
The Influence of Consumer Socialization Variables on Attitude Toward Advertising: A Comparison of African-Americans and Caucasians

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Using the theory of consumer socialization, the authors explore factors that might shape attitudes toward advertising for African-American and Caucasian young adults. Though the African-American market is growing in importance to advertisers, little if any research has explored African-American perceptions of advertising. The theory of consumer socialization provides a conceptual framework for investigating variables that might influence attitudes toward advertising. African-American and Caucasian young adults were surveyed on various consumer socialization variables. Parental communication, peer communication, mass media, gender, and race were found to be related significantly to attitudes toward advertising. African-Americans watched more TV and had more positive attitudes toward advertising than their Caucasian counterparts.

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"Business people who don't learn the culture of the African-American market won't prosper in the nineties and into the year 2000" (Rossman 1994).

African-Americans are an extremely important yet relatively neglected target for advertisers and advertising researchers. They spend more than \$270 billion a year on consumer goods, and advertisers are spending approximately \$865 million a year to reach them (Gray 1997). The African-American middle class, which accounts for more than 40% of African-Americans and represents a major portion of their spending, has also been neglected by the advertising community (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1998). Practitioners have been slow in researching the African-American market primarily because of declining research budgets (Hume 1991). Some academic research on that target has been conducted and reported since the 1970s. Overall, the African-American market represents tremendous potential, yet little research has been conducted in terms of African-American attitudes toward advertising and how socialization may influence those attitudes.

Consumer socialization provides an excellent vantage point from which to gain a better understanding of African-American consumers and their attitudes toward advertising. According to Ward (1974, p. 2), "consumer socialization is the process by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace." Moreover, previous research has related broad patterns of parent-child interactions to several specific parental practices, including the restriction and monitoring of children's consumption and media use and the development of independent consumption (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Carlson, Grossbart, and Stuenkel 1992).

There are compelling reasons to believe that the media's socializing effects may be greater for African-Americans than for Caucasians. Studies indicate that, for some African-American children, weekly television viewing exceeds their parents' 40-hour work week (Murray 1972; Stroman 1986). Moreover, African-American children and adolescents may be more susceptible to media's effects because they often use television as a source of guidance (Anderson and Williams 1983; Dates 1980). For example, African-American

adolescents report using television to learn about different occupations (Greenberg and Atkin 1982) and to learn dating behavior (Gerson 1968). Research on college-educated African-Americans indicates that they watch about five more hours of television a week than their Caucasian counterparts (Robinson, Landry, and Rooks 1998). In addition, the types of television programs watched by the two groups differ rather dramatically. In 1996, only two shows in the top 20 were common to both African-American and Caucasian households (Farley 1996), indicating very little overlap in shows watched. Because of the media separation, accompanying advertisements are likely to be specifically targeted to each particular subgroup potentially providing very different advertising.

Much of the literature on African-American socialization focuses on the effects of television, but little, if any, specifically addresses advertising or attitudes toward advertising. Attitudes toward advertising have been discussed extensively in the advertising literature because of the notion that general attitudes toward advertising are important determinants of attitudes toward specific advertisements (Lutz 1985). Moreover, an individual's attitude toward the ad is an important antecedent and predictor of attitude toward the brand, which is partially determined by an individual's attitude toward advertising in general (Lutz 1985; McKenzie and Lutz 1989).

In summary, the literature suggests that (1) consumers' attitudes toward advertising influence purchasing behavior, (2) individuals acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their consumer behavior, including their reactions to advertising, through consumer socialization, (3) African-Americans may have different consumer socialization experiences related to media and television than Caucasians, and (4) advertisers and advertising researchers have neglected the important African-American market. Our study therefore, had two general objectives. One was to extend the literature by exploring factors that might shape attitudes toward advertising. That is, does consumer socialization influence an individual's attitudes toward advertising? The foundations of consumer socialization provide the theoretical basis for assessing the influence of socialization variables on attitudes toward advertising. The second objective was to use consumer socialization to discern any potential subcultural differences in college-educated African-Americans' and Caucasians' attitudes toward advertising. We use the study to draw implications for advertisers, public policy makers, and advertising researchers.

Background

Attitudes Toward Advertising

The attitude toward advertising construct has been given much research attention through the years (for an excellent review, see O'Donohoe 1995). Most of the work has examined the underlying dimensions of attitude toward advertising. Bauer and Greyser (1968), for example, explored the social and economic effects of advertising. The Pollay and Mittal (1993) model includes seven dimensions of attitude toward advertising. At the micro level, those researchers suggest three personal dimensions (product information, social role, and hedonism). At the macro level, they propose four general dimensions representing the societal effects of advertising (economic, materialism, values, and falsity of information).

Public attitudes toward advertising have been of interest to advertising researchers for years. From a public policy perspective, concerns have been voiced that criticisms of advertising (i.e., it presents false and misleading information, it promotes undesirable values, it persuades people to buy things they do not need, etc.) may undermine its effectiveness or even lead to pleas for greater regulation (Calfee and Ringold 1988; Pollay and Mittal 1993).

Advertising researchers have been more interested in the impact of overall attitudes toward advertising on consumer behavior variables. Studies have suggested, for example, that consumers' attitudes toward individual advertisements are influenced by their attitudes toward advertising in general (Bauer and Greyser 1968; Lutz 1985). People with more favorable feelings about advertising in general found specific advertisements more acceptable, informative, and enjoyable (Bartos and Dunn 1974; Bauer and Greyser 1968; Lutz 1985).

Advertising researchers have also investigated the effect of overall attitudes toward advertising on the degree of involvement in advertisements. James and Kover's (1992) research suggests that consumers' overall positive attitude toward all advertising is related positively to involvement with specific advertisements. Further, those authors state that overall attitudes are likely to affect other aspects of advertising communications as well.

Research tends to suggest that attitudes toward advertising are only moderately related to respondents' age, gender, income, and education. The failure of demographic variables to account for much variance in attitudes is consistent with Durand and

Lambert's (1985) finding that criticisms of advertising were explained more by a sense of consumer and political alienation than by demographic characteristics. The more alienated the customers felt, the more they criticized advertising. Though many of the studies on attitude toward advertising investigated demographic variables, few, if any, assessed the influence of socialization variables on attitude toward advertising.

African-American Consumers

One of the most neglected groups in the marketing literature is African-American consumers. The lack of research on that group is surprising given their economic and social influence. Non-Hispanic African-Americans made up 12% of the U.S. population in 1996 (Fisher 1996). That group is expected to grow faster than the overall population into the next century—increasing by 23% versus 17% for the U.S. population as a whole (Fisher 1996). Thus, the African-American market is expected to reach 39.5 million by the year 2015 (Fisher 1996). The median African-American household income in 1994 was \$21,000 versus to \$32,300 for all U.S. households (Fisher 1996). In the past 25 years, incomes of African-Americans have grown at approximately the same rate as the U.S. average in constant dollars (Statistical Abstract 1997). Other figures show African Americans moving into better paying job categories and a growing upper and middle class (Campanelli 1991), with one in seven African-American households having an annual income over \$50,000 (Hayes 1995).

African-Americans are a sizable consumer market, spending \$270 billion a year in 1993 (Morris 1993). Since the beginning of this decade, consumer spending by African-Americans has increased 54% (Gray 1997)—a figure that is three times higher than that for overall national spending during the same period (Statistical Abstract 1997). As a subgroup, African-Americans tend to spend more than the average U.S. citizen in such product categories as personal care items, women's accessories, jewelry, and infant and toddler clothing. According to some surveys, African-Americans are more motivated by quality and status than Caucasian consumers (Fisher 1996). For certain products such as boys' clothing and liquor, many African-Americans feel that buying premium brands is a way to make a statement about themselves (Morris 1993). Hence, the market potential of African-Americans has not gone unnoticed. In 1996, national advertisers spent \$865 million advertising to African-Americans (Gray 1997). In addition, local advertisers, public relations, promotions, and events combined

pushed total expenditures on that market to \$1.3 billion (Gray 1997).

Advertising research on African-Americans has focused primarily on the frequency and role portrayals of African-American models in advertisements (cf. Green 1991; Kern-Foxworth 1994; Unger and Stearns 1986; Wilkes and Valencia 1989). Most studies indicate an increase in the number of African-American models featured in advertising. Further, Lipman (1991) reports that African-American sports and entertainment personalities are often over-represented in advertisements. Unger and Stearns (1986) found African-American models to be over-represented in ads for telephones, liquor and wine, beer, and hair products, and under-represented in ads for tobacco and clothing.

Hence, though much of the initial advertising research on African-Americans is descriptive, one stream of research has empirically examined African-Americans' reactions to same- and different-race models in advertisements. In the 15-year period from the mid-1960s (Barban and Cundiff 1964) through the end of the 1970s, a steady stream of marketing research produced somewhat mixed results. The general consensus drawn from the empirical research on Caucasians revealed "little difference in how white consumers evaluate models of different race" (Bush, Hair, and Solomon 1979, p. 345), but research on African-American consumers found commercials with African-American models to be more meaningful to African-American viewers than ads with an all Caucasian cast (Schlinger and Plummer 1972) or ads suggestive of tokenism (Szybillo and Jacoby 1974). Solomon, Bush, and Hair (1976) summed up the difference: "Black consumers, for the most part, have responded more positively to black models than their white counterparts" (p. 431). For a review of the literature examining the effects of model's race in advertising, see Whittler (1991).

Some research has investigated African-American perceptions of advertising. For example, early research has suggested that African-Americans tend to be more receptive than Caucasians to advertising in general (Bauer and Greyser 1968; Durand, Teel, and Bearden 1979; Tolley and Goett 1971). Soley and Reid (1983) discovered that African-Americans were more satisfied with the informational value of advertising than Caucasians. A recent study found African-Americans to be somewhat more materialistic and to have more positive attitudes toward advertising than their Caucasian peers (Yoon 1995). Little, if any, research has investigated what variables might influence and shape those beliefs toward advertising.

Theoretical Foundation

Consumer Socialization

Consumer socialization is the process by which young people develop consumer-related skills, knowledge, and attitudes (Moschis and Churchill 1978). Various types of theories (e.g., developmental, social learning, social systems) have been used to explain consumer socialization over an individual's life cycle. Perhaps the most popular theory in communication and advertising research is the social learning model (Moschis and Smith 1985), which generally views socialization as an outcome of environmental forces applied to the individual (Bandura 1969). The individual is viewed as a passive participant in the learning process, and the development of beliefs and attitudes results from the interaction with others. The three main elements of that socialization theory are socialization agents, social structural variables, and outcomes.

According to social learning theory, the socialization agents and other social structural variables are instrumental in shaping an individual's attitudes and behaviors (McLeod and O'Keefe 1972). The socialization agents transmit norms, attitudes, and behaviors to the individual and socialization is assumed to take place during the individual's interaction with the agents. Socialization agents may be any person, institution, or organization directly involved with the individual. In the consumer behavior literature they include television advertising (Adler 1977), parents (Ward, Wackman, and Wartella 1977), school, and peers (Moschis and Churchill 1978). African-American studies have found such social structure variables as communication with parents and TV viewing to be important socialization agents (Rutledge 1988).

The social setting within which the interaction of individual and socialization agent takes place is the second important aspect of socialization. The social setting is often defined in terms of social structural variables such as gender, race, and family size (Moschis and Churchill 1978). Franklin (1994) has stated how social structural variables are important in explaining the learning or socialization process of African-American youths.

The third major element of social learning theory is outcomes. The end result of the socialization process is the acquisition of attitudes and behaviors often referred to as outcomes or consumer skills. The consumer socialization literature includes various

activities related to purchasing and consumption as consumer skills (Moschis and Smith 1985), such as consumer activism, attitudes toward prices, materialism, and economic and social motivations. We used all three aspects of social learning theory in this study.

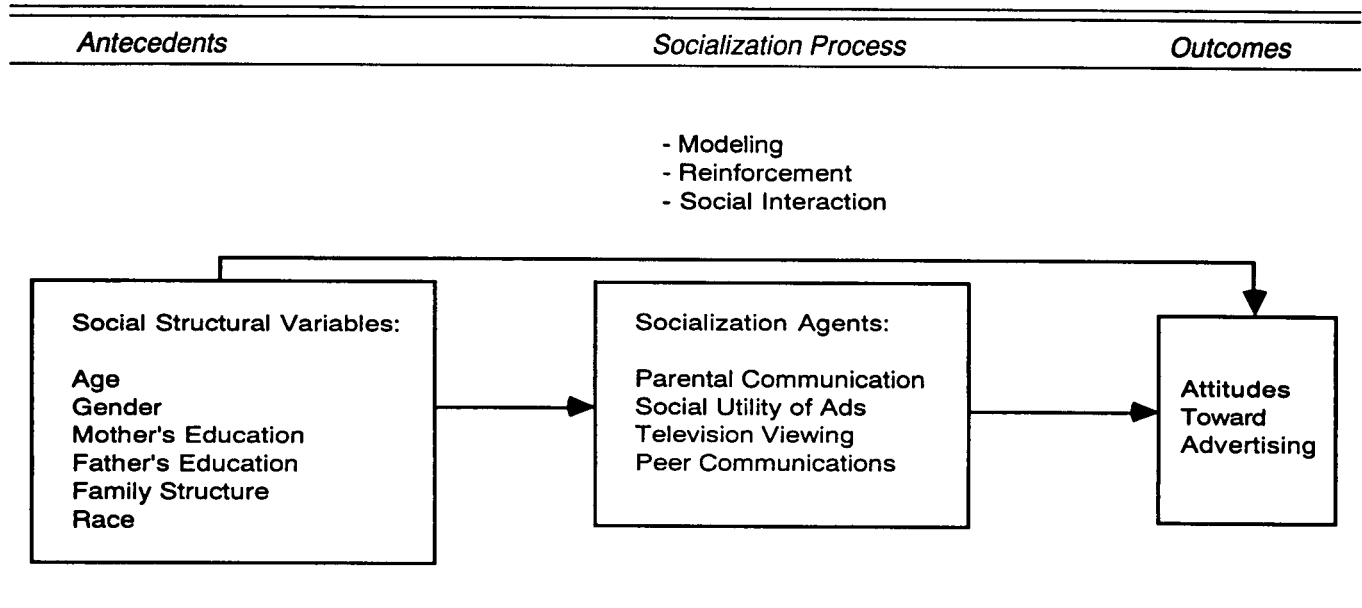
Socialization Agents. The socialization agents examined in our study were parents, mass media, and peers. They were selected because they are particularly relevant to advertising and because previous research indicates they play a significant role in consumer socialization (Moschis and Churchill 1978; Ward 1974) and African-American socialization (Rutledge 1988).

Social Structural Variables. The social structural variables used in our research were race, gender, mother's education, father's education, and family structure (i.e., whether the individual grew up with one or both parents). Those variables have been used in African-American socialization research (cf. Rutledge 1988). Because we were investigating subcultural differences, we included those variables as they have the potential to affect acquisition of the consumer skill (attitude toward advertising) both directly and indirectly through the socialization process. Additionally, they build on many of the demographic variables used in the attitude toward advertising literature.

Outcomes. The outcome variable we investigated was attitude toward advertising because it represents an important activity related to purchasing and consumption. It is of interest because it is (1) a summary construct of beliefs and affective reactions toward advertising and (2) a consumer skill that has been relatively neglected from a socialization perspective.

Figure 1 is an outline of the general conceptual model of consumer socialization. According to the consumer socialization literature, the social structural variables can affect learning (i.e., the outcome) directly or indirectly. Additionally, the socialization agent may have an effect on the individual's learning of the outcome variable through interaction with the individual. The learner may acquire cognition and behaviors from the socialization agents through the processes of modeling, reinforcement, and social interaction (McLeod and O'Keefe 1972). Though the processes associated with socialization are important, the intent of our study was not to focus on those processes, but rather to explore which socialization variables might directly influence attitude toward advertising.

Figure 1
A Conceptual Model of Consumer Socialization and Attitudes Toward Advertising



Hypotheses

Socialization Agents

Parents. Parents can have a significant influence on a child's acquisition of consumer skills (Moschis and Churchill 1978). Moore and Stephens (1975) indicate, for example, that overt parent-child communication about consumption predicts the adolescent's knowledge of prices. Moschis and Churchill (1978) found a significant effect between parent-adolescent communication and the adolescent's economic motivations for consumption. Given that attitude toward advertising is a consumer skill, these findings suggest the following hypothesis.

H1: Parental communication about consumption-related activities is related positively to attitude toward advertising.

Peers. An individual's peer group can be an important socialization agent. For years, researchers (cf. Riesman and Roseborough 1955; Parsons, Bales and Shils 1953) have posited that individuals learn from peers. Moschis and Churchill (1978) found a significant effect between peer communication about consumption and the consumer skills social motivations for consumption and materialistic values. They suggested that "youths may learn the expressive aspects of consumption from their peers" (p. 603). Again, attitude toward advertising as a consumer skill, suggests the following hypothesis.

H2: Communication with peers about consumption-related activities is related positively to attitude toward advertising.

Mass Media. Traditionally, mass media have been considered an important socialization agent related to consumption-related activities. Bandura (1969, 1971) argued that television commercials are dispensers of product information and that people learn how to attach social meaning to material goods through viewing and imitation of TV advertising. Moreover, Ward, Wackman, and Wartella (1977) suggested that advertising can have a major influence on consumer learning. Moschis and Churchill (1978) found a strong relationship between TV viewing and an individual's social motivation for consumption. They discovered that social utility reasons for watching television as a means of gathering information about lifestyles and behaviors are strong predictors of such consumer skills as materialism and economic motivation for consumption. Moschis and Churchill also found a strong positive relationship between amount of television viewing and social motivations for consumption. Given that attitude toward advertising is a consumer skill, the findings suggest the following hypotheses.

H3a: Social utility reasons for watching/reading advertising are related positively to attitude toward advertising.

H3b: The amount of television viewing is related positively to attitudes toward advertising.

Social Structural Variables

Though the socialization literature suggests that social structural variables can affect outcomes directly or indirectly, the advertising literature indicates that attitudes toward advertising are only moderately related to respondents' age, gender, income, and education (Bauer and Greyser 1968; Durand and Lambert 1985). College graduates tended to look at advertising less favorably than noncollege graduates, but expressed overall mixed rather than negative feelings. The work of Durand and Lambert (1985) also failed to link demographic variables to attitudes toward advertising as such variables accounted for very little variance in attitudes. Therefore, the literature supports the contention of no relationship between age, gender, income, education, and attitude toward advertising.

We included family structure in the study as a social structural variable because of its relevance in African-American socialization research. As a greater proportion of African-American than of Caucasian families are headed by females, the negative characteristics of one-parent families have been associated most often with African-American families (Rutledge 1988). Type of family structure has traditionally been considered an important determinant of the socialization process. Rutledge (1988), however, investigating the influence of family structure and 50 socialization variables, concluded that "the type of family structure alone cannot determine the nature of the outcome of socialization" (p. 204). Rutledge suggests that the association between family structure and socialization is much less important than is commonly believed. Hence, the literature suggests no relationship between family structure and socialization.

Conversely, some research indicates that the social structural variable of race may be related to socialization and attitudes toward advertising. Brunelli (1993) reported that African-Americans watch more television than non-African Americans. A recent study found that college-educated African-Americans watch about five more hours of TV a week than their Caucasian counterparts (Robinson, Yarding, and Rooks 1998). Further, Brunelli (1993) concluded that such exposure to TV and TV advertising can be related to African-Americans' perceptions of idealized images portrayed in the ads. Yoon (1995) reported that African-Americans had more favorable beliefs about advertising and were more materialistic than the Caucasian respondents. Those findings are the basis for the next hypothesis.

- H4: African Americans have a more positive attitude toward advertising than Caucasians.

Method

Sample

Our study sample consisted of African-American and Caucasian undergraduate students at a large midsouthern university. Student subjects were deemed appropriate for the study for several reasons. First, students have been found to be valuable subjects for the study of conceptual variables (Calder, Phillips, and Tybout 1981; Petty and Cacioppo 1996). Additionally, college students represent a good portion of middle class consumers, the target of our research. Attempts were made to ensure similar numbers of Caucasian and African-American students by selecting classes that were racially balanced. Data collected from other racial groups (i.e., Hispanics, Asians, etc.) were not included in the sample.

The total sample consisted of 208 respondents; 102 (49%) were African-American and 106 (51%) were Caucasian. Ninety-three were male and 115 were female. Ages ranged from 18 to 36 years with a mean of 23 years and a standard deviation of 4.2 years. Approximately 33% of the respondents' fathers had a high school education or less and 67% of the fathers had some college education or more. The percentages for the respondents' mothers were similar, with 36% of the mothers having a high school education or less and 64% of them having some college or a college degree. For the family structure variable, 70% of the African-American students and 84% of the Caucasian students had lived with both parents while growing up. Each respondent completed a self-administered survey about shopping behaviors.

African-American college students were selected because of the growing African-American middle class as well as the increasing number of African-Americans entering and graduating from universities. As of 1995, approximately 1.8 million African-Americans were attending universities in the United States. Moreover, 25.5% of African-Americans 25 years of age or older have between one and three years of college versus 17.6% in 1990 (Statistical Abstract 1997).

Measures

Dependent Variable. Our attitude toward advertising scale tapped individuals' personal experience with advertising. Personal beliefs about

advertising in general (e.g., "most TV commercials are fun to watch," "most advertisements tell the truth," "advertisements help people buy things that are best for them") were measured using a 10-item scale that has been used previously in socialization research (Moschis 1981). The measure had a 5-point "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" scale. The scores for negatively worded items were reversed so that higher scores consistently represented more positive beliefs toward advertising. The 10 items had a Cronbach's alpha of .76.

Independent Variables. The scales for the independent variables also were selected from previous socialization research. The parental communication scale was a modification of the Moschis and Moore (1984) scale for family communication about consumption. The 4-item scale tapped such beliefs as "my parents and I talked about things we saw or heard advertised" and "I asked my parents for advice about buying things." The resulting alpha for the scale was .72.

The mass media construct was measured with two scales. A scale to tap social utility reasons for watching/reading ads (e.g., "I often gather information from ads about products before I buy," "to make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often look at ads to see what others are buying") was adapted from Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel (1989). The 4-item scale yielded an alpha of .80. The second scale related to mass media was adapted from Moschis and Churchill's (1978) scale to measure television viewing. The 13 items measured frequency of viewing specific programs (such as situation comedies, dramas, movies, etc.) on a 5-point "every day" to "never" scale. Our TV viewing scale had an alpha of .77.

The peer communication scale was a modification of the Moschis (1981) scale for peer communication about consumption. It measured such beliefs as "I often seek out the advice of my friends regarding which brand to buy" and "I spend a lot of time talking with my friends about products and brands." The three items had an alpha of .82. The remaining independent variables were social structure variables and were measured with standard demographic scales (age, gender, education, race, family structure). Age, gender, family structure, and race were coded as dummy variables for the regression analysis.

Results

The relationship between attitude toward advertising and the consumer socialization variables is reported in Table 1. The data indicate a positive, statistically significant association between attitude

toward advertising and each of the socialization agents. A positive correlation between parents' communication about consumption-related activities ($r=.230, p<.01$) and attitude toward advertising supports H1. Further, the data indicate a positive correlation between peer communication ($r=.186, p<.01$) and attitude toward advertising, supporting H2. H3 is supported by a positive association between the mass media variables of social utility ($r=.443, p<.01$) and TV viewing ($r=.311, p<.01$) and attitude toward advertising.

H4 is supported by a significant association between attitude toward advertising and race ($r=.278, p<.01$). The data show that African-Americans have a more positive attitude toward advertising than Caucasians, the mean values being 2.91 and 2.56, respectively. All mean values are based on a 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree scale. We found no significant correlation between attitude toward advertising and the social structural variables of age, mother's education, father's education, and family structure. The only social structural variable, other than race, that is correlated with attitude toward advertising is gender ($r=.230, p<.01$). The mean values indicate that women (mean=2.86) have a more positive attitude toward advertising than men (mean=2.56).

Relative Influence of Consumer Socialization Variables

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to explore further the relative influence of consumer socialization variables on attitude toward advertising. To test for the possible presence of intercorrelations among independent variables, we ran correlations among the 10 predictor variables. All correlations were rather low (under .50). We assessed the tolerance values of the independent variables by using the conventional tolerance value of .1 as the cutoff point for high multicollinearity (Hair et al. 1992). All independent variables in the equation had high tolerance values ranging from .79 to .99, indicating an absence of multicollinearity (see Table 2). Hence, the resulting regression coefficients can be viewed as fairly accurate estimates of the true effects of the predictor variables on attitude toward advertising.

The results of the multiple regression analysis show that some consumer socialization variables are significant predictors of attitude toward advertising (adjusted $r^2=.30$, $F=21.6$; $p<.0001$). The stepwise regression results in Table 2 indicate significant standardized beta coefficients for four of the consumer socialization variables. The consumer socialization variables with the most predictive power for the

Table 1
Correlation Coefficients for Attitude Toward Advertising and Socialization Variables

<i>Consumer Socialization Variable</i>	<i>Attitude Toward Advertising</i>
Socialization Agent	
Parental communication	.230*
Peer communication	.186*
Mass media	
Social utility—ads	.443*
TV viewing	.311*
Social Structural	
Age	-.078
Gender ^a	.230*
Mother's education	-.003
Father's education	-.084
Family structure ^b	-.005
Race ^c	.278*

* $p < .01$ ^aDummy variable with 1 as female.^bDummy variable with 1 as living with both parents.^cDummy variable with 1 as African-American.

Table 2
Stepwise Regression Results of Attitude Toward Advertising and Socialization Variables^{*}

<i>Socialization Variable</i>	<i>Standardized Beta Coefficient</i>	<i>Significance t-Statistic</i>	<i>Tolerance Level</i>	<i>Value</i>
Social utility of ads	.39	6.20	.0001	.79
Gender ^a	.25	4.02	.0001	.94
TV viewing	.18	2.73	.007	.94
Race ^b	.17	2.60	.010	.99
Peer communication	-.08	-1.14	.256	.78
Parents' communication	-.06	.85	.396	.79
Age	-.06	-1.02	.306	.65
Family structure ^c	.05	.88	.382	.97
Mother's education	.01	.23	.820	.96
Father's education	-.002	-.03	.978	.95

^{*}Adjusted r^2 for the model=.30, $F=21.6$, $p < .0001$ ^aDummy variable with 1 as female^bDummy variable with 1 as African-American^cDummy variable with 1 as living with both parents

dependent variable, attitude toward advertising, are social utility of advertising ($\beta = .39$, $t = 6.20$, $p < .0001$), gender ($\beta = .25$, $t = 4.02$, $p < .0001$), TV viewing ($\beta = .18$, $t = 2.73$, $p < .007$), and race ($\beta = .17$, $t = 2.60$, $p < .01$). Social utility of advertising and the amount of TV viewing are socialization agents, whereas gender and race are social structural variables. Therefore, both types of socialization variables appear to influence individuals' attitude toward advertising.

To explore further the effect of race and consumer socialization on attitude toward advertising, we used two multiple regression equations. Table 3 reports the stepwise regression results for attitude toward advertising by race. The regression model is significant for both African-Americans (adjusted $r^2 = .30$, $F = 14.76$, $p < .0001$) and Caucasians (adjusted $r^2 = .14$, $F = 9.03$, $p < .0001$), but appears to fit the African-American data ($r^2 = .30$) slightly better than the Caucasian ($r^2 = .14$) data.

Table 3
Stepwise Regression Results of Attitude Toward Advertising by Race

<i>Socialization Variable</i>	<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	
	<i>African-American</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>
Social utility of ads	.49*	.34*
Gender ^a	.25*	.23*
TV viewing	.20**	.18
Peer communication	-.03	-.12
Parents communication	.03	.16
Age	-.04	-.08
Family structure ^b	-.02	.11
Mother's education	-.08	.15
Father's education	-.03	.06
Adjusted r ²	.30	.14
F-value	14.76	9.03
Significance level	.0001	.0001

*Significant at .01.

**Significant at .05.

^aDummy variable with 1 as female.

^bDummy variable with 1 as living with both parents.

For both African-Americans and Caucasians, social utility of advertising and gender are predictors of attitude toward advertising. The results suggest that the more an individual looks to advertising for guidance, the more favorable that person's attitude toward overall advertising becomes. For both African-Americans and Caucasians, women have a more positive attitude toward advertising than men (mean=2.86, vs. 2.56). The results also show that the amount of TV viewing is a predictor of attitude toward advertising for African-Americans only (mean African-Americans=3.52, mean Caucasians=3.15), confirming the finding that African-Americans watch more TV and use television more for guidance than their Caucasian counterparts.

Discussion and Implications

Theoretical Implications

Our findings provide insight to some prediction factors that help to explain the variation in attitudes toward advertising. The consumer socialization variables of parental communication, peer communication, social utility of advertising, the amount of TV viewing, gender and race are all shown to be associated positively with the outcome variable, attitude toward advertising. Our study extends consumer socialization research by investigating a

consumer skill (attitude toward ads) not been previously investigated in that research. Moreover, our study extends previous research suggesting that children learn consumer skills from multiple sources, including parents, peers and the mass media (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Ward, Wackman and Wartella 1977). We found that socialization agents (i.e., parents, peers, mass media) play a major part in shaping individuals' general attitudes toward advertising, and that those socialization variables may have a differential impact across race.

Our findings also provide empirical support for the results of previous African-American studies and extend that research by investigating attitudes toward advertising. We found that African-American college students tend to watch more TV, use advertising more as a source for information and have more positive attitudes toward advertising than their Caucasian counterparts. Those findings confirm the results of previous research showing that African-Americans watch more TV than their Caucasian counterparts and often use television as a source of guidance (Anderson and Williams 1983; Dates 1980; Stroman 1986, 1991). Therefore, television and advertising in general may have greater socializing effects for African-Americans than for Caucasians.

Another theoretical contribution of our study is the suggestion that the social structural variable gender has a significant effect on the consumer skill attitude

toward advertising. Though the literature on attitude toward advertising shows little, if any, relationship between demographic variables and attitude toward advertising (O'Donohoe 1995), we found gender to be related to attitude toward advertising in the direction that women had more positive attitude scores than men.

Our contradictory finding associated with gender and attitude toward advertising is somewhat consistent with the literature on market mavens. Feick and Price (1987) identified individuals characterized by general marketplace expertise as "market mavens" and defined them as "individuals who have information about many kinds of products, places to shop, and other facets of markets, and initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information" (p. 85). Moreover, market mavens tend to read magazines and watch TV more than nonmavens (Feick and Price 1987). Feick and Price found that market mavens were more likely than nonmavens to be female and African-American.

Public Policy Implications

Our findings have important public policy implications for advertisers. Because African-Americans are more favorably predisposed toward advertising, watch more TV, and rely on advertising to help choose the best product (social utility), they may be more vulnerable to misleading advertisements. For example, a few years ago malt liquor advertising targeted specifically to inner-city African-Americans was criticized by advocacy groups for having the potential to mislead that target group. However, heightened positive sensitivity toward advertising could enhance African-American's reception of product messages and thereby lead to greater product information and consumer knowledge. Our findings do not imply that African-Americans should be protected by policy restrictions. Additional research is necessary to determine whether a more positive attitude toward advertising leads to a greater probability of being misled by advertising. Rather than indicating a need for policy protection, our findings suggest an opportunity for advertisers to gain a better understanding of their position within a subculture and thus create more meaningful and directed messages.

Minority media portrayals, including advertising, have been criticized for reflecting and perpetuating the racism within our culture. Our findings and those of other researchers illuminate the reality: the

African-American middle class is strong and growing, has defined its desires, and embraces advertising as an ally in product purchase. Advertisers who understand and respect the consumer socialization dimensions of the African-American middle class, and recognize both its similarities and uniqueness in relation to all Americans, can best serve all their customers.

Managerial Implications

For advertising practitioners, our results have practical implications pertaining to attitudes toward advertising, race, and gender. An overall finding of our research is that how individuals are socialized by parents, peers, and mass media can influence attitudes toward advertising. Therefore, advertisers can use their messages to influence the socialization process through parents, peers, or mass media. The macro goal of advertisers could be to develop messages that can best market their products while building positive attitudes toward advertising. Such attitudes can influence an individual's attitude toward individual advertisements and ultimately the brand itself. Moreover, individuals with more favorable attitudes toward advertising are more accepting of advertising, find advertising more informative, and have a higher level of involvement with the ad.

In terms of race and gender, our findings suggest that African-Americans and women tend to have more positive attitudes toward advertising. The literature on attitudes toward advertising indicates that people with more favorable attitudes about advertising in general find specific advertisements more acceptable, informative, and enjoyable (Bartos and Dunn 1974; Bauer and Greyser 1968; Lutz 1985). Further, positive attitudes toward advertising can lead to positive attitudes toward the brand and, ultimately, to purchase. Our findings, along with the identification of the market maven as "more likely to be female and black" (Feick and Price 1987, p. 92), help identify an important target for advertisers. Women and African-Americans should be targeted by advertisers because of their potential marketplace expertise, their ability to diffuse information, and, most important, their receptivity to advertising. Those groups may have a greater proportion of opinion leaders who tend to be aware of new products earlier, provide information to other consumers across product categories, engage in general market information seeking, and exhibit general market interest and attentiveness. Those qualities, along with a more positive attitude toward advertising, are indicative of a tremendous target for advertisers.

Future Research

Consumer socialization among African-American consumers is ripe for further research. We sought to determine what consumer socialization variables might directly affect attitudes toward advertising, but many other variables and relationships warrant empirical investigation. In particular, research is needed on the socialization processes of modeling, reinforcement, and social interaction to discern whether differences are present across cultures and whether the differences affect consumer skill variables. Additionally, other consumer skills or outcomes such as consumer affairs knowledge, attitudes toward pricing, and consumer activism have not been investigated from a multicultural perspective. Much more research is needed on the socialization agents themselves. For example, we found that African-Americans watch more TV than Caucasians, which may influence attitudes toward advertising. Future research is needed on the type of TV programs watched by African-American and Caucasian young adults, as program content itself may serve as a socialization agent. How different cultures interact with parents, peers, and mass media to develop consumer skills warrants research attention. As the African-American market continues to grow in economic importance in the United States, we hope that practitioners will use the initial insights provided by our study and that additional research will be done on that relatively neglected target.

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