fill out the survey which would be linked to the website. However, it is easier to control the level of attention that the students give the survey when they are doing it within the confines of a lab because they have no other reason to be in the room so they focus on it, do it and leave, while at home they may be doing several things at once that could compromise their responses.

Future research can look more in depth at whether there is a correlation between gender and perceptions of different types of websites. It might also be beneficial to redo this study with more participants in each condition. With more participants, it is possible that there could be stronger result.

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Appendix A

Protocol # _____

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

I consent to participating in research entitled: **Online dating in a Students world.**

Dr. Osei Appiah, Principal Investigator, or his/her authorized representative has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation. Participants will provide responses to a mock website. Possible benefits of the study have been described, as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available. The total length of time to complete the study should be no more than 20 minutes in length. You have the full right to refuse to answer any question on the questionnaire without penalty or forfeiture of study participation. Your participation is completely voluntary; at any time you may withdraw from the study if you so choose with no penalty or forfeiture of extra credit opportunity. In such a case you will have the opportunity to obtain the same amount of extra-credit participating in alternative activity. A description of this activity will be posted on the Carmen webpage for this course.

All questionnaire responses are completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of the primary researcher and his assistant. In exchange for participating, you will receive extra credit in this course. You will receive credit by reporting your Ohio State webmail address, your first and last initials, and the course for which you are participating on within the questionnaire. This identifying information will be separated from your responses to maintain your confidentiality. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you may do so by simply not completing the questionnaire or viewing the webpage. If you wish to withdraw after completing the questionnaire or if you have any questions regarding the study itself or the alternative activity, please contact Elly Grekin at grekin.1@osu.edu¹ or at 614-292-2756. Please read the consent form in front of you now.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date:

Signed:

(Participant)

Signed:

(Principal Investigator or his/her authorized

Signed:

(Person authorized to consent for participant, if required)

Appendix B
Online Dating Web Site Survey
School of Communication
The Ohio State University

The purpose of this study is to find out the preferred look and design to a commercial dating web site. Your responses will help us better design sites that appeal to you.

Please answer each question to the best of your ability. You will be guaranteed anonymity; and please do not write your name on the questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to fill out.

If you have any questions while completing the questionnaire, please contact the questionnaire administrator and he/she will discuss your question with you.

Please complete the questionnaire on your own, without discussing it with your friends or neighbors.

Thank you for participating in this Web Site survey!

We would like to know some information concerning your background. Please be as specific as possible when you give your answers. As previously mentioned, your answers are anonymous.

1. What is your major? _____

2. What year/class are you in school?

_____ freshman _____ sophomore _____ junior
_____ senior _____ graduate student
_____ Other (explain) _____

3. Age? _____

4. Gender: _____ male _____ female

5. My ethnicity is...(please circle your answer)

- (1) Asian, Asian-American, Pacific Islander
- (2) Black or African-American
- (3) Hispanic or Latino
- (4) White, Caucasian, European, not Hispanic
- (5) American Indian or Native American
- (6) Other (write in): _____

6. On an average day, how many hours do you spend on the Internet?

7. Now, thinking about the web page you saw, please answer the following questions as best you can.

a. The race/ethnicity of the couple in the image is...(please circle your answer)

- (1) Black or African-American
- (2) White, Caucasian, European, not Hispanic
- (3) Biracial or Multiracial
- (4) Can't tell/Don't know
- (5) Don't remember

Below are 11 scales with ratings from 1 to 7. For each scale please circle the number that best indicates how you feel about the web site. For example, 1 = Boring, and 7 = Interesting

8. I feel that that the overall dating WEB SITE is...

boring	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	interesting
bad	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	good
negative	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	positive
useless	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	useful
worthless	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	valuable
poor	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	outstanding
not for me	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	for me
weak	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	strong
not appealing	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	appealing
not attractive	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	attractive
not likable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	likable

9. Think about **Student Love**. If you had the money, what is the likelihood that you would sign up for a membership? If you are currently in a relationship, imagine that you are single (Circle the Number)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very
Likely						Likely

10. Think about **Student Love**. What is the likelihood that you would recommend this site to a friend? (circle the number)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very
Likely						Likely

Next, for each scale please circle the number (from 1 to 7) that best represents your feelings about the People shown on the web site.

11. I feel that the couple who appeared on the web site is...

boring	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	interesting
bad	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	good
negative	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	positive
useless	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	useful
worthless	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	valuable
poor	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	outstanding
not for me	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	for me
weak	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	strong
not appealing	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	appealing
not attractive	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	attractive
not likable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	likable

Please answer the following question by circling the number (from 1 to 7) that best describes your feeling about the couple featured on the website

12. How well does the featured couple seem to get along

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very well

13. How much does it seem that the featured couple love each other

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						A lot

14. What is the likelihood that the featured couple will stay together?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all likely						Very likely

15. How much sexual intimacy is there between the featured couple?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all likely						Very much

16. How much communication does there appear to be between the featured couple?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
None						Very much

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Please circle a number from 1 (Disagree Completely) to 7 (Agree Completely).

17. I think the dating web site was intended for people like me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Completely						Agree Completely

Please answer the following question by circling the number (from 1 to 7) that best describes your feeling.

18. How strongly did you identify with (or relate to) the people on the dating web site?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not At All						Very Strongly

Please indicate the extent that you agree or disagree with the following statements (from disagree completely to agree completely)

19. The type of person that would visit Student Love is the type of person whom I would want to be like.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree completely						agree completely

20. The type of person that would visit Student Love (use the website to try and find a match) is the type of person whom I would consider a member of my group.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree completely						agree completely

Please tell us how similar or dissimilar you are to the type of people most likely to use the Student Love website – based on the following traits. Please select an option from ‘Not at all similar’ to ‘Very Similar’

21. How similar are you to the people most likely to visit Student Love based on overall lifestyle?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Similar						Very Similar

22. How similar are you to the people most likely to visit Student Love based on cultural background?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Similar						Very Similar

23. How similar are you to the people most likely to visit Student Love based on dress?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Similar						Very Similar

24. How similar are you to the people most likely to visit Student Love based on appearance?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very
Similar						Similar

25. How similar are you to the people most likely to visit Student Love based on basic values ?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very
Similar						Similar

Please select the option that best indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

26. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly						Strongly
Disagree						Agree

27. I am happy that I am a member of the ethnic group I belong to

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly						Strongly
Disagree						Agree

28. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly						Strongly
Disagree						Agree

29. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly						Strongly
Disagree						Agree

30. I feel a strong attachment to my ethnic group

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly						Strongly
Disagree						Agree

31. I am open to dating someone of another race or ethnicity

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree						agree
completely						completely

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree completely						agree completely

Women	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Children	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Whites	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Educated	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Urban Dwellers	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Government	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Democrats	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Blacks	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Men	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Hardworking people	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Poor	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Rural dwellers	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Hispanics	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
criminals	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Republicans	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Rich	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)

34. Below are a number of different populations or areas that you may have come in contact with. Please circle the number that best describes how much interaction you have had with these populations or areas in a social context (i.e. **going to movies, parties, as friends**). Ratings on each scale are from 1 to 7, where 1 = No contact at all, and 7 = A lot of contact.

Women	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Children	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Whites	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Educated	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Urban Dwellers	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Government	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Democrats	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Blacks	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Men	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Hardworking people	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Poor	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Rural dwellers	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Hispanics	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
criminals	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Republicans	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Rich	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)

19. What do you think was the purpose of this survey?

Appendix c: Stimuli



Figure 1 : Black male Black female condition

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Find your match today!



Jenny, 22, Columbus, OH

I am a college student trying to meet new people, and experience new things. I'm kind of old fashioned and like real people. [Meet me...](#)



Mark 21, Dayton, OH

I'm a current student at OSU that's majoring in economics (such a nerdy major!! haha). I'm looking to meet some new fun people [Meet me...](#)



Lauren, 20, Columbus, OH

I like to watch movies, play guitar, play video games travel once in a while. I like dogs (German Sheppard's mostly). [Meet me...](#)



Keith 22, Cincinnati, OH


I am a sarcastic, assertive go-getter with an upbeat can-do attitude about everything :). I'm interested in meeting new people. [Meet me...](#)

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Figure 2: Black male white female condition

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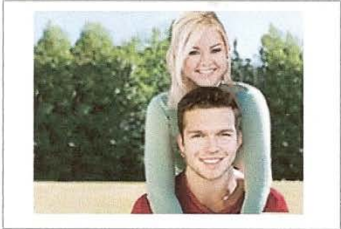
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Figure 3: White male Black female condition

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- With a FREE membership you can...
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Figure 4: White male White female condition

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Figure 5: Ethnically Ambiguous condition

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I am a college student trying to meet new people, and experience new things. I'm kind of old fashioned and like real people. [Meet me...](#)



Lauren, 20, Columbus, OH

I like to watch movies, play guitar, play video games travel once in a while. I like dogs (German Sheppard's mostly). [Meet me...](#)



Mark 21, Dayton, OH

I'm a current student at OSU that's majoring in economics (such a nerdy major!! haha). I'm looking to meet some new fun people [Meet me...](#)



Keith 22, Cincinnati, OH

I am a sarcastic, assertive go-getter with an upbeat can-do attitude about everything :). I'm interested in meeting new people. [Meet me...](#)

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Figure 6: Control condition