

**AUDIENCE REACTIONS TO THE PORTRAYAL OF BLACKS IN
ATHLETIC APPAREL COMMERCIALS**

by

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Department of Human Kinetics

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APPENDIX I



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Department of Human Kinetics

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the reactions of black and non-black adolescent basketball enthusiasts to portrayals of black athletes in athletic apparel commercials. The research builds on work in media studies by Radway (1991), Morley (1980), and Jhally and Lewis (1992). In particular, Radway's concept of the "interpretive community" is evaluated, together with Morley's notion of the "cultural map", as frameworks for explaining audience reactions. Radway suggests that similarly located groups tend to have similar interpretive strategies with respect to media messages. This tends to result in similar "readings" of media texts by these groups. Morley proposes that these diverse audiences can be plotted on a "cultural map" that describes the culturally based interpretations made by these audiences. Jhally and Lewis posit that there are racially based interpretations of black television portrayals that differentiate audiences. The explanatory power of these assertions was evaluated in this thesis project by examining the relationship between race, social location and interpretive strategies in two groups of research subjects -- black and non-black adolescent males. This work also builds on research in social inequality that theorizes about the positive and negative "influences" that black television portrayals have on viewing audience beliefs about blacks (Wonsek, 1992; Lewis and Jhally, 1992). The research schedule had 3 phases. In the first, a content analysis was conducted to document black representation in commercial messages aired during television broadcasts of 1994 NCAA basketball tournament games and 1994 NBA playoff games. A representative sample of 31 broadcasts was selected from a total of 44 broadcasts and the commercial messages were content analyzed for their racial representation. In the second phase, a sub-sample of 6 representative athletic apparel commercials featuring black athletes was drawn from the overall sample of commercials. This sub-sample was viewed by 7 groups of 2-8 subjects who routinely

watch televised basketball (3 groups of 15-19 year old black males and 4 groups of 15-19 year non-blacks). Focus group reactions to the commercials and to related interpretive and race-related questions were recorded using questionnaires and videotaping. Transcripts were prepared from the videotapes and a thematic content analysis was performed on the questionnaires and transcripts. In the third phase, audience statistics were obtained from the broadcaster and used as a frame of reference for broadening and contextualizing the focus group findings (based on the demographic characteristics of the viewing audience). The study integrated the methods of content analysis and audience research respectively, in order to overcome the limitations of both classical content analysis research (that theorizes about audience interpretations on the basis of contents alone) and of audience research (that ignores the broader spectrum of television content).

The content analysis results showed blacks to be comparatively underrepresented in the overall contents of the commercials messages and in most commercial types. However, blacks were vastly overrepresented in the athletic apparel commercial type. Audience statistics showed adolescent males to be frequent viewers of the NBA playoffs compared to their normal viewing patterns and compared to other demographic categories. The focus group finding relevant to the social inequality literature showed many *black* respondents to recognize the stereotypical portrayals of blacks in all areas of television programming. The respondents felt that these portrayals lead non-black audiences to see blacks more stereotypically in everyday life. The black respondents also appeared to identify with the black athlete portrayals, but were, for the most part, aware of the "myths" surrounding the mobility of blacks through sport and did not subscribe to these widespread beliefs. Most non-black respondents indicated that the portrayals of blacks and black athletes in the commercials were realistic, or suggested that they were

uncertain about how realistic the portrayals were because of their inexperience with “real life” blacks. These findings suggest that black portrayals tend to increase perceived racism for the black respondents while appearing to inform the non-black respondents about “what blacks are like”. The findings relevant to the youth culture literature showed the blacks and non-blacks to have common understandings of and preferences for the athletic apparel commercials and the athletes as they related to basketball, but to have distinctly “raced” perceptions of the black athletes whereby the blacks showed a cultural identification with the athletes that the non-blacks did not. The findings relevant to the interpretive literature showed the blacks and non-blacks to demonstrate a similar “cultural competency” with respect to basketball, however, their differences in cultural experience connected with race appeared to differentiate them as two different “interpretive communities”. More generally, these findings describe the youths’ positionings as television audiences, as consumers of popular culture and as readers of media text. This work has particular relevance theoretically and methodologically for the cultural studies discipline considering the underlying patterns that connected race, culture and interpretation in this audience ethnography.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is ongoing debate in mass media research about how television content is interpreted or "understood" by viewing audiences. Key issues include the relationship between the audiences' "social positioning" and interpretive strategies (Jhally and Lewis, 1992; Radway, 1991; Ang, 1985), the link between the audiences' "tastes", cultural affiliations and cultural understandings (Bourdieu, 1984; Browne and Shultze, 1990; Lull, 1984), and the extent to which audiences' interpretations are translated into actual "real life" influences for groups or individuals (Feniak, 1990; Buchignani, 1990; Leiss, Kline and Jhally, 1990; McDermott and Greenberg, 1985; Greenberg and Atkin, 1982; Vidmar, N. and Rokeash, M., 1974). The debate encompasses television programming and commercial messages alike, since both are widely seen and consumed by television audiences and potentially have far reaching consequences. Of particular importance in context are television portrayals of minority groups, in light of claims that stereotypical portrayals of such groups reinforce negative intergroup attitudes for those portrayed while non-stereotypical portrayals may tend to reinforce the illusion of social equality. Work in this area to date is not conclusive. Although there is some evidence to support the above claims about stereotypical portrayals, many generalizations about society are being made without considering how different audiences interpret the same portrayals or how different genres of programming (for example, television commercials, movies, sitcoms or news) might be interpreted differently by the same audiences. In many cases, the audience is not considered at all. This thesis study attempted to clarify some of these

issues by looking at the portrayal of minority groups in television programming and by examining segments of the television viewing audience that are exposed to these portrayals.

Statement Of Purpose And Definition Of Terms

This thesis examined how groups of black and non-black adolescent basketball enthusiasts reacted to portrayals of black athletes in athletic apparel commercials. The study also explored respondent perceptions of and beliefs about black portrayals in all areas of television programming, about the place of the black celebrity athlete in youth culture and about race issues pertaining to the black athlete. The concept of "black athlete" in context included Afro-Americans who compete in or have competed in university or professional sports and "playground" athletes, who do not play high level organized sport. "Athletic apparel commercials" are commercials advertising athletic shoes and clothing for companies such as Reebok, Nike, and Footlocker. The term "react" referred to how audiences interpret or understand the commercials, and how these commercials relate to the beliefs and understandings already held by the viewing audience.

Significance Of Study

This study attempted to engage a set of issues that are central to mainstream debates in media studies and social inequality research. Stereotypical television portrayals of blacks are believed to reinforce stereotypical beliefs about blacks in white viewing audiences (Atkin, Greenberg and McDermott, 1983; Vidmar and Rokeach, 1974). Non-stereotypical portrayals are said to reinforce beliefs in the meritocratic basis of society, and in the case of black, professional athlete spokespersons, the myth of social mobility through sport (Wenner, 1994; Wonsek, 1992). Also, it is claimed that negative stereotypical portrayals lead to feelings of low self esteem for black audiences while positive portrayals lead to feelings of pride (McDermott and Greenberg, 1985; Graves, 1980; Meyer, Donohue and Henke, 1978). Yet, there is a lack of solid audience-based research supporting these claims. From the standpoint of the literature on social inequality, therefore, this is an area that warrants further investigation.

Social issues surrounding advertising, and specifically television commercials, are also addressed in the study. The broader cultural effects of advertising as a market communication system (including its unintended consequences), are important in light of controversies about the negative effects of commercial messages on audience segments. This controversy includes debates about alcohol advertising, tobacco advertising and erotic television images as well as the potential effects of athletic apparel commercials on inner city youth, the subject of the present study.

The study also contributed to research examining portrayals of blacks in the media. Previous research has used content analysis to describe the frequency and significance of blacks in all types of programming. Greenberg and Brand's (1994: 303) overview of literature on minorities in television led them to conclude that "the research ...is still heavily reliant on content analysis and subsequent speculation rather than on the demonstration of the impacts of that content." Very few audience ethnographies have focused on reactions to black television portrayals. Jhally and Lewis' (1992) study of audience reactions to the non-stereotypical portrayal of a black family in *The Cosby Show* establishes an excellent basis for further research in the area. This thesis study builds on this work by addressing television commercials as a genre and audience segments as "interpretive communities". An "interpretive community" (Radway, 1991) is an audience whose cultural experiences, social location and interests lead them to interpret media text in similar ways. This study "tested" this theory by examining the interpretations of black and non-black male adolescent audiences of the same athletic apparel commercial messages. The adolescents who participated in the study had a common interest in watching televised basketball, but occupied different social locations based on race. Their distinct social positions were understood to constitute a possible basis for differentiation in their interpretive strategies. Lewis (1991: 193) explains the importance of social location:

in audience research...there has been a tendency to dismiss the importance of crude materialities like class and race, to question the power of these materialities to shape people's perceptions of television, popular culture and the world in general. While it would be foolish to ignore the complexity of these causal relations, it is equally foolish to ignore

causality altogether.

In Jhally and Lewis' (1992) study of the *Cosby Show*, black and white audiences reacted very differently to black portrayals. This study built directly on Jhally and Lewis' work by examining the reactions of black and white audiences to athletic apparel commercial portrayals of black athletes. A new genre was described in the study (the television commercial, rather than a comedy series), along with the "black athlete" and the accompanying "myth of social mobility through sport". Yet, this study examined the relationship between these different texts and different audiences using methods similar to those used by Jhally and Lewis'. In this way, "interpretive community" understandings of commercial messages were examined within a "taste culture" of black and non-black adolescents, thus addressing a gap in audience research literature left by Jhally and Lewis' study. Although the study is limited to explanations of specific audiences in limited viewing contexts (television commercials), the study's contribution to the literature on race issues and audience understandings of television itself justifies the research.

Chapter two, following this introduction, reviews the relevant literature in this area and contextualizes the study problem. The third chapter describes the research method and analysis procedures implemented in the study. The fourth chapter explains and analyzes the results of the study. The fifth chapter discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the results, and links the study findings to previous research. The thesis concludes with a summary of the study and with recommendations for further research and for improvements on the current study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on television portrayals of race indicates that blacks have traditionally been either ignored, underrepresented (according to population statistics), or depicted in stereotypical roles in all areas of television. Greenberg (1986) outlines three major content analyses that assessed the presence or absence of minorities in television content. Two decade long studies (Seggar, Hafenand and Hannonen-Gladden, 1981; Gerbner and Signorielli, 1979) and a programme sample (Weigal, Loomis and Soja, 1980) of television comedies, dramas and movies showed blacks to represent an average of 8% of all characters, and to fill 8% of total appearance time. Also, these appearances were concentrated in very few shows. A classic example of under-representation was evident in Vietnam War documentaries, where blacks were ignored despite their vast overrepresentation in the War itself (Corea, 1990). More recent analyses that included nonfiction portrayals (such as news) showed a small increase in the number of blacks shown during prime time television, with no notable changes in all other areas of programming (Greenberg and Brand, 1994).

The roles that blacks play on television shows have been examined superficially with respect to their "major" or "minor" statuses and with respect to the occupations and characteristics of the black characters. Research has shown that blacks have tended to be overrepresented in minor character roles, and underrepresented in major roles when compared proportionately to whites (Greenberg, 1986; Seggar et. al., 1981; Weigal et. al., 1980; Gerbner and Signorielli, 1979). In-depth analyses showed blacks to be more often portrayed in blue collar and service jobs, while performing in "less serious" roles than whites. Gray (1986) noted the stereotypes and "demeaning portrayals" on television sitcoms, such as the "patronizing, even contemptuous" assumptions underlying the television series *Diff'rent Strokes*, where blacks and whites were integrated in a "formal sense", but the basis of the storyline, a White man adopting two Black boys (and the inner city background of the boys that led to this adoption), was problematic in terms of stereotyping.

As noted above, blacks have tended to be concentrated in particular types of programming, especially comedy, sport and music, while being underrepresented in others such as children's programmes and daytime serials (Wonsek, 1992; Real, 1989; Barcus, 1983; Weigal and Howes, 1982). Within these programmatic divisions, cross-racial interactions have been quite infrequent. Corea (1990) speaks of the "virtual apartheid of situational comedies", where black and white Americans are not portrayed as living or interacting harmoniously. Where interactions are seen, those of children and adolescents are relatively informal, whereas those among adults are generally more formal and distant than within-race interactions. The infrequency of these contacts highlights a trend for television shows to be all-black or all-white (Greenberg, 1986; Pierce, 1980).

Blacks have also been underrepresented in news programming, both as broadcasters and subjects of the news. News stories about blacks are often more negative than stories about whites, focusing on negative attributes or events (especially crime) (Greenberg, 1986). Corea (1990) shows this explicitly by comparing two news stories, one referring to a crime committed by a group of blacks and the other about a white man who committed a similar crime. The white man who murdered a woman was treated with deference, whereas the black youths who raped and beat a woman were portrayed as racist (both victims were white). In Corea's terms (1990: 260), it was "African-Americans" attacking fine, respectable whites, and a "preppie" (the white murderer) acting out of character.

Despite these consistent patterns, significant non-stereotypical portrayals emerged in several areas during the late 1980's. These included the successful rise of *The Cosby Show* and the increased number of blacks gaining notable positions in both dramatic television programming (e.g. *Miami Vice*), in talk show formats (e.g., the *Oprah Winfrey Show*) and in other selected areas (e.g., Bernard Shaw-White House journalist) (Huston et. al., 1992). *The Cosby Show* is a situation comedy about an upper-middle class black family that challenged stereotypes about blacks. The show became the top rated television show in America during the late 1980's. However, these progressions (the extent to which these were, in fact,

progressions is discussed below) do not transcend the larger problems that persist in television in terms of black exclusion and black stereotypes.

Portrayal of Blacks in Television Commercials

Research on the representation of blacks in television commercials shows blacks to be somewhat more visible in this sphere than in other areas of television programming. Weigal et. al. (1980) measured minority presence in terms of "time-on-air" during prime-time programming and found blacks to be visible 8.5% of the time, to appear in 20% of the product commercials, to appear in all-black commercials less than 2% of the time and to actually interact with whites less than 2% of the time. This study unveils a common trend for blacks to be present in about 20% of commercials throughout the viewing day, but to be less prominent than whites in these commercials (Wonsek, 1992; Weigal et. al., 1980). Wonsek's (1992) recent study of television commercials during the 1988 NCAA basketball tournament (a study with particular significance for this thesis) shows "black images" to be present in 19.27% of the commercials, with 9.45% of the commercials having major black spokespersons or images. Wonsek emphasized that the low number of major black spokespersons/images in the commercials (except for athletic apparel commercials) was especially significant because the advertising was during a black athlete-dominated sports event. Greenberg (1986: 175) cautioned that the apparent high incidence of blacks in television commercials "may be overstated by merely counting faces", as blacks are more often background figures, receiving less air-time, and rarely interacting with whites (as noted in Weigal et. al.'s (1980) study).

As in other areas of television programming, there are instances of *non-stereotypical* black portrayals in television commercials. In many of these cases, black celebrity spokespersons are promotional figures, especially in recent athletic apparel commercials (Wenner, 1994; Wonsek, 1992). Wenner's (1994) analysis of television commercials during broadcasts of the USA basketball "Dream Team" games at the 1992 Summer Olympics shows that black professional basketball players supported three basic themes in commercials. The athletes

were used to promote "nationalism", to promote "hard work and the realization of dreams", and to promote themselves as sports celebrities. Wenner suggested that these portrayals, despite their apparently open construction of multiculturalism and race, limited roles of African Americans by reinforcing the myth of social mobility through sport and the illusion of a meritocratic society. Wenner felt that these limitations were reinforced within the "preferred reading" of the television commercials, that is, the understanding that most audience members would have of the television commercial (Hall, 1980). However, Wenner recognized the need for empirical audience research to complement this theoretical position.

Audience Interpretations of Black Portrayals in Television

Research on the interpretations of *stereotypical* television portrayals of blacks by white audiences shows interpretations to reflect preexisting attitudes in both adults and children (Atkin, Greenberg and McDermott, 1983; Vidmar and Rokeach, 1974) or to show no apparent trends (Greenberg, 1986; Berry and Mitchell-Kernan, 1982; Dates, 1980; Barry and Sheik, 1977). Of particular relevance is Atkin, Greenberg and McDermott's (1983) survey of 316 white elementary school students who regularly watch all-black television shows. The researchers found that the viewers' interpretations of black television character traits were closely related to parallel beliefs about the real world. Although this correlation was believed to result, in part, from the selective distortion of the televised portrayals by the viewer, the researchers indicated that the incoming perceptions exerted a stronger influence. The researchers concluded that television serves to reinforce what is learned outside the television situation while offering new information where little prior information existed for the viewer.

Research on how adolescents identify with television characters shows no relationship between racial attitudes and character perceptions (Dates, 1980). Other studies indicate that youth identify more readily with same race characters (Greenberg and Atkin, 1982; Liss, 1981; Eastman and Liss, 1981) and prefer same race television programmes (Dates, 1980). However, *interpretations* of stereotypical or non-stereotypical minority portrayals are not

explicitly examined in any of these studies. In general, studies on audience interpretations and understandings of stereotypical minority portrayals suggest that these portrayals reinforce preexisting beliefs, offer new information when no previous information exists, and leads to identification with same race characters (Atkin, Greenberg and McDermott, 1983; Vidmar and Rokeash; Greenberg and Atkin, 1982; Eastman and Liss, 1981; Liss, 1981). Survey research is most used in these studies. However, the lack of thorough research in this area is evident and is recognized by researchers in the field (Greenberg, 1986; Huston et. al., 1992).

Audience research on television commercials has been done predominantly with a marketing orientation. In one of the few sociological studies, Soley (1983) looked at white male reactions to black models in print ads and found that there were no "negative affective or connotative responses from consumers". A marketing study by Jones (1984) affirmed Soley's conclusion, although it was not specifically designed to study audience reactions to stereotypical or non-stereotypical portrayals of blacks. A second study on children affirmed the notion that the television character's ethnicity did not appear to alter audience views on the television advertising (Barry and Hansen, 1973) .

Jhally and Lewis' (1992) study of *The Cosby Show*, is one of the only audience research studies to comprehensively address reactions to and interpretations of black television portrayals (in this case, *non-stereotypical portrayals*). The researchers conducted a number of small group interviews with black and white viewers. The white respondents indicated, in most cases, that they did not notice that the upper-middle class Huxtable family in the show was black (these were termed "colourblind" responses). The study also showed most white respondents to be unaware of the existence of "widespread or structural racism", leading them to reject policies like affirmative action (Lewis, 1991: 181). The prevalent attitudes expressed by the black respondents were of "pride and approval of the way they (The Huxtable family), as black people, (were) portrayed" (Lewis, 1991: 193). Although these groups acknowledged the common criticism that the show was "too white", few respondents actually endorsed this view.

Lewis discusses the consequences of these interpretations in his book *The Ideological Octopus*. He suggests there is a sense in which the "colourblind" reading of the show by white viewers could represent a situation where the "inevitable" of crude racism have been disentangled" and the "colour of one's skin can, indeed, signify nothing" (Lewis, 1991: 180). At the same time, the black viewers celebration of black culture (a celebration based on subtle cultural symbols on this popular show) could also appear to reinforce a common cultural identity based on race. However, *the Cosby Show's* failure to address the barriers that many blacks face could also yield a false sense of social equality among many white viewers, according to Lewis. Although Jhally and Lewis' (1992) study explores audiences reactions to the show and the potential ideological consequences of the show in much greater detail, for the purposes of this discussion it is sufficient to note that white audiences and black audiences interpreted the show differently and that a variety of potential ideological consequences resulted from these interpretations.

Besides the Jhally and Lewis study, very little research addresses audience reactions to *non-stereotypical* portrayals of blacks. An experimental study conducted by Allsopp (1982) suggested that minority role models in television programmes were an effective means of enhancing interracial perceptions. The researcher introduced two situation comedies, one with a predesignated negative portrayal of a black person and another with a positive portrayal, to fourth and fifth grade black and white children. The positive portrayal was believed to decrease negative stereotyping among black children while the "negative" portrayal was believed to induce more positive attitudes among black and white children . However, the findings of this study were ambiguous as a "no portrayal" option was not implemented and it is unclear as to whether any portrayal is better than none or if distinctly positive portrayals are necessary (Greenberg, 1985). A similar study by Gorn, Goldberg and Kanungo (1976) demonstrated that preschool children had more positive intergroup attitudes after watching positive inter-ethnic interactions on Sesame Street. However, these experimental studies failed to address the actual interpretations and understandings of the audience segments, and did not show how television content interacts with the viewer.

These experimental studies, often referred to as "effects" research, are criticized for using short term studies to measure long term effects, for attempting to create "control" conditions for an event (television viewing) that cannot be reproduced outside of the actual site of consumption, and for focusing on the impact of the television message on the passive television viewer (treating the television viewer as an "empty vessel") (Lewis, 1991: 9). These criticisms (see also Gerbner et. al., 1994) demonstrate the problems associated with much of the existing work on minorities and television audiences. In response to these problems, a new emphasis has emerged in audience studies focused on the reactions of audiences to different genres of television in "lived" viewing conditions. These "audience ethnographies" are discussed below.

Connecting Audience Interests, Tastes and Interpretations

As discussed earlier, the work by Jhally and Lewis (1992) showed that black audiences and white audiences tended to interpret black portrayals on *the Cosby Show* in different ways. Studies on black and white reactions to other media genres (not necessarily black portrayals) have also supported these findings, showing how audiences enjoy similar cultural elements, but interpret them in diverse ways. For example, Browne and Schulze (1990) studied adolescent interpretations of two Madonna music videos and found there were differing interpretations of the videos by black and white audiences. These findings showed how these audiences had diverse orientations toward music, sexuality, and the lyrics that link them. Samuels (1991) reinforces this idea in his discussion of rap music. He suggests that rap, while proportionately more popular among blacks and based in "black culture", has a primary audience of white suburban males. He indicates that "the ways in which rap has been consumed and popularized speak not of cross-cultural understanding, musical or otherwise, but of a voyeurism and a tolerance of racism" (1991: D5). This conditional relationship between musical interests and interpretations is described by Harvard University's Henry Gates (as quoted by Samuels) when he argued that "both the rappers and their white street fans affect and commodify their own visions of street culture" (1991: D5).

These distinctly “black “ and “white” perceptions of common cultural elements have also been identified by researchers working in the effects framework. Although the behaviorist tendencies of the studies are not without problems, some of these findings have focused on audience interpretations and beliefs, and are useful. McDermott and Greenberg (1985), for example, found that regularity of watching black television shows related with black students’ self-esteem and self-image, with the predominance of negative portrayals leading to negative “effects” on self-esteem. These results were corroborated by similar studies of viewing frequency, interpretation of black portrayals and self image (Graves, 1980; Meyer, Donohue and Henke, 1978). All of these studies focused on black youths and/or adolescents, and encompassed both regular television programming and advertising. A distinction between black and white viewers was identified by Greenberg and Atkin (1982) in their study of how children learn about minorities from television viewing. These researchers found that whites learned about blacks from television while blacks claimed to learn about both whites and themselves. These distinctions, as well as the tendencies for blacks and whites to prefer same-race television shows and characters (Greenberg and Atkin, 1982; Liss, 1981; Eastman and Liss, 1980) help show that black and white television viewers watch television differently. At the same time, however, this evidence does not confirm that blacks and whites *interpret* media texts in different ways: (there is not yet sufficient research across genres and across differently “socially located” audiences to make this claim), although research in these areas is ongoing.

At issue in the audience research literature is the question of how to theorize audience social strata. Bourdieu’s (1984) work on the sociology of “taste” has helped to set the agenda in this area. Bourdieu analyzed the socially constructed character of preferences, interpretations and value judgments, and found evidence of connections between taste, lifestyle and social position based on a mass survey of French culture. An important limitation of Bourdieu’s work was his exclusive focus on class relations. Race (as well as gender and age) were not evaluated as separate demographic conditions (Moore, 1993: 123). This is significant in context in light of the findings on cross-race interpretations discussed

above (Browne and Schulze, 1990; Jhally and Lewis, 1992; Greenberg and Atkin, 1982). Bourdieu's research agenda, although useful, does not directly lend itself to research in racially specific features of mass culture.

Some researchers dismiss the importance of crude materialities like class and race, and question the power of these materialities to shape people's perceptions of television, popular culture and the world in general (Lewis, 1991: 193). Lull (1984) addresses the theoretical issue of whether taste can be separated from social conditions, a concern reminiscent of Bourdieu's limitations. Lull relates the notion of "taste" and "taste culture" to adolescents in his work on the cultural significance of music. Initially, Lull acknowledges the "unifying and expressive qualities" of music as popular culture, suggesting that "American black music, reggae, 1960's protest music, punk rock, and other forms are intimately associated with the common social realities of music makers and listeners" (1985: 215). He also describes how music can have *crossover appeal*, referring to Lewis' (1982) work that showed how contemporary popular music transcends boundaries of social class, race, gender, educational level, and nearly every other demographic marker. Lull refers to the music of popular performing artist Michael Jackson, "the ultimate crossover artist in the mid-1980s" to demonstrate this idea. Jackson's appeal to "millions of fans who are black and white, female and male, very old and very young, rich and poor, straight and gay, old-fashioned and modern" (1985: 215) showed how diverse audiences can have similar cultural interests. Lull noted how the compelling range of influences that mass media provides increases the potential for audiences to "cross over", thus allowing people from all demographic strata to have access to the materials of popular culture. However, Lull recognizes that youth are distinct in the popular culture realm and that this crossover is often limited to adolescent "taste cultures". It appears from these literatures that crossover *interests* (the cultural activities that are enjoyed and participated in by different audiences) do not necessarily coincide with common *interpretations* or *tastes* (referring to the socially shared meanings that these activities have for their participants) by audience group members, as was evident from our discussions of Madonna's music and rap music.

The Television Commercial As a Distinct Cultural Communicative Form

Although the portrayal of blacks in all areas of television programming is important, it is necessary to distinguish advertising from regular programming. The television commercial is a message system constructed to communicate meaning to specific audience segments through denotative indicators that are rich in suggestive or connotative significance (Leiss, Kline and Jhally, 1985: 200). Although there are striking similarities in some cases between commercial messages and programming contents in terms of cinematic methods (e.g., use of music, drama, cuts) and thematic arrangements (e.g. situation comedy), a principle distinction is that the commercials are designed mainly to “persuade” whereas programming contents are designed to “entertain”. Of particular importance to this discussion is the notion that present day advertising communicates more about the social context in which products are used than about the products themselves. Leiss, Kline and Jhally (1985: 352) reinforce this idea, indicating that “the primary field of content in modern advertising is contemporary culture itself, and advertising is a contested discourse precisely for this reason”. From this perspective, advertising is more than a mechanism for communicating product information to the viewing audience, it is cultural and social discourse that gives meaning to consumption (where the consumer identifies with cultural elements of the commercial and the product or service).

Although the common cultural *mythologies* associated with television commercial advertising and television programming suggest a similarity between these two genres, the compact format and explicit goals of the television commercial make it a unique form of communication. The intention of television advertisers is to create and access “consumption communities” (consumers whose styles and expenditure patterns are socially and culturally based) among television viewers (Leiss, Kline and Jhally, 1985). The television commercial is a form of persuasive communication concerned with promotion of products and services, in some cases impinging on the realm of politics, education and society. This is distinct from the entertainment driven aspects of conventional television programming. These distinctions

demonstrate the need for advertising to be separated from regular programming in audience-related research.

Text Based Theories and Structural Analysis

Text-based theories of communication generally predict how the audience is affected by a media text, based on an analysis of the media text itself. Textual analysis is an important step in understanding the text-audience interaction. Only by understanding *the structure of the media text* can a comprehensive explanation of the text-audience interaction be undertaken.

For example, structuralist analysis provides a basis for understanding how the media communicates to the audience. The media text is structured by sets of *codes*. Real (1989) explains how these *codes* are comprised of social interactions, relations and verbal expressions that are organized to make up understandable and coherent sets of events or conversations that are meaningful for the viewing audience. Codes tend to express the *social* beliefs of the dominant culture, and can be conceived of as *myths*. Kellner (1979: 22) describes mythology as simple stories that "explain, instruct, and justify practices and institutions; they are lived, and shape thought and action. Myths link together symbols, formula, plot, and characters in a pattern that is conventional, appealing and gratifying".

This structured mythology is evident in media stereotypes about blacks. Real (1989: 107) explains how the ideology of racism is coded into American mythology through the portrayal of black Americans as slaves and ex-slaves on the plantation and as "happy-go-lucky singing and dancing servants". In Real's framework, icons, genre, and formula are fundamental components of this constructed mythology about blacks. *Icons*, or culturally based visual representations of these myths, are often comprised of individuals (such as Bill Cosby), whose presence resonates with and affects the dominant mythology (Fishwick, 1970). *Genre* is a combination of widely recognized settings, characters, dress, plot lines and other elements regularly found in media texts and the *formula* is how the presentation of these media texts is structured.

Just as conventional television content, constructed by the coding of icons, genre and formula, is believed to reinforce the stereotypical black mythology, *the Cosby Show* and other non-stereotypical images are believed by some to recode the connotative meaning of "black" from the stereotypical denigratory meaning to an alternate or opposing meaning such as "black = beautiful" (Hall, 1982: 79). Hall sees these movements to be part of collective black resistance and the development of a positive black consciousness. This is evident in *the Cosby Show's* "potentially decisive effects in convincing middle Americans that a Black man and his family can be their most favoured weekly guest" (Real, 1989: 121).

Barthes (1972), in his discussion of the "myth's masking powers", suggests that such representations serve to suppress contradictions and idealize existing conditions. Wonsek (1992: 457) supports this idea in her discussion of black personalities as commercial spokespersons, suggesting that these personalities "reinforce the illusion that the 'American Dream' is available to all", while allowing the dominant group to deny its racism. Others suggest that these portrayals offer the White audience a view of reality that is "reassuring and acceptable, just the way they want it to be-no guilt, no fears" (Corea, 1990: 265).

Audience Research: Developments and Theoretical Considerations

Much of contemporary audience research focused on the context of media consumption, the media genre, and the viewer-media text interaction is derived from David Morley's (1980) *The "Nationwide" Audience*, a study of a BBC news and current affairs show. Morley's project was designed to "sketch a provisional map of different 'interpretive communities' by carrying out interviews with TV viewing groups drawn from various educational and occupational backgrounds" (Moore, 1993: 6). This study separated itself from other critical work at the time by addressing the interaction between the audience and the television text. Previously, work in this area had ignored the audience and emphasized the power of the text to influence the "passive" viewer. This "hypodermic needle" model was endorsed by the film journal *Screen* in the 1970s and is based on early sociological theory.

A crucial contribution of Morley's study was the testing of Stuart Hall's (1980) encoding-decoding model of the audience. Hall's model showed the communicative process to be a whole, with the moment of programme making at one end and the moment of audience perception at the other. He indicated that viewers brought their own interpretive frameworks to the message (whether this was television or other media) and therefore that the processes of encoding and decoding were not be perfectly symmetrical (Hall, 1980). Hall's framework also described what he called the "preferred" reading of the media texts, a reading that conformed with the dominant cultural order and a reading that the "ordinary" viewer would make. According to Hall, viewer readings that matched the "preferred" reading (as defined by the researcher) were known as "dominant readings". Those readings that displayed the basic premise of the preferred reading but varied in other ways were "negotiated" readings, while those readings that were contrary to "preferred" reading were "oppositional". Since the *Nationwide* project, criticisms of the study and of the encoding-decoding model (Morley, 1981; Lewis, 1983) have led to revised forms of audience research. For example, media genres and the context of media consumption (social setting, physical setting) are now recognized as important research considerations.

Critics of the encoding-decoding model (see Lewis, 1983; Morley, 1981 and Moores, 1993) hold that the notion of encoding and preferred readings imply an intentionality on the part of the broadcasters. Yet, this does not stand up. Moores (1993), for example, has argued that broadcasters operate more on a taken-for-granted reproduction of dominant definitions and an acceptance of professional conventions than they do with deliberate biases and purposes. The notion of the "preferred reading" is further criticized to be little more than the researcher's own interpretation of the text (Lewis, 1983).

Hobson's (1982) study of the British television serial *Crossroad* that investigated the interpretations of women who were regular viewers of the television programme is an example of the reformulated audience research that resulted from these criticisms. Hobson interviewed women in the household context, watching an episode of the programme on television as a prelude to a discussion about the women's experiences with and interpretations

of the show. Her study is one of the first to devote this much attention to the types of television programming people watched and the context of their actual viewing. Other relevant studies in this area include Ang's (1985) study of viewers' written interpretations of the American soap *Dallas*, Liebes and Katz (1990) study of cross-cultural interpretations of *Dallas*, and the Jhally and Lewis (1992) study of *the Cosby Show* mentioned earlier.

Janice Radway's (1991, initially published in 1984) ethnographic study of women who read romance novels is particularly relevant to this paper because of her use of Stanley Fish's (1979) notion of "interpretive communities" to theorize the patterns of interpretation that viewers (and in Radway's case, readers) bring to the text. Radway hypothesized that similar readings are produced because "similarly located readers learn a similar set of reading strategies and interpretive codes that they bring to bear upon the texts they encounter" (Radway, 1991: 8). Radway attempted to determine whether women romance readers interpreted romances differently from the community of trained scholars. This framework is useful for television audience research that examines the interpretive strategies of specific audiences, yet it is not without difficulties.

Radway herself noted that her work failed to adequately describe how membership in the romance-reading community was composed and that as a result she was unable to explain how "social determination operate(d) with respect to the larger activity of reading romance" (1991: 8). Radway indicated she would now want to construct an ethnography of romance that examined how other social variables such as age, class location, education and race intersected with gender to produce varying interpretations and engagements with the romance form.

A parallel set of developments in the study of youth subcultures made just these sorts of connections. It is possible to link the youth subculture research with Radway's framework of interpretive communities and to address the connection between social location and interpretive strategies within youth subcultures. Although the youth subculture literature generally is limited to the interests, activities and social positioning of these sub-cultures (see Hebdige, 1979), Radway's work provides a bridge with interpretive practices. She writes that

"similarly located readers learn a similar set of reading strategies and interpretive codes that they bring to bear upon the texts they encounter" (1991: 8). Radway argues that these similarities can be attributed to specific cultural competencies (such as an understanding of certain kinds of music) that are acquired as a consequence of the "readers'" social location.

Along similar lines, Willis (1990) has noted that youth actively construct meaning, identity and lifestyle through their interpretation and consumption of television, advertising, music and clothes. Willis referred to this active construction as "symbolic creativity". He argued that these creativities are negotiated within structural constraints (such as memberships of race, class, gender, age, and region) in order to give meaning to one's consumptions and experiences. Hebdige (1979: 103) used the term "bricolage" in a similar way in his work on spectacular British youth subcultures to describe how "basic elements can be used in a variety of improvised combinations to generate new meanings". For example, in his study of the punk rock sub-culture, he explained how "unremarkable and inappropriate items-a pin, a plastic clothes peg, a television component, a razor blade, a tampon-could be brought within the province of punk (un)fashion" (Hebdige, 1979: 107). Moores (1993) contended that Willis' symbolic creativity, while similar to bricolage, helps to explain how *all* youth actively construct meaning, identity and lifestyle, not just the spectacular groups (Hebdige's focus).

Both of these concepts are helpful for explaining the "use" of the running shoe in adolescent street culture. Peter Feniak (1991: F7) in his article "Air It! Pump It!- Worshipping the Running Shoe", discussed how "sneakers", made by such companies as Nike, Converse and Reebok were initially popular in American "paved over, graffiti filled playgrounds". At this time, the running shoe sub-culture was somewhat more exclusive and spectacular, and the shoe itself would be considered an example of "bricolage". However, the sneakers' prevalence in the movie "Do the Right Thing", a movie directed by well known black personality Spike Lee, and in athletic apparel commercials featuring popular basketball stars, intensified the passion for these shoes among youth (Reilly, 1991; Feniak, 1991). Sneakers became a fundamental part of "rap" music style. According to Feniak, "a style had been set that would reach teenagers everywhere" (Feniak, 1991: F7). At this point, Hebdige's

conception of bricolage as a "theory of the spectacular subculture" (1979: 104) seems less applicable, as the "creative" use of the running shoe had become less subversive and more mainstream. The shoe might be better considered an example of symbolic creativity, holding with Willis' broader understandings of youth culture.

Athletic apparel companies have capitalized on this popular style, selling their shoes using "attitude" and "lifestyle" advertising, appealing to youth who see these shoes as a statement about their personalities (Hickey, 1990). Although the obsession with these shoes is often associated with the inner city and rap music, their appeal (if not their meaning) tends to transcend sub-cultural divisions. This common appeal is important in the context of Radway's notion of the "interpretive community". Radway would "predict" that interpretations of commercials promoting running shoes would be similar for members of groups that are "similarly located". However, this prediction may be an oversimplification as it does not account adequately for how to define what "similarly located groups" might be and it does not address theoretical issues of social determination. Willis (1990: 8) illustrates the intricacies and complexities associated with doing research on race and youth culture in his study of young blacks' experiences in Britain as follows:

often young black people are engaged in a doubly creative task. They are trying to negotiate what it means to be a black person in a white culture at the same time they are engaged in the same creative activities as their white peers, through which they explore aspects of their black identities. The balance which young people strike between these things differs from culture to culture and from individual to individual.

Majors (1990: 111) theorized about this sort of "negotiation" in his discussion of black masculinity and sport. He suggested that black males cope with their frustration, alienation, and social impotence within an institutionally racist society by "channeling their creative energies into the construction of unique, expressive, and conspicuous styles of demeanor, speech, gesture, clothing, hairstyle, walk, stance, and handshake" (1990: 111). Within the realm of sport, this "cool pose" as Majors terms it, is best symbolized by the emergence of an

expressive style among black basketball players that encompasses creativity, grace, and agility, embedded in an aggressive assertion of masculinity. These expressive behaviors are associated not only with professional athletes, but also with "college, high school and playground athletes" who mimic, develop and use expressive styles of their own (Majors, 1990: 112). Of particular importance is that these behaviors are considered to be uniquely "black", and act as resistance to the dominant white culture.

Racial differences, of course, are cultural. Yet, their apparent fixity derives from the enscribing of culture in the material world. Jhally and Lewis (1992: 96), for example, differentiate between being a black person and being a white person in the United States on the grounds that racial differences are "deeply rooted in their distinct and separate histories, histories encapsulating a host of material and cultural distinctions". Their analysis is eminently relevant to Canada, where a history of discrimination and racial difference exists, despite the popular view of Canada as comparatively tolerant of racial minorities. Historical analysis has shown that ethnic affiliation has been important in the material formation of social classes in Canada. According to Agos and Boyd (1993: 331), "dominant ethnic groups (have) appropriated positions of power and advantage and restricted other ethnic groups to less desirable positions".

In the American case, Lewis (1991) has researched modern cultural instruments of racism, including the myth of meritocracy (akin to the myth of social mobility through sport (Coakley, 1990) that is reinforced by society's glorification of blacks who have "beat the odds". He explains the inherent contradictions associated with racism:

The history of racism is now embedded in an iniquitous capitalist system, where economic rather than racial laws ensure widespread segregation and disadvantage. This, in turn, encourages white people to believe in an imagined cultural superiority, while simultaneously giving credence to the idea that we are what we become, that culture is not God-given but a social construction (Lewis, 1991: 173).

Current research on discriminatory practices in employment and in access to significant resources shows these barriers to exist in Canada (Reitz, 1993). For example, Henry and Ginzberg (1985) found that in Toronto there was a notably higher percentage of "positive" responses to employment applications for whites than non-whites who had similar experience and qualifications. These findings support other studies done in Canada that reveal income, education and unemployment disparities between whites and non-whites (Agocs and Boyd, 1993). These notions of race and racism provide a historical and contemporary framework on social inequality for this study.

In light of this distinction between race and racism in Canada and the United States and the potential cultural impacts of television messages on audiences, it is important to note the levels of Canadian exposure to American culture through television. This is a significant issue for a study of the racial impacts of athletic apparel commercials. The commercials in this thesis study were aired in conjunction with American broadcasts of games, yet were shown in Canada. Statistics on Canadians' exposure to American television reflect that U.S. stations commanded 31.9 per cent of the English speaking Canadian audience share in 1987-88 (Canada, 1990) while the Canadian programme share of the English speaking Canadian audience in 1990 was only 26 per cent (Canada, 1992). Seventy-eight per cent of Canadian households subscribe to cable television systems, which offer a minimum of three U.S. commercial networks (Canada, 1991).

Of course the major concern for this study is the cultural impact of this exposure. Bruce Feldthusen (1993) noted that television is a powerful "cultural conditioner...it conditions-in a subtle and often insidious way-our values and assumptions; creates many of our heroes, myths, role models...and our expectations about life" (1993: 45). He also supports the view that American programmes strengthen what is common between the two cultures while

simultaneously "obliterating what is distinctively Canadian" (1993: 45-46). Although Feldthusen does not cite empirical studies to support his argument, his point that Canadians are exposed to American culture through television and that audiences are socialized and culturally conditioned by the television content is tentatively supported by other studies (McDermott and Greenberg, 1985; Atkin, Greenberg and McDermott, 1983; Greenberg, and Atkin, 1982; Graves, 1980; Vidmar and Rokeach, 1974). Further research is required to investigate how Canadian audiences interpret and "use" American television broadcasts.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter summarizes how the study was designed and carried out methodologically. The research problem was approached empirically by integrating audience research, content analysis and audience viewing statistics. The content analysis allowed for a summary of black representation in the commercial messages to be formulated. All commercials in the study sample were content analyzed and the subset of athletic apparel commercials was identified. A representative selection of the latter were used for the audience response portion of the study that looked at how groups of adolescent basketball enthusiasts recruited for the study interpreted the roles of blacks within the commercials. The data was contextualized using audience statistics for the programmes obtained from the broadcaster. This method was a constructive attempt to use content analysis to support audience research and gain a broader perspective on the distribution of media contents and audience interpretations of these contents.

The research plan followed a three step protocol. The selection of research tools, measurement techniques, and analysis procedures for each step are outlined below. Also, an extensive sample description is given in the discussion of the second step of the protocol (the only step where an audience sample was utilized). In all cases, feasibility, availability of evidence, ethics and potential study barriers are considered.

Step #1 Content Analysis of Commercial Messages-A sample of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Basketball Tournament Games (March-April 1994) and a sample of National Basketball Association (NBA) playoff games (April-June 1994) were recorded off-air. A content analysis of all commercials was performed. A representative sub-sample of 6 athletic apparel commercials was drawn for viewing by the focus groups in step #2.

Step #2 Focus Group Reactions to the Commercials-Seven groups of subjects were recruited to view the sub-sample of commercials in a theatre viewing, small focus group context (2-8 individuals). Four of the groups consisted of non-black males (a mix of whites, Asians and two East Indians and one Israeli) ranging from 15-19 years of age and three groups were black males also ranging from 15-19 years of age. All groups were made up of subjects who routinely watch televised basketball. The groups were shown the sample of commercials

and their reactions to and interpretations of the commercials were collected on a questionnaire (which was responded to in between commercials during the theatre viewing) and in discussion which was videotaped for subsequent analysis. The groups' written and verbal responses were analyzed for interpretive strategies and thematic contents.

Step #3 Audience Statistics-Audience statistics were obtained from the broadcaster and used as a frame of reference for broadening and contextualizing the focus group findings (based on the demographic characteristics of the actual viewing audience).

Step #1-Content Analysis of Commercial Messages

The following explanation outlines a rationale and method for analyzing the content of commercials recorded in the off-air sample. This is followed by a rationale for the selection of the sub-sample of athletic apparel commercials from the broader sample of commercial messages. In each case, potential problems and data analysis strategies are summarized.

The NCAA tournament and NBA playoffs were selected for sampling based on the high incidence of athletic apparel commercials in this form of programming, based on the viewing audience (which includes black and non-black male adolescents basketball enthusiasts, the focus of this study) and to provide a foundation for comparison with prior work. Wonsek (1992) conducted a content analysis of the 1988 NCAA tournament, which is used as a guide for step #1 of this study. Also, the extensive television coverage given to these nationally broadcasted events provided a large sample of commercials across various time slots, a potentially rich field of commercials to draw on. In this study, a total of 16 NCAA and 28 NBA broadcasts were recorded off-air between April and June 1994. From these, the sample of 13 NCAA games (following Wonsek's study of 1988) and 18 NBA games were selected and content analyzed for racial representation. A total of 615 commercials from the NCAA tournament 1,133 commercials from the NBA playoffs were analyzed (see appendix A for selection criterion). These games were videotaped in the University of British Columbia Leisure and Sport Management Laboratory.

Rationale for Content Analysis

The content analysis allowed black presence in commercial messages to be described and a framework to be established for the focus groups by documenting the number of blacks and

whites in the commercials. The analysis helped position the sample of athletic apparel commercials content-wise within the spectrum of commercial messages broadcast during the playoffs. It also provided a basis for comparing findings with Wonsek's (1992) study of the 1988 NCAA basketball tournament.

Category construction and interpretation in the content analysis were based on Wonsek's study of the 1988 NCAA tournament, where commercials were divided according to product category (e.g. automotive, food, beer, personal hygiene), race of spokesperson/image in the commercial (neutral, white or black) and degree of involvement in the commercial (major spokesperson/image or minor spokesperson/image). The thesis took a simpler and somewhat more objective approach, i) by not distinguishing between a major and minor image/spokesperson), ii) by counting the number of blacks and whites (as well as Asians and others) in each commercial and, iii) by documenting the use of celebrities in the commercials. The data were used to calculate the percentage of individual races in all commercials and the percentage of "Anglo-European only", "Afro-American/Afro-Canadian only" and "mixed Anglo-European and Afro-American/Afro-Canadian" racial groups within certain product categories. Also, the celebrity presence (regardless of race) in each commercial was described to further contextualize the use of celebrity athletes in athletic apparel commercials. See appendix B for an explicit description of *how* the content analysis was undertaken.

The ability of the analyst to consistently and accurately record the desired information during the content analysis was an issue for this research. Accuracy was assessed using a second "coder" (a UBC Human Kinetics graduate) for inter-coder reliability measures. Both coders received similar training, and initial differences between coders were discussed and mutually acceptable decisions reached. Intra-coder reliability was evaluated to ensure consistency in each coder's analysis. The reliability scoring involved comparing the scores of the two coders in each racial category (calculating percentage reliability scores for the number of Afro-Americans/Afro-Canadians, for the number of Anglo-Europeans, for the number of Asians and for the number of others) for each commercial. Then, the percentages for each racial category were averaged to give a reliability score for the commercials. One hundred

and fifty-three commercials were compared with 131 distinct commercials and 22 repeats. Intra-coder reliability was tested using the same strategy except that percentage scores made by the *same* coder over two different trials of the same commercials were compared. Twenty-three different commercials were used to test the reliability for the first coder and 20 different commercials were used to test the second coder.

This strategy was selected to reflect the reliability across racial categories and within commercials instead of just reliability across commercials (as would have been the case if a percentage was calculated for all identifiable figures in each commercial, ignoring racial categories). The weakness of the strategy used here is that it may not reflect the actual number of figures in each category (e.g. if Anglo-Europeans are highly overrepresented in a given commercial). However, the importance of maintaining the racial categories in the reliability calculation was given priority in this study of racial representation.

Selection of the Sub-Sample of Athletic Apparel Commercials

A representative selection of commercials was drawn based on racial themes and characteristics in the commercials -- see appendices C and D.

Step #2 Focus Groups

The following explanation outlines the rationale for using focus group research and discusses the sample procedure, issues in conducting focus groups and data analysis techniques.

Rationale for Focus Group Technique

The use of focus groups for the audience research section of this analysis was based on the understanding that "directed" interaction within a homogeneous group brings out ideas and points of view that would not come out in casual conversation (ethnography) or in a one-to-one interview (Morgan, 1988). Also, for audience research that is interested in "group" interpretations of a media text (in this case, the athletic apparel commercial), it is preferable to study these interpretations in a group setting. This interaction is also preferable to structured

survey research for deriving "understandings" and interpretations that could not be discovered without interaction among peers and probing by the interviewer. Although a questionnaire was used to complement the focus group data, the interaction component of the small focus group was crucial for this study.

The small focus group approach was also modeled after recent qualitative audience studies, including Jhally and Lewis' (1992) study of audience responses to *The Cosby Show*. The assumptions inherent to this sort of research are outlined by Jhally and Lewis in the preface to their book.

We assume that the significance, or meaning, of television in popular culture is a product of the interplay between a television programme and the attitudes the viewer brings to it. We accept, therefore, that television is influential. But we also accept that the precise nature of its influence is unpredictable: it will depend upon viewers who have thoughts, interests, and opinions before they sit down in front of the screen... Establishing connections between attitudes and perceptions is technically difficult and demanding. It is a little like a trial in which the jury can only reconstruct events from evidence and testimony presented to it after the fact. So it is with this kind of investigative audience research inasmuch as we cannot perch inside people's brains and watch ideas and opinions forming. Like the prudent jury, we must use our knowledge and skill to interpret what people tell us rather than accept all testimony at face value (1992: 9).

Focus Group Sampling Method

Groups of 15-19 year old non-black males (a mix of whites, Asians, two East Indians and one Israeli) and 15-19 year old black males were recruited for the study. All the non-black males were from Vancouver. Group members were drawn from the same school, and typically were friends (and in most cases played basketball together). All groups shared an interest in basketball and were regular or occasional viewers of televised basketball. The goal of the recruitment strategy was to find groups of adolescents with similar interests and a common youth "culture". These stipulations did not strictly control for socio-economic class, although consistencies were likely. This analysis was intended to examine how social location (with a focus on race as a demographic feature), interests and "interpretive strategies" interacted. The black male subjects used in the study were from Toronto and were recruited

in the same way as the non-black subjects, that is, from the same school and from among friends.

Sample bias was an issue in selecting subjects, however, the goal was to learn about group experiences and perspectives (Morgan, 1988), and not to test an experimental hypothesis. For this reason, groups that could provide the most meaningful information were sought (Axelrod, 1975) and the individuals were then extensively described (e.g. socio-demographically and by their interests and tastes).

The 15-19 year old age category was chosen in response to research findings supporting the important influence of television on youth and the place of the mass media in youth sub-cultures (Willis, 1990; Feniak, 1991; Hickey, 1990; Lull, 1985; Hebdige, 1979). In addition, the 15-19 year old group is part of the target audience for athletic apparel companies. For example, Nike has indicated that they target males between the ages of 18 and 25. This selection permitted analysis of how these audiences were addressed by the marketers and how the targeted group(s) reacted to these efforts.

The non-black subjects were recruited from Vancouver to comprise a segment that has little experience with blacks (based on the demographic make-up of the city). Their interpretations were compared with a group of black adolescents from Toronto, a city with a significant black population. The rationale here was to compare interpretive strategies for groups that were part of a similar "taste culture" (that is, who shared a common interest in watching televised basketball), but occupied a different "social location" with respect to race. The extent of these differences in "social location" were examined using a biographical questionnaire (appendix G).

The race of the respondents was defined by the subjects themselves on the biographical questionnaire using Fuller's (1992) method from her cross-cultural survey of *the Cosby Show* that put "race" as an open-ended question. A "regular" viewer of televised basketball was defined as someone who watched 1 or more games (or part games) each week during basketball season, while an "occasional" viewer was someone who watched 1 or more games (or part games) every month. Thorne and Henley (1975) suggest that sex, race, age and social

class are fundamental background variables to consider in focus group research. However, this study also focused on “taste”, as all respondents were required to be basketball enthusiasts and regular basketball viewers. The goal in this instance was to assess how a “taste culture” of black and non-black basketball enthusiasts interpreted the same media text and background issues of race.

The *number of focus groups* chosen was founded on Morgan’s (1988) suggestion that 3-4 groups are usually necessary for research attempting to find a group’s perspective in a “relatively structured” manner with a homogenous population. This study was considered “relatively structured” in that it had a distinct study goal, interview questions, and a theatre viewing element to direct group interaction. On this basis, 3 black adolescent groups and 4 non-black groups were used for analysis. Morgan’s suggestion was conditional on the research team’s ability to “clearly anticipate what (would) be said in the next focus group (by deriving themes and interpretive strategies)”. He indicated that if themes could not be discerned at this time, then more groups are necessary. Morgan and Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) held that desired goals are more likely achieved with the fewest number of groups if there is a firmly grounded and structured interview guide. This study’s interview guide (discussed below) holds to these principles, thus increasing the feasibility of the chosen number of groups.

The optimal *number of participants* for discussion sessions varies in focus group research. For research requiring group “interpretations”, as in this study, a medium to small group is recommended (Morgan, 1988), allowing for a greater contribution from each individual. Also, focus group research on adolescents suggests that smaller groups and increased individual involvement maintain the group’s attention more readily (Deatrack and Faux, 1989).

Jhally and Lewis' (1992) used groups of 2 to 6 people who knew one another well, and felt comfortable watching television together. The researchers justified using a familiar, small group strategy, on the basis that larger focus groups of unfamiliar people would tend to bring about inhibited conversations. Group discussion that delves into sensitive issues, such as

"race" works best in a comfortable, familiar, informal atmosphere. For these reasons, this study used small focus groups with 2-8 people who were familiar with and at ease with one another.

Recruiting Subjects

Between early September and late October 1994, 37 respondents were recruited and organized into 7 focus groups. Three groups of Vancouver subjects were recruited through Vancouver high school basketball coaches. Initial contact was made with the coaches by phone. Information/consent packages (see appendix E) to be distributed by the coach to the participants were dropped off during a preliminary meeting, and then follow-up contact was by phone thereafter. Information packages were taken home by the participants for parental consent prior to organizing groups. One group of subjects was recruited using a method similar to that of Jhally and Lewis' (1992): a "contacts and personal acquaintances" approach was combined with a "snowball" method (contacted subjects were asked to bring friends in to the study) to gain access to homogeneous groups of non-black adolescents.

The Toronto subjects were also recruited through a "snowball" sampling. The Toronto contact for recruitment was a fourth year, black, McMaster University student who had access to black adolescents through personal acquaintances at a Toronto high school. This person also acted as moderator for the Toronto focus group sessions. The subjects were informed of the study (not persuaded) and given information/consent packages to bring home for parental consent. This recruitment method was predictably effective given the large black population in Toronto and the popularity of basketball in the area.

The Toronto moderator was given a set of readings on conducting and moderating focus group sessions, the thesis proposal, and all necessary research items (interview guide, videotape of sub-sample of athletic apparel commercials) as preparatory and training materials before any sessions took place. The primary investigator (the author) traveled to Toronto to discuss the materials and to help design and organize the initial sessions. The first session was considered a training session for the moderator. This practice session and the first focus

group included in this study were viewed by both the Toronto moderator and the primary investigator (who was *not* present at the actual interviews) immediately after the sessions, during which time, optimal moderating strategies were discussed and improvements for the sessions, as part of an "iterative" method were suggested. Once an effective level of moderating was achieved, the Toronto moderator was left to conduct the remaining 2 sessions independently. Regular telephone updates and discussions with the primary investigator took place during these later stages.

Conducting the Focus Group

The target duration of group sessions was 1 to 1.5 hours. This was seen to be a workable period of time for subjects to give up in a day, but not so long that attention would waver from the topic (Morgan, 1988). All of the focus groups conducted in this study held to this 1-1.5 hour guideline. The groups were conducted in a variety of locations, all designed to be comfortable for the respondents. Two groups were conducted in one of the respondents' homes, 4 groups were in "out of the way" classrooms in the high school and 1 group was in a school lounge area. Although these locations did not completely simulate the subject's situation watching television at home (even those sessions that did take place in the homes), by having a group of friends together watching and discussing the commercials in a comfortable environment, a sufficiently informal atmosphere was created for study purposes. In all cases, the sessions were removed from other activity to prevent distractions.

The "geography" of the focus group rooms had the subjects in a semi-circle facing the moderator. This allowed the moderator to see all participants and to control conversation on this basis. This was also beneficial for videotaping the sessions, with a stationary camera located above and behind the moderator. Videotaping the sessions in this discrete manner (avoiding intrusiveness with stationary camera position as mentioned above) allowed the investigator to identify interaction problems after the fact that may have been missed during the session (such as distractions) and to deal with them more appropriately in future sessions.

Videotaping also allowed the investigator to more easily identify statements that were "jokes", or decontextualized remarks, by observing facial expressions and gestures.

The moderators of the focus groups were highly involved in directing conversation because of the distinct goals of the investigation. Although the moderators still encouraged casual and open conversation about the topics (allowing for serendipitous findings), the interview guide (see appendix H) was used to direct the subjects. This direction is recommended for focus groups made up of adolescent subjects (Deatrick and Faux, 1989).

In conducting the focus group, the participants were initially welcomed to the session and then the basic topic of the study (the analysis of audience interpretations of athletic apparel commercials that feature black athletes) was presented. Participants were advised they were under "no obligation to answer, participate, or continue participating". The moderator then described the structure of the session before commencing the theatre viewing segment of the interview. These instructions were kept uniform between the groups.

Once the theatre viewing portion of the session was completed and the questionnaires were filled out, the focus group interview was conducted. The session commenced with *general* discussions (see appendix H for interview guide) about what each respondent saw during the commercials and what commercials were "liked most" and "liked least" (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). The participants were encouraged to refer to the theatre viewing questionnaire (see appendix F). In this way, the session was designed to begin with individual thoughts and open, but directed conversation. This led (with moderator direction and probing) to discussions about the more specific topic areas outlined in the interview guide.

Two moderators were used in the research. A white interviewer (the primary investigator) interviewed the non-black groups and a black interviewer (the contact in Toronto) interviewed the black groups. This approach was based on Jhally and Lewis' (1992) method in studying the *Cosby Show*, where same race moderators were used to ease the discomfort people might feel talking about race. According to Jhally and Lewis, the strategy was clearly validated in their transcript analysis, which revealed several race-oriented comments that, in their assessment, would not have been made in the presence of a different race moderator. As

noted previously, the second interviewer was trained in focus group interviewing and was debriefed by the primary investigator. The explicit instructions provided for the second interviewer and the standard interview guide were intended to enhance the validity and reliability of the results. The debriefing after each session gave the primary investigator a better understanding of the sessions for analysis purposes.

An "iterative" method was used in developing the focus group protocol. This strategy allowed for *minor* alterations in the interview guide, moderator tactics and focus group set-up from session to session in order to improve the quality of the session and of results. Changes were intended to yield more effective and concise strategies for collecting the desired information. Each session was reviewed immediately after the focus group had been conducted to allow for evaluation and revision. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990: 63) refer to this process as the "rolling interview guide", where the interview guide is developed for the first group, and is revised until the interviewer is comfortable with the guide, or until all focus groups are complete. A weakness with this approach is that all groups are not always asked the exact same set of questions. However, the ability of the "rolling interview guide" to make the best use of multiple focus groups and to allow information to unfold over time justifies the method. Also, attempting to control and duplicate focus groups from session to session is not feasible and is contrary to the "free-flowing" conversation goal of focus group methodology. In this study, the procedure was effective.

The main alteration implemented using the iterative method was a change in emphasis on the first questions of the interview guide (see next section). Initially, the intent was to go over every commercial independently with the focus groups. However, this "commercial by commercial" discussion was found not to be conducive to free flowing conversation, especially at the beginning of the session. It was found that a more effective means of initiating general conversation surrounding the commercials was to start with the questions, "which commercials did you like?", and "which commercials didn't you like as much?". This was the only noted structural change to the interview guide or the session structure.

Content of the Interview Guide (Appendix H)

The goal of the interview guide was to give each of the two moderators a set of ordered, broadly stated topics to be used to direct conversation. The “iterative” method *allowed for* progressive changes to the interview guide through the sessions (however, practically speaking, few structural changes were made). The questions used in the interview guide were based on three studies: Atkin, Greenberg and McDermott's (1983) research on white, primary school student perceptions of blacks on television, Jhally and Lewis' (1992) study of audience reactions to *the Cosby Show* and Radway's (1991) study of an interpretive community of romance readers. Questions taken from these studies were supplemented by general questions about what the participants actually “saw” when they watched the commercials and what their interpretations were. The goal of these topics was to motivate conversation relating to the study question. This was achieved by touching on general commercial interpretations, by comparing television commercial and television programming portrayals of blacks to “real life blacks”, by discussing the use of celebrity black athletes in television commercials, and by talking about respondent beliefs and opinions about race and racism in general.

Although the focus groups were intended to be “structured” (a list of questions was provided for the moderators) , the sessions also had a range of “flexibility” in that free flowing conversations were encouraged and situations were avoided where participants would “wait for the next question”. The moderator's familiarity with the topic and experience with the questions (and the typical conversations surrounding them) helped with constructively directing the discussions, although the varying interest levels of the black and non-black groups was a major factor in determining the extent of this “flow”. The moderators improvised when necessary, “pausing and probing” where necessary, thus directing the conversation instead of halting it (Kreuger, 1991). The moderators also attempted to clarify any general statements made by the respondents (e.g. by asking the respondent “what do you mean by that” or “ what are your reasons for saying that”). The moderators’ interviewing skills and familiarity with the interview materials and focus group dynamics were enhanced

by immediate post-session evaluations and analysis of the videotaped interviews as part of the iterative method.

Using the Theatre Viewing Questionnaire (see Appendix F)

Morgan (1988) describes how questionnaire research and focus group research are complementary data sources, allowing initial, individual data to be augmented by data resulting from group interaction. The theatre viewing questionnaire for this study was used to supplement the focus group data in just this way. The respondents completed the questionnaires before the focus group discussion so that the data gathered on the questionnaires was not "influenced" by the group interaction. The questionnaire package contained a biographical information form (appendix G) for compiling demographic information about the respondents. Participants could use the questionnaire as a reference tool during the group discussion. Their responses proved useful for enhancing focus group discussion of individual points of view as well as of group points of view.

Analysis of the questionnaire was similar to the focus group analysis. The raw data were transcribed onto the computer and analyzed by the primary investigator based on common themes and interpretive strategies. Although a second coder was not used in this process, the investigator conferred with the second moderator and the identified themes and interpretations were discussed.

Potential Problems with Focus Group Research

Focus group research is often criticized for several inherent limitations in the method, including the chaotic form of the data that results and the influences of group dynamics on the findings (Morgan, 1988). The first of these issues was dealt with in this study by creating a quality "interview guide" that allowed the focus group moderator to direct the conversations in an orderly, but still flowing manner. Although the problem of chaotic data was not eliminated completely (with free-flowing conversations being encouraged), by giving the moderator a strong sense of topical direction and a strategy for achieving this direction more manageable data were attained.

"Group influence" (where the subjects' responses conform to group ideas instead of their own individual feelings, inspired through group interactions) was addressed in this study through the theatre viewing questionnaire (see appendix F) that was completed before discussion began. Research suggests that respondents are more likely to voice their own ideas if these ideas are already in writing, and the respondents in this study were encouraged to refer to their notes when answering questions (Morgan, 1988).

Potential Problems in Adolescent Interviews

A primary concern when conducting focus groups is dealing appropriately with those being interviewed. Literature on adolescent research (Deatrick and Faux, 1989) suggests that group interviews can be problematic unless distractions are minimized. "Peer conformity" also threatens the validity of the focus group. These problems were dealt with by keeping the focus group relatively small (as mentioned previously), to increase involvement and minimize distraction. The pre-discussion questionnaire, the interview guide and moderator (who did not allow any group members to dominate and influence others) served to alleviate the peer conformity problem. Videotaping the sessions also allowed the investigator to analyze these dynamics and to minimize their impacts when interpreting the transcripts.

Analysis of Focus Groups

Data attained from the video tapes and from the questionnaires for each focus group were transcribed onto computer. The transcription incorporated the verbal and written data, including incomplete sentences and statements. Although some accompanying thoughts (from the analyst) were included in the transcript to clarify ideas, the respondents' comments remained unchanged allowing the analyst to observe how the respondents discussed and conceptualized the issues. The transcript was supplemented by additional analyst observations about the group interview, including non-verbal communication, gestures, and behavioral responses. The availability of the raw data in videotape form allowed for easy reference and analysis of "what took place".

Ethnographic and content analysis methodologies were used to analyze the cumulative focus group data (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). The ethnographic summary required an initial reading of the transcript. From this reading, a classification system for major topics and categories relevant to the study question was developed and transcript material related to these topics identified. Several readings of the transcript allowed the analyst to "code" areas of the transcript that were relevant to these topics (the interview guide helped direct this process). After the coding process was completed, the "coded" material was sorted so that all material relevant to the established topics was gathered together (this was done using relational database software). A thematic analysis was then performed for each subject area and relevant, representative ideas identified. Although this analysis was mainly ethnographic in its reliance on direct quotation and interpretation of general ideas and themes, the actual coding process (including category identification, the examination of recurring themes within the data and noting specific references made by the participants) was organized as a content analysis.

Potential Problems in Analysis of Focus Group Data

Problems with this analytic process include subjectivity of the "coder" and the potential bias in selecting "representative" quotations from the transcript (specifically, taking quotations out of context to prove a point). Although two coders were not used explicitly for this process (as noted above), subjectivity and quotation bias were minimized by insisting on a wide selection of quotations to support a theme or category coding decision, and by conferring with the second moderator. The coding process thus adhered to established principles for enhancing reliability in analysis of focus group results by Krippendorff (1980). According to Krippendorff these are:

1. The process of transcription from the raw data (in this case, the computer input of the videotaped sessions with accompanying notes as mentioned previously) must be clear and understandable to the coders.

2. The characteristics of coders (including familiarity with the subject matter and the research technique) must be made explicit to the reader, to allow for assessment of possible bias. Care is taken in the results section to identify the point of view of the researcher and to give the reader a number of statements and findings supporting a theme or category
3. The report must also outline the specific criteria used for the category construction. For this study, all theme and category decisions were based on the commentary of the focus group participants themselves and substantiated through multiple examples.

Using these guidelines, subjectivity and coder bias were identified and controlled for (although not eliminated).

Ethics

The proposed study received ethics approval from the University of British Columbia Behavioral Sciences Screening Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (Appendix I).

Step #3 Audience Statistics

In step #3, audience figures were solicited from the broadcaster for the NCAA tournament and the NBA playoffs. Unfortunately, according to sources at CBS, the NCAA tournament did *not* take place during a ratings period and, therefore, audience statistics were not available for this event. The Sports Network (TSN) Canadian rebroadcaster of the 1994 NBA playoffs, was able to provide some general figures that were reported in chart form and include a 15-19 year old age group. These audience statistics provide insight into the audience composition for NBA games as compared to viewing averages for other television programming. They also provide a basis for deciding the proportionate make-up of 15-19 year olds in the viewing audience and for understanding the “reach” therefore of the NBA and NCAA programming and advertising contents in this target population.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSES

The study results and analyses are presented in three sections, following the three step analytic protocol outlined in the methodology chapter. In the first section, the content analysis results are discussed for all commercials sampled during the NCAA tournament and NBA playoffs. In the second section, audience reactions to the sub-sample of athletic apparel commercials are described from the television commercial response questionnaire data and focus group interview data. In the third section, a demographic breakdown of the viewing audience for the NBA playoffs is presented from overall audience statistics obtained from The Sports Network (TSN).

Section 1-Content Analysis

Representation Of Racial Groups In NCAA Tournament And NBA Playoff Commercial Messages

This summary of the content analysis of commercial messages shown during the NCAA tournament and NBA playoffs describes the representation of whites and blacks in the overall sample of commercial messages and in specific commercial types. Emergent trends and exceptions to these trends are noted. The results give context to this study by comparing the representational patterns in the athletic apparel commercials (the subject of the audience response portion of the research) to other product categories and to overall trends.

These trends were described using two different analytic strategies to summarize the data. The first summary method outlined the representation of commercials in specific racial categories. These categories were: Anglo-European only, Afro-American/Afro-Canadian only,

Asian only, Mixed Anglo-European and Afro-American/Afro-Canadian, Mixed Anglo-European and Asian, Mixed Anglo-European and Afro-American/Afro-Canadian and Asian. The second summary method outlined the number of identifiable figures by race that were shown in the commercials. Overall representation patterns summarized in these ways are outlined in table 1 and table 2 (below).

Results describing the *overall representation* of racial groups in commercial messages aired during the NCAA tournament and NBA playoffs showed Anglo-Europeans to be vastly overrepresented compared to other racial groups. Roughly 52 percent and 56 percent of commercials with identifiable figures during the NCAA tournament and NBA playoffs were Anglo-European only and seventy eight percent and seventy-six percent of the identifiable figures shown during the two events were Anglo-European. Correspondingly, Afro-Americans/Afro-Canadians were comparatively underrepresented in the overall contents of these commercials. Approximately one percent and six percent of commercials with identifiable figures shown during the NCAA tournament and the NBA playoffs were Afro-American/Afro-Canadian only. Approximately fifteen percent and twenty three percent of the identifiable figures shown during the two events were Afro-American/Afro-Canadian. A two coder method was used to ensure reliability. The intercoder reliability score for all of the content analysis data was 94.65 percent. The intracoder reliability score for the first coder was 96.49 percent and for the second coder was 93.48 percent. Refer to the research method chapter for an explanation of the noted procedures.

Table 1

Overall Representation Patterns of Racial Groups Within Racial Categories

Note-The total number of commercials (579 for the NCAA tournament and 1036 for the NBA playoffs) includes commercials with no identifiable figures (132 for the NCAA tournament and 286 for the NBA playoffs) and commercials with Asians only (0 for the NCAA tournament and 1 for the NBA playoffs). These statistics are outlined in their entirety in Appendix J.

NCAA Tournament

	Anglo-Euro only	Afro-Amer/ Afro-Can only	Mixed Anglo and Afro	Mixed Anglo and Asian	Mixed Afro and Asian	Mixed Anglo Afro and Asian	Totals
Total Commercials in category	232	5	166	23	0	21	579
% of total commercials (including commercials with no identif. figures)	40.07	.86	28.67	3.97	0	3.63	100
% of commercials with identifiable figures	51.90	1.12	37.14	5.15	0	4.70	100.01

NBA Playoffs

	Anglo-Euro only	Afro-Amer/ Afro-Can only	Mixed Anglo and Afro	Mixed Anglo and Asian	Mixed Afro and Asian	Mixed Anglo Afro and Asian	Totals
Total Commercials in category	419	47	216	21	0	46	1036
% of total commercials (including commercials with no identif. figures)	40.44	4.54	20.85	2.03	0	4.44	100.01
% of commercials with identifiable figures	55.87	6.27	28.80	2.80	0	6.13	100

Table 2

Overall Number of Identifiable Figures By Race

NCAA Tournament

	Anglo-Europeans	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	Asian and Other	Totals
Total People	2976	581	266	3818
Overall Percentage	77.95	15.22	6.84	100.01

NBA Playoffs

	Anglo-Europeans	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	Asian and Other	Totals
Total People	4483	1349	96	3818
Overall Percentage	75.62	22.76	1.62	100

These overall study findings for commercial messages shown during the noted events were catalogued into product categories. For the NCAA tournament, these categories were : automotive, automotive accessories, food, soft drinks/sport drinks, beer, business/financial services, leisure/travel vacation, personal hygiene/health, power equipment/hardware/home improvement, computer/electronics, communications/delivery, clothing and athletic apparel. The commercial messages aired during the NBA playoffs were catalogued using the same product categories as those noted for the NCAA tournament, except the “clothing” category was omitted and an “armed forces” category was added to the inventory. The overall overrepresentation of Anglo-Europeans and comparative underrepresentation of Afro-Americans/Afro-Canadians were more pronounced in specific product categories. These trends are outlined in table 3 and table 4.

Table 3

Observed Trends of Overrepresentation of Anglo-Europeans in Specific Commercial Types across the NCAA tournament and in the NBA playoffs

i) The following are percentages of Anglo-European Only commercials shown in the events (the 3 commercial types with the highest overrepresentation for both events are noted).

NCAA tournament	NBA Playoffs
Automotive Accessories (78.38 %)	Power Equip/Hardware/Home Improv(80.85%)
Power Equip/Hardware/Home Improv (60.00 %)	Automotive Accessories (79.69%)
Automotive (58.06 %)	Automotive (79.10%)

ii) The following are percentages of the total number of identifiable figures in the noted commercial categories that are Anglo-European (the commercial types with over 90 percent Anglo-Europeans are noted).

<u>NCAA tournament</u>	<u>NBA Playoffs</u>
Beer (95.65%)	Power Equip/Hardware/Home Improv(94.12%)
Business/Financial Services (94.68%)	Automotive Accessories (91.71%)
Power Equip/Hardware/Home Improv (93.33 %)	Automotive (91.42%)
Automotive Accessories (91.45%)	
Automotive (90.58%)	
Clothing (90.14%)	

Table 4

Observed Trends of Underrepresentation of Afro-Americans/Afro-Canadians in Specific Commercial Types across the NCAA tournament and in the NBA playoffs

i) The following are percentages of Afro-American/Afro-Canadian commercials shown in the events (all commercial types where there is 0.00 percent of Afro-American/Afro-Canadian only commercials are noted).

<u>NCAA tournament</u>	<u>NBA Playoffs</u>
Automotive Accessories (0.00 %)	Power Equip/Hardware/Home Improv(0.00%)
Power Equip/Hardware/Home Improv (0.00 %)	Beer (0.00%)
Automotive (0.00 %)	Leisure/Travel/Vacation (0.00%)
Food (0.00 %)	Armed Forces (0.00%)
Soft Drinks/Sport Drinks (0.00 %)	
Beer (0.00 %)	
Business/Financial Services (0.00 %)	
Leisure/Travel/Vacation (0.00 %)	
Personal Hygiene/Health (0.00 %)	
Clothing (0.00 %)	
Athletic Apparel (0.00 %)	

ii) The following are percentages of the total number of identifiable figures in the noted commercial categories that are Afro-American/Afro-Canadian (the commercial types with under 10 percent Afro-Americans/Afro-Canadians are noted).

<u>NCAA tournament</u>	<u>NBA Playoffs</u>
Clothing (9.86 %)	Automotive (8.23%)
Automotive (8.99 %)	Automotive Accessories (7.73%)

Automotive Accessories (8.55 %)	Power Equip/Hardware/Home Improv(4.98%)
Leisure/Travel/Vacation (6.96 %)	
Power Equip/Hardware/Home Improv (4.44 %)	
Beer (4.35 %)	
Business/Financial Services (3.90 %)	

There were notable exceptions to these overall and categorical trends in the athletic apparel, sport drink/soft drink and armed forces product categories, where Afro-Americans/Afro-Canadians were comparatively overrepresented (see appendix J for details). The most important exception for the purposes of this study was the athletic apparel product category. Afro-Americans/Afro-Canadians were present (in either Afro-American/Afro-Canadian only commercials or in mixed commercials) in 96.77 percent of athletic apparel commercials during the NCAA tournament and in 93.03 percent of athletic apparel commercials during the NBA playoffs. Also worthy of note is that 66.67 percent of athletic apparel commercials during the NBA playoffs were “Afro-American/Afro-Canadian only”. These exceptional trends were supported by statistics on the number of identifiable figures by race during athletic apparel commercials, where 40.41 percent of all identifiable figures during the NCAA tournament and 79.30 percent of all identifiable figures during the NBA playoffs were Afro-American/Afro-Canadian.

The overall patterns of representation noted previously (an overrepresentation of Anglo-Europeans and the underrepresentation of Afro-Americans/Afro-Canadians), the patterns in specific product categories and the skewed patterns of representation in athletic apparel product category (where Afro-Americans/Afro-Canadians are overrepresented) provide a framework for understanding the audience response portion of this study. It appears that viewers of the NCAA tournament and the NBA playoffs were “shown” a high number of blacks in only a few

commercials types, with the most notable of these exceptions (statistically and for study purposes) being the athletic apparel commercial.

Celebrity Representation

Celebrities shown during the NCAA tournament and the NBA playoffs were either athletes, actors, actresses, musicians or sportscasters (see Appendix J, table 6 for data outline). Of the 13 celebrities present in commercial messages drawn from the NCAA tournament, 7 were Anglo-European (3 athletes, 4 actor/actress/comedian and 1 sportscaster) and 6 were Afro-American/Afro-Canadian (5 athletes and 1 actor comedian). Similar to the NCAA tournament, all celebrities shown during the NBA playoffs were either athletes, actors, actresses, or sportscasters. Of the 46 celebrities shown, 19 were Anglo-European (9 athletes, 7 actor/actress/comedians, 2 football analysts/football coaches and 1 sportscaster), 26 were Afro-American/Afro-Canadian (25 athletes, 1 comedian/actor) and 1 other (athlete). Evident from this analysis was the representation of Anglo-European celebrities in coaching, sportscasting and entertainment. With one exception (Jazzy Jeff, a rap artist and actor), all Afro-American/Afro-Canadian celebrities shown were known only for "being an athlete". Viewers of the NCAA tournament and NBA playoffs were "shown" commercial messages with celebrity Afro-Americans/Afro-Canadians *athletes* as product spokespersons, while being shown Anglo-European celebrity spokespersons who were *actors, actresses, coaches* and *sportscasters*, as well as athletes.

Section 2-Focus Groups

Focus Group and Commercial Viewing Response Questionnaire Results

The focus group and commercial viewing response questionnaire results were divided into four subject areas according to themes that emerged from the research. The themes illustrate the experiences, perceptions and beliefs of black and non-black adolescent groups. The respondents' accounts of the commercial messages and their life experiences were characterized by multiple opinions, themes and understandings that were "woven" together, often within the same statements. The themes explained here were emergent patterns of understanding within various topical areas. This thematic separation revealed the groups' similar and distinct positionings as television audiences, as consumers of popular culture, as negotiators of their social situations and as "readers" of media text. Underlying these topically-based themes were, of course, the segregated and similar perceptions of the respondents as black and non-black basketball enthusiasts. While this may appear to be a complicated array of perceptions, the cultural understandings of the adolescents became very clear when these positions were integrated.

Discussion of these themes are organized under four analytical headings: a) the "raced" influences of the celebrity black athlete, b) segregated perceptions of black television portrayals, c) everyday perceptions of difference and d) culturally similar and racially distinct interpretive strategies. These categories also reflect the broader study questions and goals noted in the "Purpose of Study" segment in Chapter 1. Focus group responses and commercial viewing response questionnaire results were used collaboratively to document the themes that emerged within these areas.

When describing these themes, "typical" comments were defined as those comments that were supported by "most" members of the noted groups (whether this be all groups, the black

groups or the non-black groups). In other instances, if there was no disagreement within a group about a topic and a few comments appeared to represent the group's perceptions (if others nodded or gave affirmative words), these comments would be considered representative. "Other" comments were defined as those mentioned by one or more respondents, but were not indicative of the groups' sentiments. These general definitions of "typical" and "other" varied depending on how many of the group members commented and the nature of the conversation. In some instances, groups members made gestures or brief comments, while in other situations, all respondents were fully involved in the conversation. In this summary, these variations are clarified by defining strategies used when claims of "representation" were made. Also, by presenting reasonably large amounts of quotation data, the researcher bias can be more readily assessed. In this way, the methods used to describe the data are made explicit whenever possible.

It is also important to understand how the characteristics of the attained sample of adolescents reflected the desired adolescent segment. Evident from the biographical breakdown for the *Toronto* groups in Table 5 was that these groups of friends who shared an interest in playing basketball -- often playing together on their school basketball teams and/or watching basketball together -- were of various socio-economic backgrounds, ranging from the \$22, 000-35, 099 income bracket to the over \$64, 000 income bracket (there were 7 no responses or "don't know" answers -- there appeared to be no clear pattern for these respondents based on their parents occupations or educational backgrounds). There was a wide range of occupations noted by the respondents for their parents, including professional/technical, sales, clerical, nurse, engineer, teacher/educator and labourer. The educational backgrounds of the respondents families varied

from “some high school” to “some university”. The respondents described their “race” to be black, Afro-American or from areas in the West Indies.

This biographical information can be contextualized within demographic statistics compiled for the neighbourhoods where these adolescents live and go to school. Information was attained from the Statistics Canada 1991 Census for this purpose. The data compiled for Toronto was from a region of the city known as Scarborough, the area where 12 of the 14 respondents in 3 of the 4 groups lived (including the first focus group which was used primarily for the questionnaire data). An area within Scarborough known as West Hill where 10 of the respondents attended school was described along with Pickering, another region of Toronto where 2 respondents making up one of the groups lived. Table 6 describes the ethnic makeup, the education levels, the occupations, and the income levels of the neighbourhoods where these respondents lived. People of black origin make up about 5 percent of the population within these areas of predominantly British origin. The representation of other ethnicities is similar across the study areas (with a variation of people of Chinese origin). The educational level data shows about 30 percent of the population in the noted areas to have some university education or a university degree and about 50 percent with college or some other post secondary education. The prevalent occupations in these regions were managerial/administrative, clerical and labour. The median income per household was approximately \$50, 000 for Scarborough and West Hill and approximately \$65, 000 for Pickering. The statistics show that the black adolescents interviewed in this study live in a middle to upper income area where the representation of people of black origin is comparable to other ethnic groups except for those of British and Canadian descent (who make up the highest percentage of people). Although incomes, education levels and occupations differed among group members, they are comparable to the demographic ranges

noted in the Census data for these regions. Since the groups were formed with the intention of reflecting the youth culture of basketball enthusiasts, it was necessary to maintain the natural dynamic of this culture, which allowed for the range of demographic characteristics among the respondents noted previously.

Table 5

Biographical Information for Focus Group Respondents-Toronto Groups

The following is a summary of the relevant biographical information gathered from the biographical information package.

<u>Parent's Joint Income</u>	<u>Mother's Occupation</u>	<u>Father's Occupation</u>	<u>Group and Respondent Number #</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>How Many NCAA/NBA Games</u>	<u>Mother's Education</u>	<u>Father's Education</u>
			1.1	black	3+/3+		
		own business	1.2	black	3+/3+	college diploma	college diploma
don't know	legal secretary	professional / technical	2.2	black	3+/3+	some college	some college
	executive	professional /technical	4.1	black	3+/3+		
	sales/ marketing	professional /technical	4.2	black	3+/3+		
			4.3	black	3+/3+		
don't know	teacher/ educator		3.6	black	3+/3+	college diploma	don't know
22,000- 35,099	sales/ marketing	retired	3.1	Trinidad and Tobago	3+/3+	finished high school	finished high school
22,000- 35,099	clerical	barber	3.3	Trinidadian / Canadians- black	3+/3+	college diploma	finished high school
more than 64,900	executive	professional / technical	2.1	black	3+/3+	some college	some university
47,900- 64,900	clerical	executive	3.2	African/ American	3+/3+	finished high school	college diploma
47,900- 64,900	labourer	teacher/ educator	3.4	black	3+/3+	college diploma	finished high school
35,100- 47,899	nurse	sales	3.5	black	3+/3+	some university	some university
more than 64,900	nurse	engineer	4.4	black	1-2/3+	college diploma	college diploma

Table 6
Census Information For Toronto Focus Group Areas

	Scarborough	West Hill	Pickering
Total Population	524, 315	118, 730	68, 660
Male Population	254, 240 (48%)	57, 870 (49%)	34, 280 (50%)
Male Population by Age (% of total pop.)			
15-19 years	18, 670 (3%)	4, 455 (4%)	2, 490 (4%)
Ethnic Origin			
black origins	28, 630 (5%)	7, 260 (6%)	2, 420 (4%)
British origins	100, 950 (19%)	26, 345 (22%)	19, 070 (28%)
Canadian	37, 735 (7%)	10, 510 (9%)	8, 955 (13%)
Chinese	65, 615 (13%)	4, 560 (4%)	1, 085 (2%)
East Indian	26, 785 (5%)	6, 220 (5%)	1, 645 (2%)
Filipino	14, 740 (3%)	3, 070 (3%)	1, 100 (2%)
Greek	14, 025 (3%)	2, 640 (2%)	785 (1%)
Educational Level (Population base 15 yrs +)			
less than grade 9	41, 690 (10%)	8, 475 (9%)	2, 145 (4%)
grades 9-13	173, 415 (41%)	41, 180 (44%)	20, 740 (41%)
no certificate	103, 570 (25%)	24, 700 (26%)	11, 340 (23%)
with certificate	69, 845 (17%)	16, 480 (18%)	9, 400 (19%)
Trades Certificate or Diploma	11, 925 (3%)	2, 955 (3%)	1, 740 (3%)
Other non-university	93, 940 (22%)	22, 095 (24%)	13, 790 (28%)
Without certificate	30, 625 (7%)	7, 070 (8%)	3, 785 (8%)
With certificate	63, 315 (15%)	15, 025 (16%)	10, 005 (20%)
totals			
University			
without degree	43, 425 (10%)	8, 900 (9%)	5, 195 (10%)
with degree	52, 350 (13%)	9, 685 (10%)	6, 285 (13%)
without certificate	22, 880 (5%)	5, 040 (5%)	2, 490 (5%)
with certificate	20, 300 (5%)	3, 840 (4%)	2, 685 (5%)
Occupation			
managerial/admin.	40, 485 (14%)	9, 090 (14%)	7, 265 (18%)

engineering	15,380 (5%)	3,005 (5%)	2,140 (5%)
teaching and related	8,740 (3%)	2,120 (3%)	1,735 (4%)
medicine and health	11,755 (4%)	2,660 (4%)	1,430 (4%)
recreation	4,200 (1%)	930 (1%)	525 (1%)
clerical	72,660 (25%)	15,995 (25%)	8,995 (23%)
sales	24,650 (9%)	5,500 (8%)	4,380 (11%)
service	29,185 (10%)	6,660 (10%)	3,330 (8%)
farming, fishing	5905 (2.52%)	1440 (2.69%)	835 (1.87%)
forestry, mining, processing			
labour	46,320 (16%)	11,340 (14%)	5,555 (14%)
craftswoman	4,905 (2%)	1,260 (2%)	645 (2%)
Household Income			
Total Households	174,525	39,170	20,480
Under 20,000	31,180 (18%)	7,404 (19%)	1,427 (7%)
20,000-34,999	28,517 (16%)	5,915 (15%)	1,650 (8%)
35,000-49,999	30,623 (18%)	6,244 (16%)	2,963 (14%)
50,000 and over	83,599 (48%)	19,524 (50%)	14,314 (70%)
Average Income	52,998	54,347	68,382
Median Income	48,136	49,830	64,209

As with the Toronto groups, the Vancouver groups were from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, with the respondents' parents incomes varying from under \$22,000 to over \$64,000 (see table 7 for outline). There was a significant number of parents whose incomes were in the upper brackets (10 of the 23 respondents made this indication). This was consistent with the educational breakdown for the parents of respondents, which varied from "some high school" to "university degrees", with a high number of families (12 of 23) that had at least one parent with at least some university education. The occupations for these groups were notably varied, with the most frequent occupations being professional/technical and labourer. The non-black groups also had a diverse racial makeup. The groups were made up of Anglo-Europeans, Asians, East Indians (2 respondents) and Israelis (1 respondent).

This data is contextualized in the Census data compiled for three regions within the Greater Vancouver area, Richmond (7 respondents), Kitsilano/Point Grey (6 respondents) and East Vancouver (8 respondents). Two respondents lived outside of these districts although they attended school in the described areas. Table 8 shows that people of black origin make up less than 0.5 percent of the population compared to a predominance of people of British and Chinese origin in these areas. The educational level data shows between 33 and 70 percent of the people in the different areas had some university education or a university degree and between 40 percent and 55 percent of the people in the areas had some college or other post secondary education. Clerical, sales and services were the most prevalent occupations among the three regions. Managerial/administrative (in Kitsilano/Point Grey and Richmond) and labourer (in Richmond and East Vancouver) were also common. The median income was approximately \$50, 000 for Richmond and \$40, 000 for Kitsilano/Point Grey and East Vancouver. These statistics show the non-black adolescents to live in and/or go to school in middle income areas where they would have limited exposure to blacks. This consistency (required for this study of media impacts of black portrayals on audiences with little experience with blacks) combined with the varying demographic characteristics among group members contextualizes the Vancouver focus groups. Similar to the Toronto groups, these *demographic variations* among group members (which were in keeping with the regional statistics) were considered acceptable for this study based on our underlying intention of maintaining *cultural similarities* for these adolescents.

Table 7

Biographical Information For Focus Group Respondents -Vancouver Groups

<u>Parent's Joint Income</u>	<u>Mother's Occupation</u>	<u>Father's Occupation</u>	<u>Group and Respondent Number #</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>How Many NCAA/NB A Games</u>	<u>Mother's Education</u>	<u>Father's Education</u>
	professional / technical	craftwork	5.4	Greek Canadian	3+/3+	finished high school	some high school
	social worker	rehab consultant	6.4	White	3+/3+	university degree	university degree
	homemaker	labourer	6.3	East Indian	3+/3+	some college	finished high school
	labourer	clerical	6.7	Chinese	3+/3+	some university	university degree
	craftwork	craftwork	8.1	Chinese	3+/3+		
			8.7	Chinese	3+/3+		
	clerical	professional / technical	8.3	French	3+/3+	some college	some university
less than 22,000	teacher/ educator	sales/ marketing-craftwork	9.1	Israel	3+/3+	college diploma	some high school
22,000-35,099	housewife	waiter	5.2	Greek - Canadian	3+/3+	some high school	some high school
22, 000-35,099	homemaker	executive	6.6	.5 Filipino, .25 Norwegian, .25 English	3+/3+	college diploma	university degree
22,000-35,099	teacher/ educator	courier	9.2	Chinese	3+/3+	university degree	some college
47,900-64,900	clerical	labourer	6.11	White Irish	3+/3+	finished high school	finished high school
47,900-64,900	laundry aid	labourer	8.2	White, Polish	3+/ 3+	don't know	don't know
more than 64,900	homemaker	buildings supervisor	5.1	Greek	3+/-	finished high school	finished high school
more than 64,900	professional / technical	craftwork	5.5	Greek	3+/3+	finished high school	some high school
more than 64,900	dentist	sales/ marketing	6.1	English/ Irish	3+/3+	some university	university degree
more than 64,900	teacher/ educator	professional /technical	6.2	Irish White	3+/3+	university degree	university degree
more than 64,900	professional / technical	professional /technical	6.5	Filipino	3+/3+	university degree	university degree
more than 64,900		own construction company	8.4	White	3+/3+	college diploma	some university
more than	for bank	engineer	8.5	Half Fijian,	3+/3+	university	finished

64,900				half Chinese		degree	high school
more than 64,900	teacher/educator	professional / technical	8.6	Caucasian	3+/3+	university degree	college diploma
more than 64,900	homemaker	professional / technical	9.3	White	3+/3+	college diploma	university degree
more than 64,000	insurance broker	commercial technician	9.4	White	3+/-	some college	some college

Note: Group #1 (black group) was only used for questionnaire information. The focus group portion of the session was used as a training session for the Toronto focus group moderator.

Note: The information from Group #7 (Vancouver group) was not used for analysis as a black respondent who has lived in the United States for most of his life was in the session. This did not allow for the desired dynamic for the non-black sessions

Table 8

Census Information For Vancouver Focus Group Areas

	Richmond	Kitsilano/Point Grey	East Vancouver (Renfrew/Collingwood area)
Total Population	126, 490	51, 035	54, 045
Male Population	61, 685 (49%)	23, 945 (47%)	26, 725 (49%)
Male Population by Age (% of total pop.)			
15-19 years	4, 310 (3%)	865 (2%)	1, 775 (4%)
Ethnic Origin			
black origins	385 (0.30%)	175 (0.34%)	140 (0.26%)
British origins	26, 940 (21%)	13, 110 (26%)	6, 045 (11%)
Canadian	1, 715 (1%)	510 (1%)	405 (0.75%)
Chinese	20, 660 (16%)	2, 250 (4%)	17, 760 (33%)
East Indian	6, 835 (5%)	350 (0.69%)	3, 575 (7%)
Filipino	2, 680 (2%)	325 (0.64%)	1, 970 (4%)
Greek	355 (0.28%)	1, 120 (2%)	260 (0.48%)
Educational Level (Population base 15 yrs +)			
less than grade 9	5, 970 (6%)	1, 260 (3%)	7, 855 (18%)
grades 9-13	37, 435 (37%)	8, 700 (19%)	16, 780 (39%)
no certificate	22, 520 (23%)	5, 230 (11%)	10, 765 (25%)

with certificate	14, 915 (15%)	3, 470(8%)	6, 015 (14%)
Trades Certificate or Diploma	2, 810 (3%)	565 (1%)	970 (2%)
Other non-university	25, 880 (26%)	9, 700 (21%)	9, 560 (22%)
Without certificate	8, 090 (8%)	3, 220 (7%)	3, 740 (9%)
With certificate	17, 790 (18%)	6, 480 (14%)	5, 820 (13%)
total	54, 570 (55%)	19, 965 (43%)	20, 090 (46%)
University/College			
without degree	13, 320 (13%)	7, 840 (17%)	4, 535 (10%)
with degree	14, 145 (14%)	17, 535 (38%)	3, 750 (9%)
without certificate	8, 090 (8%)	3, 220 (7%)	3, 740 (9%)
with certificate	6, 650 (7%)	3, 510 (8%)	2, 065 (5%)
total	42, 205 (42%)	32, 105 (70%)	14, 090 (33%)
Occupation			
managerial/admin.	9, 470 (13%)	5, 215 (15%)	1, 760 (6%)
engineering	2, 560 (4%)	2, 710 (8%)	1, 120 (6%)
teaching and related	2, 610 (4%)	2, 820 (8%)	560 (2%)
medicine and health	3, 115 (4%)	2, 540 (7%)	970 (3%)
recreation	935 (1%)	1, 845 (5%)	490 2%)
clerical	16, 110 (23%)	5, 470 (16%)	5, 675 (20%)
sales	9, 095 (13%)	3, 650 (11%)	2, 385 (8%)
service	8, 760 (12%)	3, 955 (11%)	5, 670 (20%)
farming, fishing	2, 700 (3.54%)	690 (1.98%)	1540 (5.53%)
forestry, mining,			
processing			
labour	7, 820 (14%)	2520 (6.39%)	5620 (20%)
craftsworker	665 (0.94%)	285 (0.82%)	405 (1%)
Household Income			
Total Households	44, 310	26, 355	17, 205
Under 20, 000	6, 731 (15%)	5, 887 (22%)	4, 266 (25%)
20, 000-34, 999	7, 785 (18%)	6, 082 (23%)	3, 337 (19%)
35, 000-49, 999	8, 318 (19%)	4, 561 (17%)	3, 228 (19%)
50, 000 and over	21, 364 (48%)	9, 767 (37%)	6, 295 (37%)
Average Income	55, 271	50, 454	44, 731
Median Income	48, 654	39, 873	38, 275

Subject #1: "Legends" And "Role Models" Versus "Great Players": The Raced Influence Of
The Celebrity Black Athlete

Themes emerged from black and non-black discussions surrounding the influence of the black athlete and athletic apparel on youth culture. The underlying pattern was of racially distinct perceptions embedded in culturally similar responses. The similarities were apparent from the black and non-black respondents' understandings of the celebrity athlete and the athletic apparel commercial within "basketball culture". However, black respondents appeared to identify with, support and adulate the celebrity athletes whereas the non-blacks admired the athletes and enjoyed the apparel commercials, but did not appear to be influenced in the same way or to the same extent. This disparity of responses, described in detail below within several conversational contexts, gives evidence to suggest that these perceptions and dispositions are racially based. From this perspective, the "raced" influence of the celebrity black athlete and the athletic apparel commercial is explained.

"When I Saw Dee Brown In The Dunk Off, and He Pumped Up...I Was Like 'I Want That Shoe'"

Several discussions in the **black** groups focused on the importance and influence of the black celebrity athlete and athletic apparel. Many of the black adolescents gave responses acknowledging the celebrity athletes' definitive influence on popular style through athletic apparel and the athletic apparel commercial. This influence was manifested most often in the respondents' desire to look like the celebrity athlete. The following are statements typical of those made by most respondents within *all* black groups.

I didn't have anything else [referring to Michael Jordan sneakers]. I know when I was in grade eight, I had every single pair from the first one that came out. I had snakeskin ones, I had the black ones, I had the ones with the little design under.

I remember Reebok pump when they first came out, I was like, ya, they can't make you do

that. But when I saw Dee Brown in the dunk off, and he pumped up [pretends to pump up shoes] and he did this [respondent pretends to slam dunk], I was like, "I want that shoe" [respondent smiling and clapping hands]
[another respondent smiles and nods in response to the last statement] I'm guilty, I'm guilty. After Dee Brown in the dunk off, the day after, I went and paid \$185 for the Reebok.

You're going to want to wear someone's shoes who's good, like Jordan. You're going to want to wear Jordan's shoes because he was the best, right, he was a legend. You're going to want to wear Magic's shoes because he was the best, he was a legend.

like those track suits, there are normal black track suits that are wicked. And then there's the same black track suits with a little Jordan man on it. And you want the one with the Jordan man on it.

Barkley says stuff..smashing and breaking everything...like when they show the cartoon version, he's like big time, huge, bigger than everyone else. People love those kind of commercials. They want to wear the shoe. They think it makes them strong, wear Jordan's they think it can make them jump.

If you're a small kid watching that right [referring to the athletic apparel commercials that were just shown], and you look at them as role models, and you think, "hey, well maybe if I wanna buy like that product, I'll be more like them", and brings kids to like..kinda want to be like him.

Not all respondents indicated that they were compelled to "be like" the celebrity athletes.

Three respondents spread across the three groups, did not appear to support these views. These respondents were critical of people they knew who idolized and imitated celebrity basketball players. One black respondent described this sentiment explicitly when he said:

Like if you go to the Y [referring to the YMCA]...I saw this one guy, Galloway, the guy with the dreads, always wears a Shawn Kemp jersey, or that guy from the Y who wears his Larry Johnson shirt. I think some people fantasize too much. [respondent pretends to be one of the people who wears the jerseys] "Ya, like if I wear my Michael Jordan shirt I'll be just like Michael Jordan"...I think some people don't know where TV ends and real life begins.

The common thread among these critics was an acknowledgment that there are several people that they know who do "idolize" these athletes. This disposition was clear in one instance when a black respondent was describing his favourite athletes. He was interrupted by another respondent who said:

[first respondent says] they [the other respondent's favourite athletes] may be good at

baseball, football, whatever, but because they're that great doesn't mean I have to kiss their behinds.

[second respondent replies] no one said you have to worship everything about them, I said the way they play. I love the way Michael Jordan and those guys play. I'll go home and watch them play because I just love watching them play basketball. It doesn't mean I idolize them in the way, talking like them, only an idiot would do that.

[first respondent] some people do.

[second respondent] it's true. You got stupid people in this world.

These criticisms reflected an awareness of the influence of the celebrity athlete in the respondents' cultural environment. However, the conditional role of celebrity athletes framing the popularity of certain clothing items and footwear (discussed above) indicates that celebrity athletes *are* part of these youths cultural environment and that they *do* influence some (if not most) youth in the groups. All black groups agreed (there were no within group disagreements) that athletic apparel, and specifically the basketball sneaker, was a necessary part of the socially acceptable "look" within their peer group. The following statements demonstrate this sentiment.

you need to get within a certain crowd, or in some cases maybe you like this girl or something. When you want to impress her, so "oh ya, I have the shoes, maybe she'll think I have money".

just cause it has that little thing on there that says "Air" or "Nike" or something. You gotta have it, man. It's just the way people put it in your head. You gotta have Nike shoes. You can't come to camp wearing grubby shoes.

I look for how they look, like price, really, if I like the shoe, I'll pay.

The respondents' comments show the importance of the shoe's monetary value ("maybe she'll think I have money"), the shoe's "name", and the celebrity athletes who endorse the shoe. One respondent described the social pressure to have the shoes while addressing the implications of not being able to afford the shoes:

if you're wearing Mike's [Jordan] stuff, Starter stuff, the crowd of people, that's the kind of people you hang with. But there's another class that can't afford that. You have to buy another brand that's not known...all the people like that will be in another crowd.

There is also evidence that the celebrity athletes' importance to some respondents goes deeper than simply wanting to look like and play like the athlete. The celebrity athlete appeared to be a genuine "role model" for certain respondents. This sentiment was manifested in all groups, although only a few respondents actually made explicit references to it. This perception would not be described as the dominant one, but rather a notable one for these black groups. For these respondents, what the athlete says and does on and off the court appeared to be influential. The effective use of celebrity athletes in public service announcements was an example of this. One group acknowledged these messages in a discussion about the possibility of making the NBA:

see that's why you got to use your head, that's why all those NBA players say "stay in school"... they're saying don't single out everything and just have basketball.

The personalities of specific athletes appeared to be influential in other instances. The following three statements were taken from respondents in each of the three black groups. This was also a notable perception, not a dominant one. One or two respondents in each group made comments of this nature. The following statements referred to outspoken basketball superstar Charles Barkley, basketball great Michael Jordan and up and coming NBA star Chris Webber.

look at Charles Barkley, his attitude on the court. He'll speak his mind, just tell you, get on your case, whatever. And I like that. He's not afraid to tell you, "Well, I'm going to do this to you if you keep doing this, if you keep going over my back", and he'll do it too. And a lot of the people in the commercials are different from the way they are in real life, just like a cover up of who they really are. And Charles, he does the commercials the way he wants to do them, that's just who he is, that's how the commercial goes. A lot of people don't do that.

a guy like Michael Jordan, you can say he plays basketball, this and that, right. But his personality's good too.

I like Barkley's personality too, cause Barkley always tells you he doesn't care about nobody, he just says it like it is. That's one thing about Barkley, he doesn't take nothing from anyone. If he doesn't like you, he doesn't come to your face and say "hello" and behind your back saying "why am I talking to this person", like a lot of people in the NBA.

the Chris Webber one where he dunked on Barkley...the way they highlighted it. It was so unbelievable, dunking over Barkley, because Barkley's so wise and Webber was so cool in college, dunking all the time.

The respondents' adulation of the celebrity athlete was also demonstrated by their excitement and interest in the "real life" depictions of black celebrity athletes in the athletic apparel commercials. Most respondents in all the groups (no respondents made any negative comments or gestures) reinforced this sentiment.

I think the one in the Barber Shop [the commercial that was shown earlier in the session], even though it doesn't relate to anything on the court, but you get to see a different side of the players, you don't just see guys dribbling, shooting on the court. You can see like they're people too. They're not illiterate, they're not stupid. You know, they're people, they can talk. It shows a different side of the players, not just like on-court perspective.

when they showed Tim Hardaway [black celebrity athlete], he was just asking George Gervin a question about the finger roll, and when I saw him, I was like [respondent pretends to look in awe, or very impressed], cause I love Tim Hardaway, so when I saw him it was like, yes, you have to show his face in there, you know.

I know like when I saw that Webber commercial and he said that about Barkley. Oh, man, I was like jumping in my house man. I was like, I wish I got that on tape and I would rewind it and see it again.

Often assertions made by the black respondents about the celebrity black athletes' influence had racial implications. This was evident in their tendency to *identify with* the black celebrity athletes and their inability to identify with white athletes. For instance, when asked if it made a difference if the athletes in the commercials they saw were black or white, most respondents in all groups (those few respondents who did not show this same identification are referred to later) indicated that it would be unrealistic if blacks were not in the commercials, and that they could not identify with the commercial if the athletes were white:

if it was all white people, then we would be saying "how come there's no black people in that commercial, it's basketball, we play basketball too", you know what I mean. It would probably be different if it was all white players. We wouldn't respect it. We wouldn't respect it at all.

for the commercial, I think the respect would be lost if you don't put at least one black person in something like that. Like it's just common to associate blacks with basketball. Negative or positive or whatever, we just associate black people with basketball.

Those new Jordan's [basketball shoes], I just wanted to get them. They're a stupid shoe though. I know if it was anybody else's name, I definitely wouldn't have bought them. You have to have black people represent black people.

if you hear Larry Bird the all-star, nobody cares, not just because he's white, he's boring too. His whole game style sucks.

One group formulated a "theory" as to why there are predominantly black people in the shoe commercials. Inherent in this theory was an assumption common to all black groups, that black athletes in the commercials are more appealing to a black audience. The "theory" was described in the following way:

maybe white guys our age are going to buy the shoes anyway [other respondent nods] so they are trying to appeal to black people. Not saying we're poor or nothin, but they have to appeal to us. Whereas, not to be racist, but white people, like, they know the white people are buying their shoes so they have to appeal to black people.

[other respondent continues] that's why they don't have hockey commercials. They think white people are going to buy it anyways and they can't appeal to black people that much because there aren't that many black people to appeal to in hockey.

Most respondents in two of the three groups indicated that their support for and identification with black athletes is based on a common cultural experience. The third group did not negate this notion, instead, they focused on how they enjoyed the superior play of black basketball players compared to whites -- cultural identification was not *explicitly* mentioned. The following comments are typical of those respondents who supported the cultural identification perspective.

say...you lived like in a ghetto, and there was one person who got out of the ghetto, and he was playing basketball at Michigan, or some place that was predominantly black. Tell me that the whole place is not going to support him because they know where he's coming from and they know they can relate.

[response to last comment] exactly. Just like in Montreal, they had a baseball game, right. Half black people, half white people. Montreal never sold season's tickets. Nobody ever watched the Expos play. But one day there was a French guy pitching, they sold 50 000. The next day, there was a wicked player pitching, they sold 5 000.

I'd rather see two black people play, not because of sport, but because I want [blacks] to rise up [meaning blacks to excel].

I want black people to succeed, right. Not because I'm racist, because I want black people to come out of oppression and succeed. So if I have the chance of watching two black tennis players and two white tennis players, I'm gonna support the black tennis players, just like I'm gonna go to black heritage day, black rallies. I'm not racist, that's just the way it is [response to last comment] that's why they used to have two leagues, the Negro's league. The white people watch the white people play and the black people watch the black people play.

Many black respondents explained how their identification with the black athlete was based on the athlete's preferable playing style as well as a cultural support. This idea was mentioned and supported in all groups. Although one group seemed to favour this playing style idea over the cultural one, the other groups' suggested that both playing style and cultural identification were important. The following comments were typical of the "playing style" view.

you have to remember, when you do a commercial, you want something that catches the eye...and if there were basketball commercials with stuff like that, for example, that Chris Webber commercial, if it was like Rony Seikely, and John Paxon and Larry Bird and Kevin McCale [all white players] [other respondents are laughing at the idea], I don't think that people would look at that commercial. You wouldn't see like Larry Bird crowning [slam dunking over] Chris Webber or anything like that man. Like when you see dunks and stuff...all you see is black people.

I would rather see twelve black people play. The basketball looks different. When you see white people play it's so fundamental.

Some respondents agreed that blacks have a more exciting playing style, but felt that if the white athlete were to perform in a similar manner, it would be just as exciting. This idea was noted in two of the three groups by some respondents. However, those that supported this view did so in a seemingly hypothetical manner, as the superior play of the black athlete was generally acknowledged.

in the commercials they have certain athletes do certain stuff, like the pass, the dunk over Barkley. And the white athlete doing that would still get "wow, look at that air".

Although these respondents showed respect for "good" white basketball players, the more prevalent condition was that black respondents tended to "identify" with *black* basketball players and not with white basketball players.

"If You Like Basketball, Black People Play Basketball...You're Still Going To Buy The Thing Even Though A Black Person Wears It"

Most *non-black* respondents indicated that they admired and wanted to play basketball like the celebrity athletes in the commercials, however, the influence of these athletes on the "culture" of those interviewed appeared to be minimal. While the ideas expressed by these groups were similar to those described by the black respondents, the comments made by the non-blacks were less frequent and less enthusiastic than those made by the black respondents. These expressions did not show the celebrity athlete to have any notable impact on the lives of the individuals, beyond wanting to play basketball like the celebrities. The following comments were typical of those made by some respondents (never more than half the group) in *all* non-black groups.

We go for a dunk, we want to look like Michael Jordan. It's true. Everybody wants to look like Michael.

Sometimes we copy how the commercials are. We talk like they talk.

I did like the Larry Bird when it showed him in his old, with big hair.

Other respondents who did not comment appeared to be uncertain (or unconcerned) about the influence of the black athlete. It seemed evident that this topic had limited meaning for several of the respondents by their lack of interest and input. This comparative lack of enthusiasm was evident from the non-black comments about the Nike "barber shop" commercials:

I like the fact that they are just hanging around talking.

It's pretty funny, making fun of Charles Barkley.

they were funny and they had action in there.

[the following are responses to the question "what was it that you liked about the barber shop commercials"] the style and the way they told the story.

[other respondent continues] they have good guys.

[other respondent continues] they have good lines too.

[other respondent continues] ya, a lot of creativity in them.

Although the respondents had favourite athletes, their descriptions of these athletes and why they liked them showed little identification beyond the fact that they played basketball:

[referring to Larry Bird-white basketball player] I like him as a player, he's a good player.

[when asked what it was about the athletes that makes them appealing] because they're good and flashy, and I guess people look up to them. They score a lot of points.

good players, great players.

Patrick Ewing [black player] or Kevin McCale [white player], he can play centre or power forward, good jump shot.

These comments, while favourable, do not compare to the striking enthusiasm shown by the black groups for these "barber shop" commercials.

The non-black respondents' comments also had specific racial implications. In all groups, some non-black respondents (with no apparent opposition from other group members), indicated that they could not relate to the black celebrity portrayals. Usually two or three group members in each group made specific comments while other group members would nod or not react. Embedded in these comments were racial overtones that were indicative of a "raced" understanding of the black portrayals.

I didn't like those ones, a bunch of bald guys in a barber shop.

Maybe black guys sit around in a barber shop like that.

The Nike ones they said how great they were back in their day.

[other respondent continues] cause they're like Webber bragging about dunks and stuff.

[other respondent continues] it's more on looks, the other one's (the Starter commercial) more on practice.

Similar to the black groups, a few non-black respondents (comments were made in two groups) were critical of people they knew of who copied the characters in the commercials and tried to "be like" the celebrity athletes. An important difference, however, was that the non-black respondents did not recognize this "modeling" to be a widespread phenomena, at least amongst

their peer group. This would likely explain why only a few respondents commented on this phenomena at all when asked about the realism and the impacts of the commercials.

Furthermore, one group of non-black respondents felt that the athletic apparel commercials and celebrity athletes had a greater influence on black adolescents (which is especially interesting given the groups' admittedly limited exposure to "real life" blacks). The following comments were typical of those made by the one non-black group, where all respondents either made statements or appeared to agree with statements expressing this sentiment:

I think they [blacks] copy a lot, like they'll get on a basketball court and they'll act like that because of the commercials. Like they see a guy on the commercials and they go to court and trash talk [verbal taunting]. I don't think it's part of their game.
[other respondent continues] I think a lot of people from Canada pick that up, trash talking and stuff, so they do it.

black people try to act like that [like the commercials shown in the focus group].
[other respondent continues] some of them, not all of them are, but some, like, aren't.
[other respondent continues] the one's hanging out at the beach are.
[other respondent continues] they're trash talking and stuff like that, it's basically the same thing.

Some respondents [one or two in each group] in all groups indicated that it made no difference to *themselves* whether the athletes in the commercials were black or white:

If you like basketball, black people play basketball, so it's no big thing. No I don't see any black people there. You're still going to buy the thing even though a black person wears it.

[when asked if it would make a difference if the athletes in the barber shop commercials were white] as long as they were good, or like Chris Mullen [white basketball star].

the sport of basketball is predominantly black anyways, so like if they were showing a hockey commercial and they showed a bunch of white people, so basketball is predominantly black, same with football.

ya, you see a bunch of black athletes, just, they're professionals, you watch them.

if it's a good player, you don't even think about it.

In sum, the most marked trend was the limited influence that the athletes appeared to have on these non-black respondents. The most notable responses were to the questions, "who are your favourite athletes to watch on television and why" (with probing questions dealing with style, personality and attitude of the athletes), "how does the use of celebrities affect your opinion of the commercials" and more racially oriented questions such as "would it make a difference if the athletes in the commercials were white". Responses usually dealt more with how the adolescents liked certain aspects of the celebrity athlete's game, and less on how these athletes actually influenced their "style" or culture. Also, the race of the celebrity athlete appeared to be of little consequence for these adolescents.

The Raced Influence of the Celebrity Black Athlete: Comparative Overview

Distinct racially based themes emerged from black and non-black responses to the same set of questions, questions that dealt with the influence of the celebrity athlete, athletic apparel and the athletic apparel commercial. **Black** respondents used the questions as a base for discussions about the influence of the black athlete on popular culture and style, the place of the athlete as a role model and for more racially oriented discussions of youth culture and sport culture. It seemed as though the black respondents used the focus groups as a forum to express important views about issues that impacted their lives, often commenting on relevant cultural and racial issues with little to no prompting from the moderator. On the contrary, the **non-black** respondents appeared to be commenting on a subject that was of interest to them as basketball players, but not as something that significantly impacted their lives. It seemed that the respondents had not given thought to the topic previous to these interviews. Athletic apparel and the celebrity athlete were not influential for these adolescents (compared to the black adolescents) and there was no "significant" cultural identification with these athletes. In this

case, what the adolescents did not say was also particularly relevant. These fundamental differences between the black and non-black groups is consistent with the other thematic categories.

Subject #2: "Every Show, A Black Guy Has To Be Either a Criminal Or On Sports...That's All You Ever See.": Segregated Perceptions of Black Television Portrayals

Themes emerged from black and non-black discussions surrounding the portrayal of blacks on television. The nature of these discussions led necessarily to racially distinct perceptions between the black and non-black groups (described below). Distinctions were especially evident in the youths' responses to questions about the realism of these portrayals. The *black* respondents were critical of stereotyping in some instances, while suggesting that they identified with the portrayals in others. They also showed a genuine concern regarding the potentially negative consequences that these portrayals of blacks have on a white audience. The *non-black* groups showed uncertainty about black portrayal realism, demonstrating and explaining their inexperience with real life blacks. These distinct understandings are the basis of the following thematic discussion of the segregated perceptions of black portrayals.

"I Definitely Like The Trash Talking...It Was Shown In The Ghetto, Like That's Where Black People Play Ball Or Whatever": Identification With And Criticism Of Black Television Portrayals

The *black* respondents identification with and criticisms of black portrayals were especially evident in discussions about the portrayal of blacks in athletic apparel commercials. In these discussions, respondents most often made reference to the Nike "barber shop" commercials and the Footlocker "playground" commercial that were shown during the commercial viewing segment of the research session. Although the black respondents in all groups appeared to

recognize the high proportion of stereotypical black portrayals in television programming and advertising (described later), they still tended to identify with the black athletes in the apparel commercials and described what they saw as the realism of the commercials. This was the dominant trend in *all* groups. For instance, several respondents described how their peer group was similar to the celebrity athletes in the Nike "Barber Shop" commercials:

you know like in the commercials, like the George Gervin finger roll one, or the Chris Webber [see appendix D-commercial numbers 2 and 5]. You know the way they just sit back, and the way they are talking about things. I know these guys like to a lot too [refers to other respondents]. I know lots of times me and Marcus, we'll be chillin out and say "remember back that time when I made that move [pretends to be making a move with his arms], just brought it in and swung it here like that, man. Oh man, the way they talk, reminiscing.

especially the one's with the Nike commercials where they're in the barber shop...that is as close to reality as you're going to get. I know a lot of people do that [other respondents nod heads]. Everybody does that, sit back, exaggerate.

[other respondent continues] the stories that they're telling, like right now they tell stories about their teammates and we do the same, except they're stories are at another level, that's the only difference.

Another respondent described a similar sentiment, suggesting that the athletes in the Nike commercials did not appear to be extraordinary in any way:

the ones in the barber shop, they're trying to show them as real people, you know, not just people on the court. Like they're dressed in normal clothes, they're not in they're uniforms. They're just in casual clothes. Everyone goes to the barber shop, so, you know, why not hang out? It shows the players, they're not enemies all the time, cause not everyone was on the same team. That one with the oldtimers, there's Tim Hardaway, and then there's David Robinson [both black player] and a couple of other players. You know they're not on the same team, but they still come together.

When asked if the commercials are realistic, other respondents referred to the actual NBA game segments that were shown in the Nike commercials:

sure, that's why they have the clips there [respondent pretends to do a finger roll].

he really did dunk on Barkley, and did the finger roll from the free throw line. We have kids nowadays in high school who are doing that stuff.

The respondents also recognized stereotypical aspects of these commercials. The following comments were indicative of those made by these black adolescents.

I mean like, in the Barber Shop, it's kind of like a stereotype too, like when you see all these guys [blacks] sitting in a barber shop, doing nothing.

I think the one in the Barber Shop...you can see like they're people too. They're not illiterate, they're not stupid. You know, they're people, they can talk. It shows a different side of the players, not just the on-court perspective.

These comments surrounding the Nike "Barber Shop" commercial demonstrate an awareness of stereotyping and an identification with familiar aspects of athletic apparel commercials. In this instance, the respondents described how the one commercial showing positive aspects of the players was not like most commercials ("you can see they're people too, they're not illiterate, they're not stupid") while recognizing the stereotype of blacks "sitting in a barber shop, doing nothing". Again, this recognition and identification was typical of *all* black all groups. There were no contradictory remarks made by any respondents.

Descriptions of the Footlocker commercial reinforced this theme. The commercial showed predominantly black high school and college-aged athletes playing basketball in what appeared to be an inner city, ghetto playground (see appendix D-commercial number 1). Explicit in the respondents comments were these contradictory perceptions of the commercials as something they could enjoy and identify with, but also as stereotypical depictions of blacks.

I definitely like the trash talk part. It was shown in the ghetto, sort of. Like that's where black people play ball or whatever. Like that's more of a lower class neighbourhood.

they're kids our age, that's how we play on the court.

lots of trash talking out on the court.

the footlocker one, with all the guys playing basketball. Like you see them all dressed up. Like wearing jeans. When you play basketball, you wear shorts, you don't wear a vest and big clothes to go play basketball.

(Note: "Trash talking" refers to the verbal taunting, challenging and boasting.)

These comments showing an *identification* ("that's how we play") and a *recognition of stereotyping* ("it was shown in the ghetto...like that's where black people play ball") were made regularly in *all* black groups in discussions about black athlete depictions in athletic apparel commercials.

The black respondents' comments about black portrayals in all areas of television programming (including more general references to athletic apparel commercials) and other television commercial types were far more critical than those regarding the athletic apparel commercial. All groups recognized that the types of roles that blacks appear in on television are limited. There was no disagreement in any of the groups during these discussions:

You won't ever see any black person with a book. There's always got to be a ball in his hand, some kind of ball. Football, baseball, basketball, football. Always.

You see a black person that is known in this world. He is known for being an athlete, for being a comedian, like Eddie Murphy or Martin or something, or for being bad...If they're popular at something else, it won't get promoted.

I noticed a lot of the commercials [athletic apparel], they revolve around the city, like the urban areas and associating with youth. That's where the youths hang out, blacks. They make a whole set of links.

look at every show, if someone's a criminal-black guy, black guy.

[other respondent continues] look at most of the black shows, they're all comedies.

[other respondent] you don't see like L.A. Law.

But every show, a black has to be either a criminal or on sports, blacks in basketball. That's all you ever see.

You see anything, something to do with good, you don't see many blacks doing that, unless it's Michael Jordan or a superstar.

Other respondents reinforced these views in discussions about black portrayals in news broadcasts and "true to life" crime shows (that show actual arrests and police actions):

a lot of stuff shown is different types of blacks. The higher class, cause they have basketball, and this other class that's always gonna be crying. Every two seconds they're on TV, a crime

everyday. Even in shows like COPS [a police show documenting "real life" police actions], you see arrested black people. Every time you see them arresting black people, a black person, a black person or a Latino, something like that. You always get a camera man hopping in a car, and there's a black person they're chasing. I mean, not everybody, not every call you get is going to be a black person. I mean, black people aren't the only people that commit crime. I know a lot of white guys that commit crime. But you never see that on TV. And that's another portrayal problem. All in sports or commit crimes.

Some respondents commented on the stereotypical depictions of blacks as living in the "ghetto":

Like if you go across to the park over there, it's not a lower class neighbourhood [respondent points out the window of his house where the interview is taking place]. Not all, some kids are, some people have no choices. That's where they live. That's where they were brought up, so that's what they're used to. Stuff goes on around them. That's just what happens. That's life.

the Footlocker one...maybe change it to a bit higher class neighbourhood and have more people, more colours, not just black people running around. Because you could also look at it from another point of view that they're just running around causing mischief or whatever, and that's the way black people are. A lot of people think that. Like just walking around here, you see a lot of people looking at you thinking "what are you going to do today".

there's a lot of stuff you see on TV and they are showing us as "this is the way black people are". Every five minutes you hear somebody else on the news go "that guy from Jamaica just killed someone". But that's not the whole story. I think the few people, black people, race, cause doubt...they do something stupid like that, so, stuff like that, it really gives us an image.

Evident from these comments is the black respondents' concerns about *how white people are impacted* by stereotypical depictions of blacks ("you see a lot of people looking at you thinking 'what are you going to do today'"). Also, the *unrealistic role modeling* for blacks was addressed.

These discussions were extended to black portrayals in movies:

look at all the movies that come out with guns in troubled neighbourhoods or whatever, always black. Of course, then again, that's what sells though. No one wants to see a movie about boys in the hood with all white people in it. That's stupid. I ain't paying no money to see that. I ain't renting it, nothing. You know, it's dumb. So I guess it's kind of good and bad when you see black actors get in movies, and in music.

[response to last comment] ya, but they're in it for the money too.

[response to last comment] like with "Boyz in the Hood" and other movies like that, they show what's really happening, not the stereotypes...Stuff like that kinda gets the message straight, you know. See what's happening. Like black people don't make the guns and all that stuff, they don't ship it into the neighbourhoods, you know.

[response] and the man is always the white man, most of the time.

Respondents in all groups expressed other concerns about unrealistic or negative role modeling for blacks on television. This was manifested in discussions about the potential impacts of celebrity black athlete portrayals. Some respondents suggesting that the portrayals may induce "false hopes" for a black adolescent audience:

the everyday black person knows the difference between a want and a need. And they buy the things they need instead of what they want. But those famous basketball players, they can get whatever they want because they have so much money. Like if I'm watching, [respondent pretends he's watching a commercial], "oh, that's what I want, I want the same thing, I want what they want". So you go out to buy the product, but you may not have enough money.

Real life blacks, you see how they have to get there. They show what it takes to get to where they are. In commercials you see the flashy, to do whatever they want. Driving their cars. Like even last year, Shaquille in the Pepsi commercial. You see him driving away in the Ferrari, with his head through the roof. I mean that's a lot of money to do that, so. It's two different sides. It's a totally different side. Because even around here, I know my parents have to pay food bills, and that's a lot different. It's a whole different story, what they show on TV and how it really is.

These difficulties appear to be especially significant if one considers the peer pressures associated with owning celebrity athlete endorsed athletic apparel. Although the respondents ability to identify these problems and pressures shows that they are a critical audience, their recognitions do not outweigh the apparent peer influences that are rooted in these sorts of popular advertising. In these discussions about the impacts of stereotypical black television portrayals on the audience, there was participation and support from almost all of the black adolescents. Within the smaller groups (with 4 and 2 respondents), all respondents usually commented on the topic. In the 6 person group, usually all but one or two respondents made direct comment, while the other respondents nodded or had no reaction.

The apparent realism of the commercials and the respondents identification with celebrity athletes (described earlier) stood in contradistinction with the respondents' thoughts about "making it" to the NBA. In fact, the "false hopes" noted by researchers (Wenner, 1994;

Wonsek, 1992) did not seem to apply to most of these adolescents. Most respondents in all groups (with no disagreements) recognized and acknowledged the implausibility of "making it" to the NBA. The representative force of the commercials therefore, appeared to be more mythological than actually descriptive. However, many of those interviewed acknowledged that the "dream" of "making it" despite awareness to the contrary, persists. One respondent expressed this feeling explicitly when he said:

because for me personally, I know right now, I'm looking into working with kids and stuff. This is my last year, but my number one, a lot of people tell me I'm crazy, I'm tripping, I'll never make it. But one of my dreams, honestly, to go to the NBA. I'm not saying when I go to college or whatever. Maybe I'll finish college or university, and I'll be 26 or 25 having my job. But I still have a dream, man.

Other respondents were less emphatic about "the dream", although the desire to "make it" remained embedded in their comments:

at least give it a decent try, but I don't know how many of us will be actually disappointed if we don't. We might be disappointed, but it won't be the end of the road.

you got to have other things, because if you don't make it in basketball, and you are so dependent on basketball, what are you going to do.
[another respondent continues] you could twist your ankle.

see, that's why you got to lose your head. That's why all those NBA players say stay in school...They're saying don't single everything out and just have basketball.

as long as I'm doing something I like. As long as I'm playing basketball. Even if I'm not playing basketball professionally. I could picture myself playing basketball at the age of 30, taking my kids to watch me go play basketball on a Friday night.

Some respondents spoke of other professional leagues besides the NBA that could provide a career in basketball:

it doesn't even make a difference, the NBA. You know how many other leagues they have in Israel or stuff like that.
[other respondent continues] they can get you into the NBA too, like a European team. Like they can look at you, the NBA can look at you and say, "oh, I want him for my team".

there are leagues everywhere, and you can make decent money...you see the players making a million dollars, that's because it is the NBA...What they're doing, it is entertainment think

because they get paid so much, more than movie actors...they're there to entertain you, they are bringing in 50 000 people to watch a game. But if you're playing like that [referring to playing in other leagues], that's playing for a job.

Ironically, the interest of some of the respondents in playing professional basketball appeared to stem from their identification with the celebrity athletes and the athletic apparel commercials, even while, as a group, they were critical of the "false hopes" that are created by some athletic apparel commercials. The following critical comments were typical:

[referring to Starter commercial in appendix D-commercial number 3] they say all this stuff, they kind of give you like a guideline. You see on the commercials, they say, "oh, I did fifty thousand push-ups, I ran fifty million stairs, I ran around...". They give you a whole bunch of stories and let people think that if you follow this step by step you can make it. They almost make it sound too easy to make it.

[other respondent continues] they're almost trying to say "follow me exactly", you know what I mean. They are trying to give a textbook on how to make it, when there really isn't a textbook.

the TV tells black people that all we can do is play basketball and we can do sports. But there are a lot of black people that you don't hear anything about that are doctors and lawyers that are also do really good jobs, and you never hear about it. You never hear about the educational aspect, like the ones that go to college, all you hear about is the sports stars. It's really like a role model, the doctor, someone that's a more realistic goal than being a basketball player.

And that should be more a role model on TV than basketball players and stuff like that.

it could be the right message, it could be the wrong message [referring to celebrity basketball players endorsing products]. Because you can't always idolize a basketball player. Because if you think about it, what is your percentage of making it to the NBA. It's not very high, right. Because if you think, oh, why not be a basketball player, and set your mind to it, not everybody can be a basketball player. Some people are just not made to be basketball players...It's kind of like blinding kids to other things. There are other things in life bigger than basketball. Life is bigger than basketball. It's kind of like leading people toward that message that basketball is everything.

Respondents in two groups, while recognizing how difficult it is to make the NBA, described the elements of the commercials that inspire them to hold on to their "dream". These are notable responses, but were not supported by all group members (2 respondents in each group).

it's realistic for anybody to make it at anything, because if it wasn't realistic, there wouldn't be no one there [referring to the celebrity athletes in the commercials]. There's lots of people that should be, people like, even New York playground legends that should be there, but a lot of

people take the wrong route in college.

the Starter one, the one that tells you about it takes hard work to get where you are. That's the message you got to know. You got to know that you can't be just good to get to the NBA. He had to work. You got to work hard at your game to get where you want to be. So he had to work pretty darn hard to get where he wanted to be. That's another message that's put out, that things don't come easy.

These comments are significant, as the potential impacts of these messages on even a small percentage of blacks are important. However, the black respondents as a group, even those that made these comments, acknowledged the myth of social mobility through sport and did not appear to be "deceived" by these commercials into thinking that professional sport is a realistic aspiration.

"Black People Are More 'What's Up Baby', Stuff Like That. And White Folk Are More Down To Earth."

Unlike the black respondents, who were very aware of how blacks are portrayed on television, the *non-black respondents* in all groups (with no notable exceptions) appeared to be less mindful to the portrayal of blacks in television programming. This is not to say that they did not have perceptions and opinions, but their comments were less comprehensive and less thoughtful than those of the black respondents. This lack of interest and focus in the discussions led me to use predominantly questionnaire data to see what the non-black did and didn't notice. Typical questionnaire responses made by the non-black respondents *who did make note* of the portrayal of blacks in the athletic apparel commercials are outlined below. It should be stated, however, that most respondents *did not* make note of how blacks were portrayed, even in these commercials. These comments were derived from the "tell the story of the ad" category in the commercial viewing questionnaire and focus on the Footlocker "playground" commercial (where

non-celebrity black athletes are shown) and the Nike "barber shop" commercials (where black celebrity athletes are shown):

[referring to the Footlocker commercial] players talking slang while they make nice plays and brag many black athletes playing basketball always scoring.

loud black men playing uncivilized basketball.

portrays African American teenagers playing unorganized basketball with black Nike shoes, speak with slang.

black men playing ghetto ball, trash talking, having fun.

a small African American kid is wearing many Footlocker items. He is scoring baskets and seems to be portraying the image of the black rapper/dancer/homie.

In these instances, the respondents appeared to make an association between the inner city, the athlete's basketball playing "style" and the race of the athletes. Seldom did the respondents offer commentary beyond these descriptions in the focus group discussions.

In each group's discussions, some non-black respondents had more explicit descriptions of how blacks are portrayed in other areas of television programming. Although there were just a few comments made in each group, there was little disagreement among respondents (the only disagreement of any sort was noted in the first comments outlined below).

Black sitcoms are more humorous by, like Naked Gun Two and a Half [a comedy movie renowned for "off the wall" humour], like stupid funny.

[other respondent continues] it's not stupid funny, it's just a different kind of funny.

Black people [on television] are more "what's up baby", stuff like that. And white folk are more down to earth.

[in response to the question, "what are blacks like on TV"] like the tough guy, the gangster, the homie. Like I guess if you're a black kid and you see all this on TV, it's like that's what I should, then I should talk like this and have a gun and stuff. Some of them do, but some of them don't I guess.

Unlike the black respondents, who appeared to have thought about this subject previously, the non-black respondents as a group could only think of a few examples outside of sport where

blacks were shown. The subject of black depictions appeared to be unimportant to the non-black respondents. This was in contrast to the black respondents who found serious meaning in the black portrayals. What is significant in these findings, therefore, are the non-black respondents' perceptions of how blacks are portrayed. The non-black respondents appear to absorb the stereotypic black portrayals offered in television advertising and other television programming in non-critical ways.

Further insights into how black television portrayals "inform" a non-black audience were evident in discussions about how portrayals of blacks on television compared to their perceptions of "real life" blacks. These discussions hold particular importance in terms of potential media impacts when one considers how little experience the non-black respondents had with "real life" black people. When asked about their previous experience with blacks, most respondents in all groups indicated that they knew only a few blacks, and had little exposure to them:

I don't really know any black people. That's the sad thing though...we don't have any black people here.

[other respondent continues] ya, we've got one black guy in our school.

[other respondent continues] I've got three or four in my neighbourhood.

[in response to the question "are there many black kids around here, do you know many blacks"] A couple, not that many. If you go down to the beach in the summer, there's basketball games and stuff like that. During basketball games and stuff like that.

For these respondents, exposure to blacks has been confined to the basketball court, either in pick-up games or organized games with their varsity basketball teams. There were no notable exceptions among these respondents.

Within this context, the non-black discussions about the realism of black portrayals are insightful into the impacts of the media. Few comments were made regarding the realism of black portrayals (or potentially stereotypes) until the respondents were asked specifically "how portrayals of blacks on television compare to "real life" blacks". Most respondents in non-black

groups (there were no notable disagreements) saw black portrayals in athletic apparel commercials to be quite realistic. As in the previous section, the respondents' comments centred around the Footlocker "playground" commercial (portraying non-celebrity black athletes) and the Nike "barber shop" commercials (that show celebrity black athletes). The following statements were typical of those made by non-black respondents about black athlete portrayals:

- [referring to the realism of the Footlocker commercial] ya, that's what it's like.
- [other respondent continues] sometimes that's what it's like.
- [other respondent continues] it's like that a lot in the States. I've been to the States. It's like that down there. Very old style gyms with the lettering, trash talking.
- [other respondent continues] more inside play, inside moves on the outdoor courts.

- [referring to the realism of the Footlocker commercial] we don't play like that.
- [other respondent continues] we don't talk.
- [other respondent continues] not like that.
- [other respondent continues] that's New York, New York is a bit different.

- [referring to the realism of the Footlocker commercial] cause black people try to act like that.
- [other respondent continues] some of them, not all of them are, but some like aren't.
- [other respondent continues] the ones that hang out at the beach playing basketball are.
- [other respondent continues] they're trash talking and stuff like that, it's basically the same thing.

One group alluded to the realism of the Footlocker commercial when they were asked if it would have made a difference if white basketball players were in the commercials instead of black players:

- it really couldn't have been [white basketball players] because they were doing cool dunks.
- [other respondent continues] they were on the street, playing streetball and stuff [the black athletes]. I don't know and it just, you just don't picture it as much.
- [other respondent continues] portrayed ghetto style.
- [other respondent continues] we can afford to build gyms in our neighbourhoods.

These respondents appeared to see the portrayal of black athletes in the inner city, playing a distinct "style" of basketball to be realistic. Although some respondents recognized that not all blacks play this style in this setting, this did not make the commercial any less believable.

Non-black respondents in all groups (with no disagreements) also felt that the portrayal of black celebrities in the Nike "barber shop" commercials were realistic:

the barber shop is more like black, because they always talk, like.

[other respondent continues] it looked like they were in a black neighbourhood.

[other respondent continues] in the barber shop, they all exaggerate about how they are good and stuff, that's true.

[Moderator's comment] do you think the commercials were realistic?

(respondents answer in unison) ya.

[Moderator's comment] Which ones do you think were realistic?

(respondent) the barber shop, because you just generally wouldn't see white people hanging out in a...you'd probably see white people hanging out in a bar or something. But you associate the barber shop with something, usually you just see black people hang out there.

some of the black guys, you see how they are on the things, the commercials. They act like it seemed, the things they say, funny stuff.

The non-black respondents did not refer to stereotyping in any of the Nike commercials. The respondents appeared to be comfortable with these "barber shop" portrayals of blacks, suggesting that white people would not have "fit" into this setting.

In two groups, some non-black respondents recognized stereotypes in their perceptions of black portrayals in other television programming. Although there was not disagreement in these groups, most respondents did not comment on this subject, or make supportive remarks or gestures. In *all* groups, discussion of black portrayal realism was characterized by feelings of uncertainly.

[in response to "do you learn anything about blacks from the shows"] you get an image of how it is, but you don't really know, so it's kind of twisted.

[other respondent continues] they seem so much different than us.

[other respondent continues] they are so much different than us.

I guess you pick up stereotypes from TV or whatever. Not everyone's like that.

They are just acting on TV. They're just doing what they are supposed to do.

One group referred to a phrase out of the movie *White Man Can't Jump* (a movie about a white basketball player and black basketball player "hustling" basketball for money) that they perceived to be true for "real life" black athletes:

Remember in the movie "White Man Can't Jump", when that white guy says that black guys would rather lose-look good and lose [other respondents nod]...I think it's true. Black guys would rather lose, but still look really good.

[other respondent continues] ya.

[other respondent continues] it's hard to say, for all those black guys.

[other respondent continues] the majority, I think the majority.

Respondents in these groups gave insights into black portrayals realism in their responses to "would it make a difference if the athletes in the commercials were blacks or whites". The following comments were typical of all non-black groups.

[when asked if it would make a difference if white players were in the "barber shop" Nike commercials] it couldn't really have been cause they [the black athletes in the commercials] were doing cool dunks.

[other respondent continues] white guys can't do fancy dunks.

[when asked to compare the way black players and white players play] white players play with more fundamentals, they aren't going to take off from the free throw line and dunk.

I guess watching black guys play is more entertaining.

white people play to win, just like in the interviews. It seems to mean more, to the white. Like when Larry Bird talks, and stuff like that, it seems to be like their life.

Inherent in these statements is the idea that the blacks were portrayed realistically, and so it was appropriate that they were in these particular roles, and not whites.

The statements made by non-black respondents throughout this section demonstrated a level of dubiousness about the realism of black portrayals in television programming. Some respondents explained that they "didn't know" how realistic the portrayals of blacks were because of their limited exposure to blacks. Others (those who made the above comments) spoke tentatively, as though they were talking about a subject they were generally unfamiliar with. In

all cases, the respondents did not appear to have enough experience with blacks to make an informed assessment about the realism and stereotypical content of black portrayals outside the context of basketball.

Segregated Perceptions of Black Television Portrayals: Comparative Overview

Evidently, the black and non-black respondents “saw” the black television portrayals in very different ways. The *black* respondents identified with some portrayals and noticed stereotyping in others. The respondents suggested that these portrayals led a non-black audience to see “real life” blacks stereotypically and negatively (“it really gives us an image”). In some instances, the black respondents saw the athletes in the commercials as models for how to “make it” in sport. However, the “dream” of making it to the NBA, as the celebrity athletes shown in the commercials have, was approached with reservation by these respondents.

The *non-black* respondents were less aware of how blacks are portrayed on television. These respondents, who had little experience with “real life” blacks, expressed inconsistent views about the realism of the black portrayals. Respondents in all non-black groups appeared to be comfortable with and to see realism in the athletic apparel commercial portrayals of black athletes, while being uncertain about the realism of black portrayals in other television genres (sit-coms, movies, etc.). Some respondents indicated that they did not know how realistic the portrayals were while others gave explicit descriptions of how the portrayals were realistic, despite their admitted inexperience with blacks. In these ways, the racial and culturally based differences led to segregated perceptions of black television portrayals.

Subject #3: “They Seem So Much Different Than Us”: Everyday Perceptions of Difference

During the focus group interviews, themes emerged showing distinct understandings of race and racism in the respondents’ own lives and in society at large. Evident in the black and non-

black adolescents' responses were perceptions of difference between black people and white people. Underlying this theme was the place of television as a perpetuator of these understandings. In this way, the adolescents experiences with and understandings of race and racial difference shed light on how media perceptions of blacks potentially contribute to "real life" perceptions.

"Sometimes I Go, 'Damn, Do You Think White People Like Me?'"

Although the question "do you think racism is a problem in society" was asked during the sessions, opinions and perceptions were offered freely by all **black** respondents in all groups throughout the interviews. Often these insights were elaborations on their perceptions of black depictions on television, of race and sport and of the importance of race as a component of their adolescent culture.

These respondents showed an acute awareness of racism in society. This was particularly evident in discussions about black celebrity athletes. Respondents in all groups made comments suggesting that outside of sport and entertainment, blacks are not respected in comparison to whites. The following description of one respondent's experience on a "night out" illustrates this sentiment:

I was at a pool hall and the guy [white person] goes, "Michael Jordan, he's the best player and he's so good" and all this. But he respects Michael Jordan as a basketball player. I don't think he respects Michael Jordan as a person, he's like "I like Jordan as a black basketball player", but that's it, because he's entertaining that guy at the pool hall. And that's why he doesn't say, "Michael Jordan's a good person", the way he might look at a white singer or dancer or President or something. It's like black people are just there for show and once the shows over. I don't think guys are going to go twenty years from now and say, "ya, Michael Jordan's a good guy, you know, I want him to represent me in politics". It's like..."what are you doing for me", and Michael Jordan's in commercials, and with this guy [the white person from the pool hall], it's cool, but as soon as the show is over and then the next black guy comes up and it's his show.

Other respondents reinforced this idea, suggesting that blacks are viewed only as entertainers:

they're [white people] using us for sports man. All those white people that go watch basketball, how many of them have black boyfriends, how many of them are married to black people, none.

like O.J. Simpson. How many people are turning on O.J. now. "I love O.J., go O.J.", now it's like that black guy murdered his two white people, his white wife. People are turning on him. But when he was running the football, everyone was cheering for him

white people are fantasizing when they see black people on TV. It's like, "look at that black person, oh my gosh, lets get dinner and go watch some black people on TV".

a lot of white people...when they watch things, they don't look at it black white...when they go to a Blue Jays game or the NBA, they wear their suit and tie, the same way they're going to a ballet. They don't care if it's black people or Italians...they don't really care who's playing, but I don't care what you guys say, everybody's got a little bit of prejudice in their mind. I know white people and you know white people that would never let their daughter marry a black person.

the TV tells black people that all we can do is play basketball and we can do sports. But there are a lot of black people that you don't hear anything about that are doctors and lawyers that also do really good jobs, and you never hear anything about it.

These comments also show how some black respondents felt that blacks are "used" by white people. The respondents' suggestion that white people support blacks as entertainers, but will not let them into their personal lives ("How many of them are married to black people? None.") or stand by them in difficult circumstances ("I love O.J., go O.J....people are turning on him") reinforced this view.

Respondents elaborated on this idea in discussions about how blacks are restricted in other areas of employment that do not involve sport or entertainment:

like a selected few people have a life after basketball. Like how many people can you think of that move on after basketball. The only person I can think of right now is Isaiah Thomas [former NBA player who now is in management with the Toronto Raptors basketball team], and he is still linked to the one thing he does best which is basketball. He's still an entertainer and all that stuff.

with all those commercials [the athletic apparel commercials shown in the research session], even though there is like a lot of black people doing the commercials, behind all the commercials, you know, is like a white producer, a white filmer behind the camera, a white

director, a white person from Nike...

Some respondents spoke about stereotypes that stigmatize blacks in everyday life:

every black person who has a pager is a drug dealer.

black man in a car with tinted windows, you know, a Benz. You know what he's doing [other respondent continues] yet a white guy could be walking around in his suit, and the best car, and he could still be doing drugs.

pager [for a white person], lawyer, doctor. Black man pager, drug dealer, cause he has a gold chain on, or gold rings, shades on or something. It's stupid. It's a stereotype. Stereotype for two things, sports and criminals. That's all black people are stereotyped for.

Clearly, the black respondents had strong perceptions of how white people see black people.

Many of these perceptions seemed to be based in stereotypical portrayals of blacks in the media, portrayals that were believed by these respondents to lead white people to see blacks stereotypically. This was evident from the apparent parallel between the respondents' descriptions of black television portrayals and their descriptions of "real life" blacks.

One respondent described how stereotypical sport role models are restrictive for blacks and could negatively affect a black person's self-esteem.

hockey, that's more towards white people. If you keep seeing that, that will kind of make you in the back of your mind think, "I cannot do that, I cannot go any farther. I can't do anything about it, it's too late. Like, it doesn't matter what I'm doing because it's already toward the white person, so I have to take a back seat...it just puts you down mentally, so you think, "because I'm black, I can't do this at all".

Although not all respondents spoke of these feelings explicitly, they are consistent with the belief that racism towards blacks is perpetuated by stereotypical portrayals of blacks on television, where blacks are rarely (if ever) shown to be hockey players (according to these respondents).

Some respondents felt that white athletes are "preferred" by the media and the white audience. This sentiment was manifested in comments about player recruitment and media treatment of black and white professional basketball players:

if they had a white guy who is as good as Michael Jordan, he'd be on TV more than Michael

Jordan was. He'd be everything. Look, Larry Bird and Magic Johnson [former white and black basketball stars]. They were even. To white people and most of the world, they were both popular. Bird got a lot of publicity, and his skills were, I don't think as good as Magic's...Look at other sports, man, like baseball. You know they've got good black athletes, but as soon as one white athlete's really good, they prop him up so much, because, you know, everybody has a little bit of racism.

look at Christian Laetner. Laetner was good in college. We know he's not that good. But they worshipped him because he's a white guy...pretty, he's like a brainer student. He's a model, they loved him. He was white.

you have one white guy and one black guy, the white guy is as good as the black guy. They're going to take the white guy. You know why? Because the white guy will sell tickets.

they want the great white hope.

Throughout these black adolescent focus groups, the belief that people identify with, and favour same race athletes persisted. Since whites were considered more influential in sport (as one respondent put it, "TV contracts, NBC and ABC, all those people that watch, the paid salaries...are all white people, man, right, season's ticket holders are all white") this favouritism was believed to favour whites. However, three respondents (in two groups) were less convinced than others about the extent of this identification and favouritism. The following comments were responses to the opinions expressed above:

a black person right now can bring in as much money as a white person.

White people are easy to market [respondent is speaking sarcastically]? How many white people do you see in those commercials?

[other respondent continues] I saw one or two white guys in all those commercials

[other respondent continues, speaking sarcastically] do you see the Chris Mullen shoe, the Rony Seikely Converse, you know, the John Paxon Nike [the players just mentioned are white basketball players]? You see Larry, you see Malone, you see Magic, Ewing [black players] [respondent suggesting that black athletes can be used as spokespeople to appeal to whites].

this generation is starting to change, white people. They're starting to respect us, you know.

This opinion, while notable is certainly not typical of the views expressed by the black groups.

This disparity within the groups was concentrated in discussions about the changes in societal

attitudes towards race. These few respondents felt more positively that "times are changing", while most others were more critical. However, these differences were over the *extent* of racism in sport, the existence of racism was not questioned.

Commentary was provided on the different experiences of whites and blacks in sport and did not necessarily encompass racism and racist features of sport as such. For example, in *all* groups the different performances of blacks and whites were explained according to "natural" physical differences and to cultural differences. Explanations of physical differences between blacks and whites included the following:

white people, it's physically proven that they don't have something in the ankle...that makes them like, the fast twitch muscles aren't there.

a lot of it's your background. A lot of people, like going back to the Jacs [Jamaicans], they're background is part of their family, running...they are more adapted to it...and so naturally they would be faster, so it comes a bit easier.

Some respondents also acknowledged how the distinctly "black" experience could contribute to differences in play and style:

it's something they [black players] grow up with too. Not every black kid had everything given up so easy for them. So, for some of them, basketball is a way of life and they are willing to give it that extra [respondent claps his hands], the same way with the dunks, the way they are able to give it that extra more.

Other respondents attributed these "cultural" differences less to colour (being black or being white) and more to where you live and who your friends are. The following statements demonstrated this understanding:

you like to play the sports your friends play. Whatever you're brought up playing, you're going to play that. In the West Indies, my parents were brought up to play cricket...So, if he's my friend [referring to another respondent] and we grow up playing basketball, we're going to play that sport. It doesn't really matter where you're from, what colour you are. It doesn't matter. It's like your roots, wherever you grow up.

When I grew up, my brother was playing soccer, from the time I was like four I was playing soccer until I was like fourteen. The I started watching basketball, I started playing basketball. So what am I going to do, stand there, you know? I like to do the sport. I'll bet if all our

friends were playing hockey, I'd probably be playing.

If I was living out in Winnipeg, or out in Moose Jaw or out I something like that, I'm sure I'd be slapping sticks with the rest of those people, man.

It depends on where you grew up. It depends on the stuff you do and the people you know.

These respondents appeared to feel that both cultural and physical differences contributed to the distinctly black "style". The few respondents who did not make supportive comments either made supportive gestures or had no reaction. No respondents disagreed with the expressed ideas.

Several remarks from black respondents distinguished their own black style and "dress code" from that of white adolescents. These remarks were also made in *all* groups without opposition.

if you...see a white guy... [interrupted by another respondent who finishes sentence], wearing "black" clothes, people call him a wigger.

[other respondent continues from last statement] and if you see a black guy with the same clothes as a white guy you say, "what's going on, what's wrong with that guy, go home and take that off and don't wear it".

they [white youth] dress like us, they want to be like us, they talk like us.

white kids always try and copy the black kids [pretending to be a white adolescent], "oh, that looks cool, where did you get that?" And then they'll go out and buy that the next day, and then you don't want it no more.

white people want to be down with black people because of the stereotype, and they stereotype black people. Even in this school they have that Mr. Turner, hip hop man. He has to have a pager, and pants up, hat on, pants falling down.

if you're a black kid, and he sees other black kids wearing the same thing, he's gonna try and fit them. When he sees white guys, playing in them, then obviously he's not going to be wanting to be doing that. He's gonna try and fit in with his own group. Try and get around with that group. He's gonna be with his peers, right, those are the people.

I think when white people buy athletic apparel, they buy it for like comfort...if that shoe's comfortable for them they buy it. But black people, they'll burn their feet, but if the shoe looks good, they'll wear it [all other respondents nod].

The perceived cultural differences between black and white youth go beyond just clothing and shoes according to these respondents:

in everything, the girls you go for, the clothes you wear, the music you like, the way you act, the way you talk, sports, everything. You get laughed at if you're talking to a white girl. You get laughed at if you're playing a white sport. You get laughed at if you're dressing like a white person. You get laughed at you're listening to heavy metal, everything. It's all the same. Black people and white people judge too much.

The preferable "black" style and attitude were most evident in responses to the question "would it make a difference if the athletes in the commercials were white". Most respondents indicated that black athletes and white athletes play basketball in different ways:

you don't see white people doing all those fancy stuff. You see black people doing all cradle [pretends to do a "cradle" dunk -- a particular style of slam dunk] and the free throw line they reverse on somebody's head and all that kind of stuff. You don't see white people, I'm not saying they don't do it, but you don't see it.

the black players in the NBA, they have a little more finesse.
[other respondent adds] a lot more.

One group, while supporting the notion that there are differences between blacks and whites physically and culturally (explained above), indicated that these differences are often reinforced by societal pressures and, are not always "naturally" true.

it's all the way you show you're product, if you bring across your product towards a black crowd, you show a lot of black people. For black people sitting home watching TV... you're watching that you go out and get too, so everybody else goes out and gets it.

those companies...think "only black people play basketball, so we'll put black people in this commercial, and we'll show...black people...this is the stuff you wear. So black people go, "well, all right, I'll wear this".

From remarks such as these, it was evident that peer and societal pressures to wear distinctly "black" clothes were widely shared experiences for the black groups.

Inherent in these statements was the acknowledged importance of peer acceptance. Although race was not emphasized in all instances, the importance of being "black", especially in a black peer group (as was the case with these respondents) that valued basketball as a cultural form, and viewed the celebrity black athlete as a cultural icon was unquestioned. It appears, underlying

these explanations about "why" blacks and whites were different was an understanding that racially and culturally based differences were "negotiated" in everyday life. This was evident from the respondents comments regarding "fitting in" with their peer group and their racial group while at the same time living within a predominantly white society.

Respondents discussed how race and racism impacted their own lives. While they did not report specific incidents of racism (they were not asked to do so), in all groups black respondents described their relationships with white people, and discussed how their experiences as black people were unique:

sometimes people, even myself, let's say I want to go work at some place. To me, if I want to work at that place, to me acting as a black person you have to be very conscious of what you do. And any little thing you do comes back, whereas you compare races, you're gone, just like that. He might be a little more patient with a white person.

sometimes I go, "damn, do you think white people like me?"

[other respondent continues] I know white people go "damn".

[another respondent continues sentence, still pretending to speak as a white person] "look at that black guy".

[another respondent continues sentence, still pretending to speak as a white person] "Negroes".

[another respondent continues sentence, still pretending to speak as a white person] "look at them hide in the gym. Look at them walk around like they're better than everybody else".

Everybody has that.

What is especially interesting about the respondents' comments is that they are perceptions about what other people think of them as individuals, not about overt acts of racism that these respondents have experienced. In related discussions on stereotypical portrayals of blacks, respondents made similar assertions that white people, whose attitudes have been reinforced by deceptive television portrayals of blacks, saw blacks stereotypically and, as a result, tended to treat blacks differently from whites in day to day life. This thematic category reinforces a common thread through the noted themes, that racism is a crucial part of reality for these black adolescents, and that television appears to contribute to their lived conditions of racism.

"There's Still Racism Up Here, But I Don't Think As Much As The States"

The *non-black* respondents in all groups, while having little personal experience with racism, were aware of incidents of racism in their school environment and in society at large. These perceptions were markedly different from those expressed by the black respondents, who saw race and racism to be a fundamental part of their everyday lives. In three of the four groups, non-black respondents noted that racism in Canada was a problem, but that it was different than the black-white problem that was perceived to exist in the United States (one group commented on racism, but did not compare racism in Canada to that in the United States):

I think racism up in Canada is different from the States because we live in a society where everybody lives close to each other. All races go to the same school.
[other respondent continues] you never really had slavery in Canada, except for the Chinese.
[other respondent continues] you go down to the States, some areas are all white, some areas are all black. Up here, where I grew up, you have everything.

the States has a greater black population, so it's more black. So that's their problem. And here it's Oriental, mostly, and Filipino and stuff. So it could be different, but it's the same, still.

there's still racism up here, but I don't think as much as the States.

I don't think it's a white-black problem anymore. I think it's more of an immigrant problem now. A lot of people are kind of getting frustrated with all the immigration that is happening.

These comments showed that the respondents were aware of racism in Canada, but had limited personal experience with it. The Asian and East Indian and Israeli respondents, although in a racially mixed environment which may have impeded discussion, did not indicate that racism was a problem for them. The following comments showed how some other respondents did not see racism as a serious social problem to be dealt with. These were sentiments expressed by respondents in two of the groups. These ideas, as with those expressed earlier, did not meet serious opposition within the groups. Although the within group views sometimes differed, the

respondents did not appear to have strong feelings about their ideas, appearing to be uncertain about the subject of race and racism as it relates to Canada.

I don't think there's a problem. Sometimes, once in a while in basketball you get mad at each other. You might say a racist remark or something, in basketball. I don't know in society and stuff.

it's [racism] not a problem. I haven't seen anybody actually do anything about it.

I don't notice it [racism] much.

[other respondent continues] sometimes we [referring to the other focus group members who are Asian and white] joke around with each other.

[other respondent continues] those are just jokes though.

I think Canada's realizing that everybody needs to live together.

Other respondents were comparatively more aware of race and racism:

we just had a fight here last week, and it was racial. it's getting out of hand because races can't get along with one another.

there's a lot of different cultures in Vancouver.

[other respondent continues] sometimes they just clash.

there's gangs.

I think there's racism towards Indians, [when questioned, the respondent indicated "Native Indians"], I don't think there's a problem with blacks in Canada.

One group raised the issue of "racism" towards whites in their discussion of the use of blacks in athletic apparel commercials. In this instance, it appeared that the non-black respondents did not think it is fair that blacks should be overrepresented in a commercial type, when whites are condemned for the same thing in other instances. There was clear acceptance of this idea amongst most group members during this discussion (including both Asian and East Indian respondents in the group).

if it [the athletic apparel commercial] was all white people, everyone would be considered racist.

[other respondent continues] when it's like black people, it's love for their race. When it's white people, it's like racist.

These comments show varying levels of awareness of race and racism in Vancouver by these respondents. Although some respondents described specific instances of racism they had seen, most respondents did not appear to be personally affected. The Asian and East Indian respondents in the non-black groups concurred with most comments made within the groups, and for the most part appeared to be very integrated into the sessions and the "dominant" youth culture. The comments regarding racism towards whites by one group were indicative of the respondents' limited exposure to and understanding of racism and limited tolerance to anything that appears "anti-white". An underlying theme in these interviews was that the respondents were aware of racism in Vancouver, but they were unaware of larger issues of race and racism, including those that involved blacks.

Inherent in most discussions (in *all* non-black groups) that dealt with race and racial differences between blacks and whites was the idea that blacks and whites are culturally and physically very different. Identified differences were usually explained with reference to sport and basketball, a familiar context for these respondents. The groups explained "style" differences between black and white basketball players in two ways. The respondents referred to the actual basketball playing "style" of black and white players as well as the "style" associated with on-court behavior, such as the verbal taunting and talking to opponents known as "trash talking". Non-black respondents suggested that blacks are better "natural" athletes and some groups referred to cultural differences (where you live and who you spend time with). The following statements made by non-black respondents are typical of the "natural" athlete explanation:

their body is like, they can get a lot of height and stuff. Like you can't see Larry Bird dunking on Michael Jordan and stuff like that.

blacks are more athletic, usually, there are some athletic white guys.
[other respondent continues] I think black people are naturally more athletic.

The following are examples of cultural explanations of these "style" differences:

they [blacks] are more aggressive, like New York is just more aggressive. So I guess if you had a really talented white guy growing up in New York, he'd be just as aggressive. but it is predominantly black, so, you know the black guys they are aggressive.

I don't think it's that white people act differently than black people. I think it's where you grew up.

it depends where you are.

[other respondent continues] like in Vancouver, it depends where you're brought up, right. Like a white guy brought up in New York would be exactly the same as the black guys.

The respondents expanded on this cultural theme, suggesting that there is a distinct culture for blacks. Again, these sentiments were evident in all non-black groups.

black players seem to want to look better. They go in to do something fancy and then they miss it and pop it up and they lose the game.

I played with black players...they were total showboaters, man. Like if they were going in for an easy layup, instead of laying it in they'd grab it with two hands (respondent pretends to be shooting a basketball), flick wrists. And every time they'd get fouled and it's not called, they fake injuries and stuff like that.

I would say black guys are more concerned with arguing and looking good, more concerned with looking good and arguing with each other, and getting their two bits in.

[other respondents continue] ya, like if you've been down to Kits Beach, and you see a one man show all the time.

[other respondent continues] you play for two minutes, someone gets fouled and you argue for twenty, and they don't pass it to you if you're white.

they're [black basketball players] more cocky.

[other respondent continues] they just look smoother.

[other respondent continues] it's true, they do look smoother. When they go up for a dunk or a shot, they look smoother.

they talk a lot.

when you [as a white basketball player] foul, you don't say "what's up baby" [like a black basketball player does].

they are so much different than us.

we don't play like that.

[other respondent continues] we don't talk.

[other respondent continues] not like that.

Other respondents made specific comments about the blacks that they knew that suggested there is very little difference between blacks in Vancouver and themselves. These comments were not typical of the non-black groups, and were expressed as an afterthought to the dominant sentiment.

nice guys, they're just normal guys.

actually, I know a lot of black people who play (basketball) just the exact same way (as white players).

Despite these comments, most respondents, even those that made these assertions about the similarities between blacks and non-blacks, gave more elaborate statements in other parts of the interview describing how "real life" blacks play basketball differently than themselves and how "black style" and "black culture" was distinct from their own culture. Comments describing the similarities between blacks and whites seemed to be exceptions to the predominant trend, a trend that shows non-black respondents to perceive cultural and physical differences between the blacks and themselves. This has particular significance with respect to media impacts given the respondents acknowledged inexperience with blacks.

Lived Experiences and Raced Perceptions of Difference: Comparative Overview

The black and non-black respondents had distinctly different "lived experiences" with respect to race and racism. The black respondents' explicit descriptions of racism and how perceptions of race and racial difference (by whites especially) were connected to stereotypical portrayals of blacks on television were in contrast to the non-black groups' descriptions of how blacks were very different from themselves. This has particular significance with respect to potential media impacts since the non-blacks based their descriptions on very limited experiences with "real life" blacks. These contrary understandings of race in context with discussions about the impacts of

black television portrayals gives further insight into the raced perceptions of difference that were evident throughout the interviews.

Subject #4: "The Shoes", "The Trash Talking", "The Big Dunks" and "The *Black* Athletes":
Culturally Similar And Racially Distinct Interpretive Strategies For Understanding the Athletic
Apparel Commercial

This section draws on the questionnaire and focus group responses of the black and non-black adolescents in order to gain insight into the "interpretive strategies" used by these respondents when viewing athletic apparel commercials. The evaluation concentrates on the written and verbal responses to two questionnaire and discussion items: "what were the most prominent features" of the commercial and "tell the story of the commercial". Findings are reported by clustering responses together thematically as in previous sections, however, the analysis is focused on four commercials that featured black basketball players, and that provided the most discriminating results. The commercials not analyzed (the Starter commercial featuring a white basketball player, a white baseball player and a black track athlete, and a Nike commercial that shows no athletes -- see Appendix D) are referred to for comparative purposes. The analysis is organized around the respondents' reactions to the commercials and is therefore reported relative to the commercials themselves.

In several cases, the actual number of respondents who "noticed" certain features on their commercial response questionnaires are reported.. These numbers should be understood only as supportive evidence for the positions taken in the focus groups discussions and not as an indicator of statistical significance of the findings. In some instances, the numbers are not reported such as when it appeared that the focus group responses showed thematic evidence more clearly than the basic questionnaire responses. The questionnaire responses were useful for showing the commercial features that were considered to be "most noticeable" and for recounting

the respondents typical "language" usage. However, it was the focus group discussions surrounding the commercials and the topic of basketball that demonstrated more explicitly the respondents' knowledge and understandings.

Footlocker "Playground" Commercial

Questionnaire responses regarding the Footlocker "Playground" commercial (Appendix D-commercial 1) were similar for the black and non-black groups. This similarity was consistent throughout the commercials shown during the research sessions. The language and references made in all instances showed a common knowledge and understanding of the game of basketball and "basketball culture". The comments focused on features that were considered "most prominent". Thirty-five of the 37 respondents (one in a black group and one in a non-black group did not make comment on their questionnaire) made specific mention of the way the athletes played, the "trash talking" on the court, or the "slam dunking". Twenty-nine of the respondents (17 of 23 non-blacks and 12 of 14 blacks) noticed the apparel ("the shoes", "the clothing", "Footlocker clothes") or the way the clothing was advertised. The following were typical comments made by blacks and non-blacks about the commercial's most prominent features and the story of the commercial:

[black respondent] In the commercial a bunch of guys are playing ball. They're shooting, dunking, jumping and trash talking.

[black respondent] In the commercial the boys are playing basketball, trash talking one another.

[non-black respondent] A player is shooting and cannot miss, and all the players are trash talking.

[non-black respondent] The dunks and trash talking.

[black respondent] The announcer is talking about basketball and the shoes are being shown after each basket and comment by the players.

[non-black respondent] People making baskets, wearing black shoes, short hair, it must be the shoes kinda thing.

Most other respondents simply identified the features that they found most prominent (e.g. "the shoes", "the clothes", "trash talking", "big dunks"). Some black and non-black respondents made special note of the race of the athletes in the commercials in their questionnaire responses. However, these responses were spread evenly across all groups, showing no emergent trends.

While these questionnaire responses showed a common cultural understanding of and interest in basketball, the focus group discussions that elaborated on these initial responses revealed interpretive differences between the black and non-black groups that focused on race. **Black** groups commented on and were aware of stereotyping during the Footlocker commercial. They commented that not all black kids were from a "lower class neighbourhood", and that the portrayal of "black people running around" as they do in the Footlocker commercial could lead people to think that they're "causing mischief or whatever, and that's the way black people are". There was also a recognition by black respondents that the commercials told people that "all we can do is play basketball". As noted in the previous thematic categories, this recognition of stereotyping was accompanied by a level of identification with the athletes in the commercials, with some respondents suggesting that the athletes in the commercials reminded them of themselves playing basketball.

These perceptions of stereotyping and identification with the athletes were not evident in the **non-black** focus group discussions. Although some non-black respondents noticed that the athletes were portrayed "in the ghetto" (8 of the 23 non-blacks made note of the "ghetto" or "playground" on the questionnaire) and that there were predominantly **black** athletes in the commercial (all groups recognized this in the focus group discussions), few indicated that these were stereotypical portrayals ("ya, that's what it's like", "cause black people try to act like that").

Although some respondents indicated that they wanted to play like the athletes, no respondents expressed the same sort of personal identification that characterized many black respondent perceptions. It seemed that the black and non-black groups "saw" the same prominent features, but had different perceptions of the cultural, social and personal significance of these same features.

Nike "Barber Shop" Commercial With Celebrity Athlete Chris Webber & Nike Barber Shop Commercial With Celebrity Athlete George "Ice Man" Gervin

The common setting and themes for these "barber shop" commercials resulted in similar responses and interpretations amongst all groups. For this reason, findings from both "barber shop" commercials (commercial numbers 2 and 5 in appendix D) are discussed here together. As above, black and non-black respondents reported similar features in these commercials in the commercial response questionnaires. *All* respondents in black and non-black groups made specific notice of the celebrity athletes shown in the commercials, most often referring to them by name. Other features noted by the respondents on their commercial response questionnaires and in the focus group discussions included "the dunk" and "the moves" that were shown in the Chris Webber commercial (14 of 14 blacks and 21 of 23 non-blacks said this was a "noticeable feature" or a part of "the story" on the questionnaires) and the "finger roll" and "the moves" that were shown in the "Ice Man" commercial (11 of 14 blacks and 16 of 23 non-blacks). On the questionnaires and in the focus group discussions, the dialogue of the athletes, the Nike sign, the shoes, and the barber shop setting were mentioned by several black *and* non-black respondents in *all* groups as noticeable features for both commercials. The following comments were typical of those made by black *and* non-black respondents about the Chris Webber commercial:

[black respondent] Chris Webber is telling the story of when he dunked over Charles Barkley.

[black respondent] The Barber Shop and the series of commercials in the barber shop.

[black respondent] Webber and Spreewell are in a barber shop talking about the dunk that he threw down on Barkley. They recreate the dunk in the shop, then Webber, his last quote.

[non-black respondent] Webber and Spreewell reenact a moment in Webber's career, in the barber shop.

[non-black respondent] the real NBA players like Chris Webber and Latrell Spreewell.

[non-black respondent] Webber and Spreewell are sitting in a barber shop talking about how Webber dunked over Barkley. Webber puts on a cape and pretends to dunk over Barkley. All while Spreewell adds extra dialogue.

Similarly, questionnaire responses below typified those made about the "Ice Man" commercial.

[black respondent] They are talking about when George Gervin used to play and they're showing his most spectacular moves as Tim Hardaway makes fun of him.

[black respondent] The finger roll move that the basketball player did (The Ice Man).

[black respondent] The way all of them are sitting around talking.

[non-black respondent] Tim recalling George Gervin's patented finger roll shot and as this is going on there are video clips of these shots.

[non-black respondent] George Gervin's line about the finger roll.

[non-black respondent] Again, it's a bunch of athletes, for present and retired, all gathered at a barber shop telling their do's and don'ts on the court and getting a good laugh out of it.

Many respondents simply identified the commercials' *most prominent features* without further explanation. The most common prominent features reported by both black and non-black respondents included: "the players", "the action clips", "the style of the Nike sign", "barber shop", "the shoes", "Chris Webber", "Latrell Spreewell", "Charles Barkley" and "humour". As noted previously, all groups recognized similar features and showed a common knowledge, understanding and recognition of the celebrity athletes and the "story of the commercial".

These noted similarities notwithstanding, the focus group interview responses that elaborated on these initial reactions showed that black and non-black groups interpreted the commonly identified prominent features in different ways. When asked if the commercials were realistic the **black** respondents indicated that it was a realistic portrayal of people just "hanging out". As one black respondent put it, "you know the way they just sit back and are talking about things. I know these guys like to a lot too (refers to other respondents)". Although the black groups also made note of the potential stereotypical consequences of these portrayals, these feelings did not seem to overly influence their inherent identification with the celebrity athletes.

The **non-black** respondents also felt that the "barber shop" commercials were realistic, but perceived this realism in a very different way. While the black respondents identified with the celebrity black athletes "hanging out" and "talking about things", the non-black respondents felt that the "barber shop" commercials were realistic because they had blacks in them. As one respondent put it, "the barber shop, is more like black". Other non-black respondents affirmed this interpretation.

you think of black guys hang out in a barber shop.

those are like traditional, like when you see a bunch of black guys in a barber shop, if there was white men [respondent shakes his head], it wouldn't fit.

These "raced" perceptions within all groups, black and non-black, were consistent with the emergent themes throughout this analysis. Here again, it seems that a common understanding of basketball culture by both black and non-black groups led most respondents to recognize common features in the commercial and to use similar language (e.g. "dunked over", trash talking") to describe these features. However, distinctive understandings of the significance and relevance of these features in "daily life" appeared to differentiate the meanings attributed to these features by the respondents.

Reebok Commercial with Celebrity Athlete Shaquille "Shaq" O'Neal

As in the previous commercials, respondents noticed similar prominent features and described the "story of the commercial" in similar ways. Ten of 14 blacks and 15 of 23 non-black respondents noticed the "dunks" and "moves" that "Shaq" was making in the commercial. The story that "Shaq" was telling throughout the commercial was referred to throughout the questionnaires and in all focus groups. The shoes "Shaq" was wearing or the "pump" on the shoes were mentioned on the questionnaires by 10 of 14 blacks and 15 of 23 non-blacks. The following comments were typical of those made by the black and non-black respondents:

[black respondent] Basically the Shaq talks about how he plays and how he plans to get better. He advertises the Reebok insta-pump shoe.

[black respondent] Shaq is playing basketball while he is talking about how great he thinks he will become in the NBA. Then he says his age, pumping up his shoes.

[black respondent] It shows Shaq dunking and showing off his shoes.

[non-black respondent] Shaq is telling us how people are saying "will he be good or not", "is he too young" etc. But he says he is only 22 years old so stick around and see.

[non-black respondent] The athlete is playing in an old gym on his own talking, almost bragging "bout how good he is at only 22 years of age". He pumps up his shoes, dunks a little and the Reebok logo is seen.

[non-black respondent] Shaq is dunking and talking about himself.

Interestingly, both black and non-black respondents indicated in the focus group sessions that the Shaquille O'Neal commercial was less appealing than the Nike "barber shop" commercials. Some black and non-black respondents made specific comments indicating that they disliked "Shaq" the athlete. In the two person black focus group, there was some disagreement (one respondent liked "Shaq" and the other did not), but overall this pattern was clearly dominant for the black and non-black groups. The following comments demonstrate this theme:

[black respondent] I'll never buy Shaq shoes, because I never try Reebok on because I hate Shaq...it's not because Reebok's not good, it's because Reebok's athletes, I don't like the way

they portray Shaq.

[black respondent] The Shaq one was stupid.

[Moderator's comment] Why?

[respondent continues] he's telling us how good he's gonna be... "21, stick around" [respondent is quoting from commercial], what does that have to do with Reebok, it makes no sense.

[black respondent] They tried to make it seem like he's superhuman [Shaq], like you can't reach his level, you know what I mean. Like "give me a couple of years and I'll do all this". They try and make it sound like he's better than he really is, you know. In that sense, you know, he's a regular player, he's a good player, but, you know, but he isn't like the greatest.

[non-black respondent] Shaq is lame.

[other respondent adds] he's a little over-confident if you ask me.

[other respondent continues] ya, he needs to work on his game, forget rapping man. He's got to get them a championship before he can start rapping.

[non-black respondent] the Shaq one, there's nothing happening in it. He's just pumping up his shoes.

[other respondent adds] he's an idiot, he's too cocky.

[other respondent continues] overrated.

[other respondent continues] he's 7 foot 2 or whatever, so he's good.

[non-black respondent] I don't want to see Shaquille O'Neal talk about himself.

[non-black respondent] everything I see of Shaquille O'Neal, he seems kind of conceded.

These comments showed a common perception of Shaquille O'Neal and the way he is portrayed in the commercial. These perceptions held for both black and non-black respondents despite his status as a black celebrity athlete (a status that led to interpretive differences between black and non-black respondents for other commercials). In this instance, it appeared that the social positioning of these respondents as adolescent basketball enthusiasts transcended race. However, the **black** respondents' general recognition of the stereotyping of blacks into the role of athletes should not be understated here. Clearly, black respondents interpreted the portrayal of black athletes in athletic apparel commercials differently. The fact that this is not referred to explicitly in the case of this Shaquille O'Neal commercial should not lead to false conclusions about the relative unimportance of racial identity in the respondents' interpretive strategies. On the

contrary, the theme of race throughout all black focus group sessions and the noted interpretive differences between black and non-black groups surrounding race in the other commercials featuring black athletes showed significant perceptual differences. These reported reactions to "the Shaq" commercial again reinforce the notion of a common understanding of basketball culture and suggest that there is shared vision of what makes an athletic apparel commercial and a professional athlete appealing to adolescent basketball enthusiasts.

Culturally Similar and Racially Distinct Interpretive Strategies: Comparative Overview

This analysis of respondent reactions to a sub-sample of athletic apparel commercials showed black and non-black respondents to have a common knowledge and understanding of basketball as a sport and basketball culture, but to have "raced" perceptions of the black athlete. This demonstrated how the interests of the adolescents as basketball enthusiasts and their social location as adolescents appeared to interact, forming culturally similar yet racially distinct interpretive strategies.

Section 3 Audience Statistics

Audience statistics obtained from The Sports Network (TSN) described audience composition for the NBA playoffs compared to the 24 hour average from A.C. Nielson ratings. This average was based on the CBC/CTV 93/94 6 week average viewing patterns for English television. The profile showed viewing rates by gender, age, education, household income, and occupation categories, although gender and age are the most relevant to this study (based on the limited information provided by TSN -- see appendix K). These statistics do not provide a complete audience profile. TSN would not or could not provide the actual number of viewers who watched the games, the ethnic/racial breakdown of viewers, the full gender breakdown, or

audience composition for Toronto or Vancouver. However, these statistics *do* show that males watch the NBA playoffs significantly more than they watch other television programming. They also show that for the age groups researched in this study, the NBA playoffs were watched comparatively more than other television programming (although there is no distinction between males and females except for the broader 18-34 male category). These are important findings to give context to the audience research that was done with a segment of this overall demographic group.

Table 9

Audience Composition for the NBA 1994 Playoffs -- Based on 6 Games

<u>Audience Composition</u>	<u>Conventional TV</u>	<u>NBA Playoffs</u>	<u>Index to Conventional TV</u>
Males (all ages)	46.9 %	77.3 %	165
Males (18-34)	12.0 %	40.9 %	341
Teens (12-17)-Male and Female	5.5 %	16.4 %	297
Adults (18-24)-Male and Female	6.3 %	18.2 %	287

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter summarizes the theoretical implications of the study results. It is important to note at the outset that the discussion that follows is based on my best "interpretations" of the study results, and relies heavily on my reading of the "connections between attitudes and perceptions" (Jhally and Lewis, 1992: 9) in the respondents' testimony. I discuss the contributions of these findings with the reservation that I cannot "know" what ideas and understandings the adolescent respondents derive from television content -- or as Jhally and Lewis put it, "we cannot perch inside people's brains" (1992: 9). By providing a corpus of relevant data to support my interpretations, I have allowed for alternate explanations.

Theoretical Implications of Study Results for Social Inequality Literature

Social inequality research that addresses the impacts of stereotypical television portrayals of minorities suggests that these portrayals reinforce preexisting beliefs about blacks in a white audience, offer new information to a white audience when no previous information exists, and lead to identification with same race characters (Atkin, Greenberg and McDermott, 1983; Vidmar and Rokeach, 1974; Greenberg and Atkin, 1982, Eastman and Liss, 1981; Liss 1981, Dates, 1980). Other studies conclude that stereotypical portrayals induce feelings of low self-esteem for black audiences (McDermott and Greenberg, 1985; Graves, 1980; Meyer, Donahue and Henke, 1978). Wonsek's (1992) analysis of black portrayals in commercial messages during college basketball television broadcasts led her to theorize that these portrayals perpetuated "the image of the young black male as athlete only", potentially reinforcing rather than negating stereotypes of black males (1992: 460). Wonsek went on to suggest that stereotypical portrayals

of blacks in athletic apparel commercials (specifically those where blacks use "street talk" and are shown in the inner city) reinforced perceived differences between blacks and whites (1992: 457). These conceptions were summarized in Wonsek's conclusion that "in the historical and contemporary racist culture of the US... a likely audience inference might be that blacks are 'naturally inferior', 'naturally' threatening and 'naturally' athletic" (1992: 457).

There are diverse theories that address the potential impacts of non-stereotypical portrayals of blacks on the viewing audience. From one standpoint, non-stereotypical portrayals are believed to dismantle racial inequality and stereotyping in a way that allows "white America to view black folk as human beings" (Dyson, 1989: 29). Non-stereotypical portrayals in this view are considered to be "media representations of successful and attractive black people who white people can respect, admire, and even identify with" (Lewis, 1991: 65). For black viewers, these portrayals are thought to lead to a celebration of black culture and reinforce a common cultural identity based on race (Lewis, 1991: 180). The contrary standpoint holds that non-stereotypical portrayals may lead to a false sense of social equality for many white viewers (Lewis, 1991). Wenner (1994), for example, theorizes about the potential impacts of television commercial portrayals of celebrity black athletes as non-stereotypical "role model" figures, suggesting that these commercials "encapsulate the widespread social belief that there is a strong correspondence between sport participation and social mobility", and position the reader to "embrace a cultural belief that is at odds with what seems to be actually happening" (Wenner, 1994: 40). Wenner also suggests that celebrity black athletes are used as heroes of social acceptability in a society with few black role models outside of sport. White and black "readers" can be comfortable with these athletes breaking "small but critical social acceptability rules in these commercials" without actually addressing larger issues of black representation (1994: 41). More generally,

research on the "ethnic preferences" of readers and audiences to black portrayals in print and television advertising suggests that the characters' ethnicity does not alter audience views (Jones, 1984; Soley, 1983; Barry and Hansen, 1973).

The results of this thesis study have theoretical implications relevant to the noted literature. This study found that the interviewed black adolescents saw the portrayal of blacks in all areas of television programming to be stereotypically concentrated in the roles of athlete, criminal and entertainer. Some black respondents suggested that these portrayals could lead white audiences to think that "that's the way black people are", while convincing black people "that all we can do is play basketball". For these respondents, stereotypical portrayals were thought to impact the way others (and more specifically white people) perceived them as blacks. The black respondents' perceptions of racism in their everyday lives, and their descriptions of how whites view blacks stereotypically support this claim. This finding brings a different perspective to Greenberg's and Atkin's (1985) theory that negative stereotypical portrayals of blacks negatively impact the self-esteem of black adolescents. In this instance, the black portrayals did not appear to impact self-esteem so much as they reinforced the reality of a racist society for these youth. The issue here is not so much whether self-esteem is impacted, but more that the black adolescents' everyday experiences with and perceptions of the dominant white racial group are altered because of media portrayals of blacks. These findings imply theoretically that stereotypically negative portrayals of blacks have a more broad based impact on these adolescents' with respect to race and racism.

This thesis study also found that some non-black audiences saw the portrayals of black athletes in athletic apparel commercials and in other television programming to be realistic, while other respondents did not know how realistic these portrayals were because of their inexperience

with blacks. Those who found the commercials to be realistic, explained the realism in terms of how blacks play basketball, or how blacks act "on the court". The respondents had trouble describing how blacks were portrayed in other areas of television programming, but were very aware of how black *athletes* were portrayed, making specific references to commercial advertising and televised basketball games. The respondents' inability to describe what "real life" blacks were like in any other terms besides what they had seen on television or on the basketball court suggested that the media certainly played a part in "informing" these non-black adolescent respondents about black people. This supports Jhally and Lewis' (1992) work on white audience reactions to black portrayals in *The Cosby Show*, and their suggestion that the line between the TV world and the world beyond the screen has, for most people, become exceedingly hazy. These findings also reinforce the popular theorization (outlined previously) that black television portrayals offer new information to a white, or in this case, non-black audience that has little previous experience with or information about blacks. In this instance, the existing theory on the impacts of black television portrayals is informed by this analysis of non-black adolescent males with little or no experience with blacks, a group that was not targeted specifically in the noted studies.

The interviews showed that non-black respondents felt that they (as non-blacks) were very different from the black athletes in the commercials. They made specific references to "the way they (the black athletes) talked", and to the black athletes' distinct basketball "style" (referring to the black basketball players' superior jumping ability and "dunking" ability). These findings have valuable theoretical implications. They sustain the notion described in "experimental" studies that stereotypical portrayals of blacks appear to reinforce stereotypical beliefs about blacks in a non-black audience. The non-black respondents' recollection of blacks on television

in few roles other than that of "athlete" uphold Wonsek's (1992) notion that the portrayal of blacks during televised basketball broadcasts may "perpetuate the image of young black male(s) as athlete only" (1992: 460). The findings also support Wonsek's (1992) suggestion that stereotypical black athlete portrayals reinforce perceived differences between blacks and whites. Although the results do not support or contradict her proposition that audiences infer from these portrayals that blacks are "naturally" inferior, the commercials are consistent with the respondents' belief that blacks are "naturally" more athletic. These are important findings and significantly inform the existing theory considering that Wonsek's postulations are based on content analysis research, not audience research, as in this thesis.

This study also contributes theoretically to social inequality literature on the impacts of non-stereotypical portrayals of blacks on blacks. The results outlined previously show that most black respondents identified with and celebrated the accomplishments of black athletes. Although celebrity athlete portrayals were considered stereotypical in some respects (in that they were "athletes"), they were judged non-stereotypical in the sense that the athletes were celebrities in society where blacks seldom reach this status. These findings are consistent with Lewis and Jhally's (1992) work on black audience reactions to non-stereotypical portrayals of blacks, reinforcing their theoretical stance.

In this study, most black respondents indicated that they preferred to watch black athletes in athletic apparel commercials because of a common cultural bond with the athletes and the preferable playing "style" of the athletes. A few black respondents indicated that the race of the athlete did not matter as long as the athletes were "good players", although these respondents acknowledged that there were few "good white players". These findings that show same race identification and preference are *not* consistent with previous work on "ethnic preferences" of

readers and audiences for black portrayals in television *advertising*, that showed that the character's ethnicity did not appear to alter audience views (Jones, 1984; Soley, 1983; Barry and Hansen, 1973). However, these findings would tentatively support previous research that showed blacks and whites tend to prefer same race television shows and characters (Greenberg and Atkin, 1982; Liss, 1981; Eastman and Liss, 1980). In this way, this study's findings broaden the established theoretical position, by describing the reactions of black adolescent males to black athlete portrayals and to television advertising. Also of value was the use of audience ethnography methodology to inform the more experimental approaches employed previously for other audience groups.

In discussions about the celebrity athlete's status as a role model, some black respondents described their desire to become a professional basketball player, like these sport stars. However, all respondents recognized the barriers faced by those who aspired to be a professional athlete, and did not expect to "make it". This recognition of the myth of social mobility is especially important in light of Wenner (1994) and Wonsek's (1992) theorizations about the potentially negative influence of celebrity black athlete role models who seem to fulfill the myth. However, the social class of the black respondents (generally middle class to working class) may have come into play here. The respondents were relatively well provided for and it makes sense that less well to do youth from inner city projects (whose opportunities for upward mobility are severely limited) would have different interpretations and understandings of these portrayals. This issue, however, was not specifically addressed in this study. I can only claim that the results of the present study amend Wonsek and Wenner's theorizations (that are not based on audience research) by showing that the myth of social mobility, while reinforced somewhat by the celebrity black athlete, is not a destructive influence for all black adolescent male audiences.

The reactions of non-black respondents to non-stereotypical portrayals of blacks also have theoretical implications. The non-black responses suggested that most respondents saw black people in the commercials and in "real life" to be different from white people. References were made to the distinctly "black" language, the distinctly "black" settings, and the distinctly "black" basketball playing "style". The non-black respondents described cultural and in some cases physical differences between blacks and whites. Despite these perceived differences, the non-black respondents expressed admiration for the celebrity athletes. The non-blacks suggested that they sometimes imitated how the athletes acted and played when they were on the court. They also preferred the commercials that featured black celebrity athletes, a preference based on the exciting playing style that they associated with black players.

Although it appears the non-black respondents "view(ed) black folk as human beings", as Dyson (1989: 29) has suggested, it must be emphasized that the admiration shown by the respondents was embedded within an overriding understanding of racial difference between blacks and whites. In some cases, these differences were considered to be "natural", especially when describing athletic ability. This hardly challenged, let alone dismantled racial inequality. The non-black respondents' lack of knowledge about racism outside of Vancouver and the references made by some respondents to "racism" against whites suggest that some non-blacks may see the portrayals of black celebrity athletes as symbols of social equality, and the over-representation of blacks in athletic apparel commercials to be "reverse racism". However, to conclude that non-stereotypical portrayals led white viewers to a false assumption of social equality would be to overstate these results, given the respondents accompanying awareness of racism toward "immigrants" in Canada. More likely, these respondents were comfortable with these depicted athletes breaking "small but critical social acceptance rules in these commercials"

without actually addressing the larger issues associated with black athletes and race, as Wenner (1994: 41) theorizes. Again, the study findings inform Wenner's work by using audience research to clarify suggestions that were based on content/semiotic analysis.

Theoretical Implications for Literature on Youth Culture and Popular Culture

There are diverse theories that deal with how audience "tastes" and "interpretations" of media texts relate to the demographic makeup of the audience. Some researchers suggest that certain forms of popular culture "appear to transcend boundaries of social class, race, gender, educational level, and nearly every other demographic marker" (Lull, 1985: 215). Other research shows a direct connection between taste, lifestyle and social position (Bourdieu, 1984).

These theorizations have particular relevance when considering the impacts of "popular culture" oriented commercial advertising on youth subcultures. Ethnographic research on youth sub-cultures shows how youth actively construct meaning, identity and lifestyle through their consumption of television, advertising, music and clothing (Willis, 1990; Hebdige, 1979). For example, this kind of approach has been used to analyze the importance of the "running shoe" in contemporary popular culture. Incidents of violence among youth over running shoes, the observed obsession with the "sneaker" among certain youth sub-cultures, and the prevalence of the running shoe in popular movies, music videos and "popular" advertising, such as athletic apparel commercials have lead some authors to suggest that the sneaker has become part of a popular style "that would reach teenagers everywhere" (Feniak, 1991: F7).

Unresolved within this research, however, is the question of the extent to which demographic variables such as race and gender figure into the processes of cultural acquisition, adaptation and expression. Willis (1992: 8) suggests that the ways in which black youth negotiate "what it means to be a black person in a white culture" are pluralistic and differ from culture to culture

and individual to individual. Majors (1990: 111) proposes that the emergence of an expressive demeanor (such conspicuous ways of walking talking, dressing and speaking) among black males is a reaction to their alienation within an institutionally racist society. This "cool pose" is also manifested in sport, where black males demonstrate an expressive style of play that encompasses grace and agility as well as aggression. These behaviors are believed to act as resistance against the dominant white culture.

Some authors argue that athletic apparel companies take advantage of these youth (Feniak, 1991; Buchignani, 1990), and that commercial advertising has negative, if unintentional consequences for youth (Leiss, Kline and Jhally, 1990). Sociologist Brian Petrie in particular is cited as saying that athletic apparel companies delude youth into "thinking they can achieve their dreams by putting out good money" to the point where, "in the States anyway, if you can't afford them , you steal them" (Buchignani, 1990: A4). He considers this to be immoral as youth are "the audience with the greatest gullibility and the least amount of money" (Buchignani, 1990: A4).

In this study, black and non-black respondents showed common understandings of and preferences for athletic apparel commercials and the athletes featured in them. These results support Lull's (1985) notion that the athletic apparel commercial, as popular culture, may transcend demographic markers such as race. The findings inform Lull's work (work that focused on popular music) by discussing television advertising as the medium being "used" by these adolescents and by showing commonality among groups of blacks and non-blacks. This study also broadens Bourdieu's understanding of the connection between social position, lifestyle and taste by showing how these groups of male adolescents from a variety of social classes (within and between groups), who hold a different social position based on their races,

still had a similar interest in and understanding of (although limited by race) in basketball. This would reinforce the notion that there is a particular dynamic within popular youth culture (as Lull suggests) that may differ from the class-oriented study that Bourdieu based his theorization on, a dynamic that is conducive to a more universal youth "taste culture".

Focus group discussions about the commercials also showed that blacks have a culturally based identification with and support for black celebrity athletes that non-blacks did not show. Many black respondents also appeared to be influenced in their everyday "style" by these commercials and the celebrity athletes in them, while non-blacks, who adulated the celebrity athletes as basketball players did not appear to be influenced to the same extent or in the same way. These results help clarify Lull's (1985) work by showing how shared tastes, interpretations and interests can be mixed with distinctly "raced" understandings of a popular culture.

The distinct interpretations evident from the black groups responses in this study provide insight into the "negotiations" (Willis, 1990) that these adolescents make as a result of their social positioning as blacks in a white culture, and combined with their "tastes" and demographic characteristics. Similarly, the reactions made by the non-black groups allow us to understand how they are positioned as based on their own unique circumstances. These results give us a sense of how both groups of adolescents are positioned culturally within a broader framework of youth culture surrounding basketball. Much like Morley (1980), who constructed a picture of 'the British people' in their diversity in the *Nationwide* project, this research has positioned two groups of adolescents within a common "cultural map" of expression. Although the media genre and audiences studied were different for this study (Morley's studies looked at adult British audiences and a news programme) the theoretical formulations of Morley, who was interested in

seeing how different audiences interpreted the same media text are informed by this picture of adolescent culture.

The black respondents' identification with the "style" (playing style and mannerisms shown in the barber shop Nike commercials) and attitudes demonstrated by the black celebrity athletes, the respondents' pride in their distinctly "black" clothing, and the animosity shown by some respondents toward white adolescents who try to appropriate this black style (described by one black group as "wiggers"), supports Majors' (1990) views on the "cool pose" as resistance through distinctiveness. The black respondents' perceptions of society as inherently racist towards black people were also consistent with Majors' view of black "style" as oppositional to the dominant white culture.

The commentary by both black and non-black respondents suggested that athletic apparel commercials and the celebrity athletes they feature were both influential. For the black respondents, it appeared that having "the right" athletic apparel and shoes was absolutely necessary in order to "fit in" with an appropriate peer group. In this sense, athletic apparel advertising appeared to play an active part in creating a culture for black youth whereby expensive running shoes and athletic clothing were requirements. Some black respondents indicated that the high price for athletic apparel is a problem for some adolescents. Although this was not expanded upon by the respondents, the acknowledged pressure to own athletic apparel was the sort of social pressure referred to by Petrie (Buchignani, 1990) when he suggested that popular culture-oriented commercial messages could lead to violence and crime among youth. However, there was no tangible evidence in these interviews to directly support these theorizations. In fact, the respondents, although influenced by the commercials, were not ignorant of how the commercials are designed to target youth. Some respondents were actually

critical of this. They made specific references to "what they are trying to do" in the commercials, and the associations the advertisers are trying to make.

The non-black respondents admitted to buying the shoes advertised in the commercials as well as to mimicking the celebrity athletes on court style. The running shoe appeared to be part of their "culture", but did not appear to have the same distinct meaning for them as that noted by the black respondents. The social pressure noted by Petrie was not present. In this instance, the commercials appeared to be influential for these non-black youth (as well as black youth), but not to the point where Petrie's notions were upheld.

Theoretical Implications for the Interpretive Community Framework

In this study, I have attempted to engage a number of issues surrounding Radway's (1991) notion of the "interpretive community". Radway examined the relationship between social location and the interpretive strategies of a "community" of romance readers. She argued that, "whatever the theoretical possibility of an infinite number of readings (might be), in fact, there are patterns of regularities to what viewers and readers bring to texts in large part because they acquire specific cultural competencies as a consequence of their particular social location" (1991: 8). Radway went on to suggest that similar readings are produced because, "similarly located readers learn a similar set of reading strategies and interpretive codes that they bring to bear upon the texts they encounter" (1991: 8). A limitation of Radway's work was that she could not explain how "social determination operated with respect to the larger activity of romance reading" (1991: 8). Also, she failed to explain how membership in the romance reading community was constituted.

The focus of this thesis on race as a demographic marker among adolescent male basketball enthusiasts helps clarify some of Radway's theorizations. In particular, the finding that black

and non-black respondents had similar interpretations of and used similar language when describing the “story” and “prominent features” of the athletic commercials demonstrated a common “cultural competency” among these respondents with respect to basketball. However, because the “meaning” of these basic interpretations differed for black and non-black groups, the study also showed how interpretive strategies are culturally circumscribed. Black respondents identified with the black athletes “style” and manner, while the non-black respondents identified with the athletes as basketball players only. As well, the basketball shoe appeared to have richer significance within the “interpretive community” of the black respondents, who described the importance of the shoe as a fundamental part of their day to day dress code. The non-black respondents wore the same shoes, but did not actively describe the shoe's importance with the same level of enthusiasm or interest as the black respondents. The black respondents also showed a cultural support for the black celebrity athletes as “blacks”. Furthermore, the concern and awareness shown by black respondents for the social stereotyping inherent in black athlete portrayals in television contrasted strongly with the non-black respondents who did not comment particularly on stereotypes in the commercials or on television.

The cultural competencies shared by black and non-black respondents for basketball and basketball culture supports Radway's (1991) conception of the “interpretive community”. Yet, the social location of these respondents (black males and non-black males with little experience with blacks) appeared to lead to important interpretations when the “meanings” of their shared interests in the commercials were explored, especially when the topic of race was introduced. This gives some clarification to Radway's question of how “social determination operates” with respect to the larger activity of, in this case, watching athletic apparel commercials that feature black athletes. It would appear that differences in cultural experience connecting with race

served to shape two different interpretive groups within the study (blacks and non-blacks) and that these two groups actually comprised two “interpretive communities” despite their common interests in and similar interpretations of the commercials. In the end, the “negotiated” culture of the black respondents served to overturn the reading of the commercials offered by the non-black respondents.

Social Inequality, Youth Culture, Popular Culture and the Interpretive Community: An Integrative Assessment of Literatures and Frameworks

Having described the relevance of the study results *within* the noted literatures and theoretical frameworks, it is necessary to assess the integrative capacity of these findings *between* these literatures and theories. In doing so, the use of audience ethnography as a research tool for studying social inequality, popular culture, youth culture and interpretive strategy can be assessed in a more comprehensive and broad-based manner.

The most obvious demonstration of these integrative possibilities can be seen in the “raced” perceptions of the black and non-black respondents that were evident throughout the analysis. These perceptions were the root of the diverse notions of race and racism, the varying influences of the celebrity black athlete, the different understandings and reactions to black television portrayals, and the distinct interpretations of the athletic apparel commercials. Evidently, the respondents’ experiences as media audiences, as basketball enthusiasts, as consumers of popular advertising and clothing, and as adolescent males were shaped by their social location as blacks and non-blacks. In this way, the current study showed how *practically*, these experiences and perceptions were inseparable. In the same way, the literatures addressing media audiences, interpretive strategy, popular culture and race are *theoretically* inseparable. Although the study

findings have relevance for the literatures independently, these results illustrate the natural integration of the literatures within the larger discipline of cultural studies.

The point here is that this audience ethnography showed how in everyday life (as in the noted literatures), youth culture, popular culture, social inequality and ways of seeing (interpretive strategy) all interact. In essence, these literatures are overlaying statements about the same thing -- social conditions and people's experiences of, within and through these conditions. This is important methodologically, if one hopes to evaluate the extant depth of certain social problems and conditions, and theoretically, in terms of gaining a richer understanding of study results.

Content Analysis Evaluation and Audience Statistics Evaluation

Previous research has shown that blacks have been ignored, underrepresented, or depicted in stereotypical roles in all areas of television (Greenberg and Brand, 1994; Greenberg, 1986). Studies have also shown blacks to be over-represented in minor roles and under-represented in major roles when compared proportionately to whites (Greenberg, 1986; Seggar et. al., 1981; Weigal et. al., 1980; Gerbner and Signorielli, 1979). In television commercial messages, blacks are better represented (usually about 20 percent of all figures), but these blacks are more often background figures, receiving less air-time and rarely interacting with whites (Weigal et. al., 1980). Wonsek's (1992) study of black representation during the 1988 NCAA tournament showed "black images" to be present in 19.27% of the commercials, with 9.45% of the commercials having major black spokespersons or images. Black images and spokesperson's are substantially over-represented only in the athletic apparel commercial category. These findings are the basis for her theorization that these portrayals perpetuate "the image of the young black male as athlete only" (Wonsek, 1992: 460). Wonsek also refers to sociologist Harry Edward's explanation as to why blacks are not used in commercial advertisements:

Ad men will tell you that for years an unwritten law of their business ran--"If a black man peddles it, regardless of who he is, whites won't buy it" (Edwards, 1969: 23).

The content analysis results tend to be consistent with this previous research. Blacks were highly represented in athletic apparel, sport drink/soft drink and armed forces commercial types while being shown considerably less often in all other commercial types. Blacks and whites were shown together in a high percentage of the commercials, although this statistic does not allow for comment on the interaction of blacks and whites in the commercials. Celebrity black *athletes* were also over-represented as television commercial spokespersons during both the NCAA and NBA tournaments. White celebrity spokespersons included athletes, entertainers, sportscaster, and coaches. A question that needs to be addressed here is why the advertisers positioned blacks, whites, Asians and other ethnic groups in this way. Harry Edward's observation that advertisers believe whites won't buy what a black person sells does not hold up with respect to athletic apparel commercial advertising. In this commercial genre, it is quite clear that celebrity basketball players who are black are in fact appealing to a youth market segment of both blacks and non-blacks. This market reality has obviously been discovered and is being exploited by companies such as Nike (Feniak, 1991). The issue of this thesis is not marketing strategy of course, but the unintended consequences of this strategy. The content analysis research in the thesis sets a context for audience research in the area and supports the findings of other content analyses televised sports events dealing with race and televised sports events.

Just as the overall content analysis data gave context to the athletic apparel commercial product category, the attained audience statistics gave context to the sample of black adolescent male basketball enthusiasts. The statistics showed how the adolescent male age group watches significantly more televised basketball than other age groups, and compared to their own

averages for other television programming. These results contextualize this study, showing how the sample of adolescents used here were part of a larger group of adolescents who have similar viewing interests. Although the results do not allow for specific generalizations to other adolescent audiences, these findings bring attention to the potential impacts of athletic apparel commercial portrayals of blacks (noted previously) on a proportionately large audience of adolescent male basketball enthusiasts.

Issues In Marketing Practice

Athletic apparel companies make lucrative profits by using celebrity athlete spokespersons and by "capitalizing on the images and myths of basketball" (Wonsek, 1992: 457). These companies actively and purposefully construct a segment of mass consumer culture through their advertising campaigns (Strasser and Beckland, 1991; Katz, 1993) that influence popular culture and social conditions. Many argue that it is unreasonable to hold athletic apparel companies responsible for their customers. As social psychologist Harold Kassarian of UCLA queries, "is what the shoe companies are doing any different than Mattel selling toys on Saturday morning television...the world doesn't need \$200 sneakers, but it doesn't need Hostess twinkies either" (Barrett et. al., 1989). Nike representatives reinforce this idea, arguing that they are not trying to find a *black* basketball player specifically, but that black athletes, at this period in time, are the primary high profile athletes in basketball (York, 1991). As Nike advertising representative Dan Weiden indicated when discussing the racial implications of using celebrity black athletes to sell apparel, "I'm not going to put a lawyer in basketball shoes and try and sell you basketball shoes" (York, 1991).

Despite these arguments, it is quite clear that there are impacts from television portrayals of racial groups that need to be accounted for. Such accounts need to theorize these impacts in

terms of a text-reader (or in this instance, a television commercial-adolescent male viewer) interaction. The assumption here is that the nature of television's influence on the viewer depends upon the "viewers' thoughts, interests and opinions before they sit down in front of the screen" (Jhally and Lewis, 1992: 9). Considering this, I will suggest how the study results can be a base for practical action that encompass both those that watch the television (and commercials), and those that control it. However, these practical implications should not be taken out of context. The sort of problems that are being addressed in this study are embedded in the very fabric of our culture. These will not be "solved", but addressed with hopes of educating and enlightening society to existing social problems.

With this in mind, it is important to look at how non-black respondents can be better educated on race and racism while looking at how black respondents can be relieved of these all too real perceptions of racism. Although it is unrealistic to think that ignorance about race and racism can be overcome except by gradual and systematic changes, by emphasizing education about social inequality and the structured oppression of blacks (including the problems associated with blacks and sport) more progress can be made. For athletic apparel companies, this means sponsoring public service messages (as some already do) that educate the public about black culture and about socially structured racism that leads to assumptions about "natural" differences between blacks and whites. This also means showing non-black viewers that being black doesn't mean being an athlete or hanging out in a barber shop or playing basketball in an inner city playground. Non-black viewers arguably should be more informed of the system of social conditions that are at the root of these differences. Although some non-black respondents in this study acknowledged that one's culture depends very much on where one grows up, and that there are social problems that exist, unfounded perceptions of difference were evident.

In a broader context, I support Jhally and Lewis' challenge for those who control network television to broadcast the "unpopular" or unconventional television stories that deal with working class black people, with crime or poverty or joblessness or broken families or drug addiction (1992: 144). Programming implemented with the intention of educating the public on these issues, instead of typecasting blacks in "popular" programming as criminals, entertainers or athletes (or in the case of *The Cosby Show*, non-stereotypical roles that potentially "enlighten" racism) would be desirable. By broadening the spectrum of television programming that gives realistic descriptions of the black experience, the myth of "black male as athlete only" could be alleviated. However, these "unpopular or unconventional messages" have not yet been proven financially profitable in a commercial advertising format, and will likely not be adopted until they are.

As well as educating a non-black audience, it is important to continue public service announcements (such as those sponsored by the NBA and the NCAA) that address issues such as staying in school, drug use and alcohol abuse. The results of this study showed that for some blacks these are an effective means of reinforcing important messages. However, Wonsek (1992) suggests that, "to a receptive, dominant and racist group these messages can contribute to an overall image that blacks cause the problem" (1992: 458). According to Wonsek, associating black spokespersons with these problems leads the "dominant racist group" to think that these are "black" problems, further reinforcing stereotypes. While Wonsek's theorization should not lead to the elimination of an otherwise effective campaign, it does alert us to a potential problem that can only be addressed within a larger educational campaign.

Even though social inequality is embedded in and perpetuated by a system that maintains the dominant class, by constructing alternative racial portrayals in the media, attention can be

focused usefully and constructively on racial issues. For real progress to be made of course, race and racism will need to be addressed in all social institutions.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis addressed concerns about the negative impacts of black television portrayals on the audience, and the influences of television advertising on the viewer. Within these larger issues, the study investigated specific concerns that black athlete portrayals in athletic apparel commercials reinforce the myth of social mobility through sport for a black adolescent audience while leading a non-black audience to see the black as “athlete only”. The project explored the impacts of the athletic apparel commercial as “popular culture” on adolescent viewers. This study also examined what different audiences actually “see” when they watch television, and assessed how the “social location” and “tastes” of viewers might lead to similar or different interpretations of the same media text.

While the study results informed work in social inequality, youth and popular culture and interpretive theory in their own right, the underlying patterns that connect race, culture and interpretation have particular relevance for the cultural studies discipline as a whole. The focus group results showed that the respondents had both “raced” perceptions and culturally similar understandings. The similar cultural locations of these youth as males, adolescents and basketball enthusiasts appeared to be mediated by their racial differences. These results demonstrated in a broader context how “culture” is the construct of everyday living and is the foundation for our most common understandings, a fundamental concept in cultural studies research. The assessment of this negotiation using focus groups and questionnaires showed the utility of audience ethnography as an interpretive research tool for assessing the in-depth understandings about culture and race as described by the audience, and for informing researcher-based theorizations about media content.

Recommendations for Further Study

Over the course of this thesis project, potential improvements for this study were identified and other areas of relevant research that could extend this work were noted. Based on these, I have outlined a series of recommendations for future audience research.

- a) Research focused on how groups of black and non-black adolescents from a similar geographic area perceive black athlete portrayals would be a valuable extension on the current study. This would provide insights into how "youth culture" is perceived by groups with more similar environmental influences. Of course, the purpose of the non-black group interviews in this study was to understand the impacts of black athlete portrayals on non-black respondents who have little experience with blacks. Several interpretive differences between black and non-black groups were attributed to race in this instance. Although these theorizations are well justified, the next step would be to evaluate the responses of non-black respondents who have significant experience with blacks and have similar environmental influences. This would further clarify the noted interpretive differences.
- b) A more intense investigation of same race, but different class, interpretive differences (differences that were rarely noted in this study) would also be valuable. While this study did account for class by recruiting groups of friends whose backgrounds and "social locations" were similar, the interpretive differences within groups with dissimilar backgrounds appeared minimal, and the sorts of interpretive differences surrounding race issues appeared to have little to do with class differences across racial groups. The recommended investigation could better evaluate these findings.
- c) An investigation of the perceptions of black athlete portrayals made by different social classes of black adolescents would also be valuable. This would allow for a better understanding of how

social class impacts perceptions of social mobility through sport and identification with celebrity athletes. Popular journalism and research would lead one to hypothesize that lower class black adolescents, who grow up with limited opportunity, would be more likely to see sport as the only avenue to success, and that the celebrity athletes would be more important to them as role models (Messner, 1991; Rudman, 1986). Some have also suggested that the celebrity athletes influence would be greater for adolescents in inner city, single parent families where the celebrity athlete takes the place of the father as a role model (Buchignani, 1990). A study of black adolescents that is based on class could evaluate these theorizations.

Recommendations that deal with more methodological aspects of the study are listed below:

- a) It would be beneficial to decrease the number of commercials shown in the focus groups research sessions from 6 to 4. In the sessions conducted for this study, the adolescent respondents began to get restless near the end of the commercial viewing segment, and gave less inspired written comments on the commercial response questionnaires at this time. The extra time would also be useful for discussion, and the focus group interview could be more focused using fewer commercials.
- b) A better sampling strategy would limit the total number of commercials used in the content analysis portion of the study (especially the NBA playoffs analysis). Emergent trends became very clear at about 500 commercials, and the remaining analysis became repetitive and burdensome.
- c) It would be useful to recruit a team of coders from different racial backgrounds (preferably a black person, white person and an Asian person) to conduct the content analysis. Although issues of "what is an identifiable person" were addressed by the two white coders in this study, seldom was there disagreement about "what specific features make a black person black", or

"how 'black' does a black person have to be". These are important questions raised by sociologists in studies that compare racial groups and they could be addressed more fully if different race coders were recruited. This is not to discredit the current study findings, but to suggest potential improvements on an otherwise methodologically sound content analysis.

d) A content analysis that measures time on screen for each character in addition to the information attained in this study would be particularly informative and equally objective compared to the strategy used here. However, the suggested strategy would be far more time consuming and complicated. This strategy would be preferable for studies that focus exclusively on the commercial contents. It was not a reasonable consideration for this study that was primarily concerned with audience reactions to commercial content. This "time-on-screen" method would effectively take into consideration some of Greenberg's (1986, :175) criticisms of content analysis studies, specifically his suggestion that most content work overstates trends of black representation (especially in television commercials) by merely counting faces, and not accounting for the minimal air-time that blacks receive.

In general, the analytic protocol used in this study allowed for the effective attainment of the desired information. I recommend the small focus group methodology for other audience researchers, especially those studying adolescents. Ultimately, the importance of the attained results for assessing theorizations made by text-based researchers (those who do not address the audience) lends further support to Morley's (1980) vision of creating a "cultural map" of media audiences using audience ethnography methodology. In this way, distinct perceptions, cultural based understandings and demographically and culturally based understandings of media content by diverse audience segments could be compared and assessed.

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APPENDIX A

Protocol For Selecting NBA and NCAA Games for Content Analysis

For NCAA Tournament Games:

-all televised games from the 3rd round onwards were used for analysis

For NBA Playoff Games:

A) all games were divided into 4 time slots according to the broadcast times of the game starts:

1) "early morning"-9:00 am to 11:30 am game starts 2) "midday"-12:00 pm to 2:30 pm game starts 3) "mid, late-afternoon"-3:00-5:30 pm game starts 4) "early evening"-6:00 pm on game starts

B) a proportionate sample from each time slot was chosen : 1) 4 out of 6 "early morning" 2) 6 out of 9 "midday" 3) 4 out of 7 "mid, late afternoon" 4) 4 out of 6 "early evening"

Rationale

This sampling protocol (for the NBA playoff games) was based on Sparks (1993) sampling of television programming for active lifestyle messages in national consumer brand advertising, which was designed to sample a range of time slots, while reducing over-representation and redundancy of television contents in the overall sample. The NCAA tournament sample was more inclusive but yielded a similar number of games overall (n=13).

APPENDIX B

Content Analysis Protocol : The following categories were used in the content analysis. These categories measure the number of blacks and whites shown in all commercials during sampled NCAA tournament games and the NBA playoff games. This was the basis for an in-depth analysis of one product category (athletic apparel commercials) that was interpreted by audience groups (black and non-black adolescents).

Product Category: The type of product or service the commercial is advertising is named. These categories are derived from a set of product description categories adapted from materials provided by a **Media Measurement Services** group in Markham Ontario. These categories were previously used for research on active lifestyle advertising (Sparks, 1993). More general categories were created after the analysis to allow for simpler data summary.

Commercial Code #: Each commercial type was given a specific code # (derived from the Media Measurement Services group mentioned above) to allow for cross category comparisons using relational database software.

Commercial Description: A brief description of the commercial was recorded for analysis purposes, to allow easy identification of repeat commercials.

Product: This category was checked if no identifiable people were in the commercial.

Afro-Canadian/American Presence: The number of identifiable African Canadians or African Americans in the commercial.

Anglo-European Presence: The number of identifiable Anglo-Europeans in the commercial.

Asian and Other: The number of identifiable characters who are not Afro-Canadian/American or Anglo-European in the commercial.

Cannot Determine: The number of characters whose race is not identifiable in the commercial.

Note: The *product category* were used to identify athletic apparel commercials within the overall sample. A subset of athletic apparel commercials were selected for the focus group sessions (see appendix C and D).

APPENDIX C

The following is an outline of the protocol used for choosing the sub-sample of athletic apparel commercials.

Picking The Sub-Sample Of Athletic Apparel Commercials

The sub-sample of Athletic Apparel commercials (for focus group viewing) was selected on the following basis:

- 1) i) Commercials were divided into two broad categories according to **communicative form/style** of the commercial as follows:
 - a) **predominantly narrative**-talking or "story telling" were the main forms of communication (action scenes might be shown but were not the dominant form of communication)
 - b) **predominantly activity**-action scenes showed athletes displaying the message (often with an accompanying descriptive narrative, although this was not the dominant form of communication)
- ii) Commercials within these categories were sub-divided into two other "**value-categories**" as follows:
 - a) commercials emphasizing a "**style**" and "**attitude**" associated with basketball including how to look, how to talk, how to act-
-this style and "attitude" could either be talked about explicitly or demonstrated (through activity or athletes that demonstrated these characteristics)
 - b) commercials emphasizing **playing hard, dedication** to sport
-these can also be demonstrated or talked about
- 2) commercial required major **black character/image** present
- 3) a **proportionate** number of commercials from each category will be chosen.
-also want some commercials with black and white major characters

This system allowed for a selection of commercials that would encourage focus group reactions to the talk or "language" associated with the black athletes in the commercials (*narrative/story telling category*) and the activity or "body language" of the black athletes in the commercials (*activity category*). The sub-category division between *style/ attitude* commercials and *hard work/dedication* commercials was based on the literature on black athlete and white athlete portrayals in sport (Coakley, 1990). Research showed that black athletes were more often described as "natural" and "gifted". Blacks were often praised for their "style", in sport and popular culture literature. White athletes were praised for their work ethic, and desire (with style and natural ability being de-emphasized).

These categories also encompass the basic themes evident in athletic apparel commercials shown throughout the recorded games.

APPENDIX D

The following is a description and justification for the chosen sub-sample of athletic apparel commercials.

1. **Footlocker #1 (NCAA)-description**-playground scenes and dark gym scenes, predominantly black youth (no celebrity players) playing basketball, "talking it up as they play"-captions appear on the screen "translating" the basketball/playground language into common terms-the background speaker indicates that Footlocker knows where these athletes are "coming from, wherever that is"

ideas for discussion-assess respondents interpretations of the stereotypical athlete in a stereotypical environment
-assess whether it mattered that the athletes were black and whether these blacks were similar to blacks the respondents knew

-category #3-activity and style/attitude commercial

2. **Nike #4 (NBA)-description**-Chris Webber sitting with friends in a barber shop, acts out dunk over Charles Barkley (while the actual dunk is being shown on the television set)-finishes off the "act" by saying that Charles Barkley told Webber after the dunk that "I don't believe in role models, but uh, you mine"-everybody laughs
ideas for discussion-celebrity black athlete, how they are perceived by the viewers

-look at language used by the athletes

-assess whether it mattered that the athletes were black and whether these blacks were similar to blacks the respondents knew

-discuss the explicit use of *attitude*

-category #1-narrative and style/attitude commercial

Commercial Specific Questions:

3. **Starter #1 (NCAA)-description**-Larry Bird, Flo Jo and Lenny Dykstra talk about "what it takes to be the best"-talk about discipline and dedication, refer to the activities they have to do to "be the best"(with brief camera shots of them performing these activities, like sit-ups)-they also talk about what it is like to succeed as a result of this hard work-commercial concludes with Larry Bird saying "what do you need to be the best? Everything you've got. It's up to you"

ideas for discussion-discussion of female black athlete celebrity

-comparison of white basketball star (Larry Bird) with black athletes used in the commercials, see if it makes a difference

-see if notion of hard work related to white basketball player important

-category #3 -narrative and hard work/dedication commercial

4. **Nike #8 (NBA)-description**-The visual of the commercial is a wall with the Nike swoosh and NYC painted "graffiti style" on it. The background is a street corner with cars going by. A voice tells the story of pro basketball player Willis Reed who went down to the playground to play basketball. Reed "posted up" Helicopter Hearn, faked Helicopter Hearn into the air, and waited for him to come back down before going up for the shot. But Helicopter Hearn never came back down.

ideas for discussion-allows the viewer to describe what is happening in the picture and who is doing the action (without conventional visual cues)

-see whether the race of the narrator and the basketball players in the commercial is important to the viewer

-see whether the inner New York City environment is associated with black athletes

-category #1-narrative and style/attitude commercial

5. **Nike #6 (NBA)-description**-San Antonio Spurs players sitting around a barber shop talking about George Gervin (The Ice Man), the poster of Gervin and Gervin's "patented" finger roll. Gervin concludes the commercial saying, "One thing I could do, was finger roll"

ideas for discussion-discuss the celebrity black athlete

-all those in the commercial are black, find out whether it would make a difference if the athletes were white-find out how these black athletes compare to blacks that the respondents know

-if the respondents do not know any blacks, do they think that the blacks on these commercials (celebrities and otherwise) are true to life

-idea of *style* explicit

-category #1-*narrative* and *style/attitude* commercial

6. Reebok #1 (NBA)-**description**-Shaquille O'Neal shown practicing alone in a dark gym. Shaquille's voice is heard saying "People wonder, how far will he go, how good will he be". Ominous music. Then Shaq says "I'm only 22 years old", and the music changes to a faster, scratchy rap sound, and Shaq is shown dunking. The commercial concludes with Shaq pumping up his Reebok pump shoes, and saying "Stick around".

ideas for discussion-reaction to a celebrity athlete, Shaq, the new "ambassador" of the league

-would it make a difference if this was a white basketball star

-are there differences between the portrayals of blacks and whites in the commercials, describe

-category #4-*activity* and *work/dedication* commercial

APPENDIX E

Parental/Guardian Information and Consent Form
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



School of Human Kinetics
 210, War Memorial Gym
 6081 University Boulevard
 Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1
 Tel: (604) 822-3903 Fax: (604) 822-5884

Leisure & Sport Management Program

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Brian Wilson and I am a Masters student in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of British Columbia. I am presently recruiting participants for a study on the impacts of television commercials shown during televised basketball tournaments. This letter and the attached consent form briefly describe the study. I would appreciate your sharing this material with your son to determine if he is interested in participating in this project. If he is interested and you agree to his involvement please sign and return the attached form. If you have any concerns or questions about this study, please call me or my research supervisor at the numbers given below. Thank you for your time.

Title of Project: Athletic Apparel Commercial Messages During Televised Basketball Games

Purpose: The main objective of the project is to assess the interpretations and reactions of adolescent males to athletic apparel commercials (such as Nike, Reebok and Footlocker) that use black athletes as promotional figures.

Procedure: The study has 2 parts:

1. A group of approximately 4 adolescent males who routinely watch televised basketball will be shown a series of 6 athletic apparel commercials taken from recent broadcasts. While watching the commercials, the participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire. The questions will cover such topics as "what was liked most about the commercials", "what was liked least about the commercials", and what the story of the commercial was.

2. After the commercial viewing is complete, a group discussion will take place. The discussion will be focused on the depiction of the athletes in the commercials.

The session will take a total of 1.5 hours. The group session will be videotaped to provide a record of the discussion. In accordance with university guidelines, participation in this study is completely voluntary and the participant can withdraw from the session at any time.

Payment: The participant will be paid \$10 at the completion of the session for partaking in the study.

Location and Setting: If interested, call Brian Wilson at 822-9156 for details. If in the evening or on the weekend, call 222-8117 and leave a message.

continued on page 2

2

Anonymity: Each person's responses on the questionnaire and in the group discussion will be combined anonymously with those of other participants to produce a summary. At no time will the participants names be associated with these results. Anonymity will be preserved by using a code number system on all questionnaires. During the group discussion, each participant will be identified only on a first name basis. At the conclusion of the study the questionnaires will be destroyed and the session videotapes erased.

Use of Results: The findings will be published in a report and in academic journals. The information will be made available to the athletic apparel companies whose commercials are used in the study.

Questions: If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please call collect to Brian Wilson at (604) 822-9156 (Masters thesis student) or Dr. Robert Sparks (thesis advisor) at (604) 822-6515.

The attached consent sheet restates the above information and leaves space for your written consent. If you agree to your son's involvement in this study, please sign in the noted space. To set up a time to participate in the session, please call Brian Wilson at the above number, or leave a message at 822-6515 in the evening or on the weekend.

Thank you again for your time

Brian Wilson



School of Human Kinetics
 210, War Memorial Gym
 6081 University Boulevard
 Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1
 Tel: (604) 822-3903 Fax: (604) 822-5884

Leisure & Sport Management Program

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM (to be signed by a parent/guardian if participant is under 18 years old)
Athletic Apparel Television Commercial Project

Title of Project: Athletic Apparel Commercial Messages During Televised Basketball Games

Purpose: The main objective of the project is to assess the interpretations and reactions of adolescent males to athletic apparel commercials (such as Nike, Reebok and Footlocker) that use black athletes as promotional figures.

Procedure: The study has 2 parts:

1. A group of approximately 5 adolescent males who routinely watch televised basketball will be shown a series of 6 athletic apparel commercials taken from recent broadcasts. While watching the commercials, the participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire. The questions will cover such topics as "what was liked most about the commercials", "what was liked least about the commercials", and what the story of the commercial was.
2. After the commercial viewing is complete, a group discussion will take place. The discussion will be focused on the depiction of the athletes in the commercials.

The session will take a total of 1.5 hours. The group session will be videotaped to provide a record of the discussion. In accordance with university guidelines, participation in this study is completely voluntary and the participant can withdraw from the session at any time.

Payment: The participant will be paid \$10 at the completion of the session for partaking in the study.

Location and Setting: If interested, call Brian Wilson at 822-9156 for details. If in the evening or on the weekend, call 222-8117 and leave a message.

Anonymity: Each person's responses on the questionnaire and in the group discussion will be combined anonymously with those of other participants to produce a summary. At no time will the participants names be associated with these results. Anonymity will be preserved by using a code number system on all questionnaires. During the group discussion, each participant will be identified only on a first name basis. At the conclusion of the study the questionnaires will be destroyed and the session videotapes erased.

Use of Results: The findings will be published in a report and in academic journals. The information will be made available to the athletic apparel companies whose commercials are used in the study.

Questions: If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please call Brian Wilson at 822-9156 (Masters thesis student) or Dr. Robert Sparks (thesis advisor) at 822-6515.

PARENTAL CONSENT STATEMENT: I have read this sheet in its entirety. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. I acknowledge that the participant has the right to refuse to participate and can withdraw at any time. I acknowledge that I have been given a copy of this consent form and the project information sheet.

I consent/do not consent (please circle one) to my son's participation in this study.

Participant's Name: _____ Print Own Name: _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

PARTICIPANT CONSENT (if participant 18 years or older): I have read this sheet in its entirety and I consent to take part in the study it describes. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. I acknowledge that I have been given a copy of this consent form and the project information sheet.

Signature: _____ Print Name: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F

Theatre Viewing Questionnaire for study (based on similar version used in work on audience interpretations of soft drink and beer commercials). This questionnaire accompanied a biographical information form that was completed after the focus group session.

Commercial Viewing Questionnaire (one to be filled out for each commercial)

Please respond to the following questions after viewing the television commercial.

1. Have you seen this commercial before? Yes/No (circle one)

If yes, approximately how long ago? _____

2. As you watched the commercial (just now) what was the most attention getting feature that you noticed?

a. _____

3. Identify other prominent features that you recall (not more than two).

b. _____

 c. _____

4. Do you buy this brand? Yes/No (circle one)

5. Briefly tell the story of this commercial. What is going on in this picture?

6. What did you like most about this commercial. What is going on in this picture? _____

7. What did you like least? _____

APPENDIX G

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Instructions: The following questions are intended to provide some background information about you. Answer all the questions as accurately as you can. If it is unclear what is being asked, please ask for help from the group leader.

1. **Age:** ____ (years)
2. **Sex:** Male/Female (circle)
3. What **area** of Toronto do you presently live in? Please be as specific as possible.
area _____
4. How long have you lived in the Toronto area? ____ (years)
5. If you have ever lived outside of the Toronto area, where did you live?
area _____
6. What is your **race**? _____
7. How many **hours** of television did you watch **last week**? ____ hours
8. How many **days** did you watch television **last week**? ____ days
9. Rank order the five types of television programming you most frequently watch. For example, if you tend to watch Soaps more than any other kinds of programming, you would rank Soaps "1". And so forth (**rank only the top five**)

Comedy hour ____
 Game Shows ____
 (eg., Wheel of Fortune)
 Movies ____

Music ____
 News ____
 (eg., CBC National)

Soaps ____
 Series ____
 (eg., NYPD, Northern Exposure)
 Sit-coms ____
 (Roseanne, Seinfeld)
 Sports ____
 Other ____

If you indicated "other", identify the programming: _____

10. What are your **3 favourite television shows**?

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

11. What are your **3 favourite sports** to watch on television (please specify the league e.g. NBA, CFL, NFL)?

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

12. How many **NCAA** basketball tournament games (or parts of games) did you watch this year?

☐ 0 ☐ around 1-2 games ☐ 3+ games

13. How many **NBA** basketball playoff games (or parts of games) did you watch this year?

☐ 0 ☐ about 1-2 games ☐ 3+ games

14. Approximately how old were you when you first started watching basketball on television regularly (watching an average of 1 game per month during basketball season and playoffs)?

Check as appropriate.

☐ under 10

☐ 11-13

☐ 14-16

☐ 16-18

☐ 19+

15. Parents' joint income **last year**, if known: (**check one**)

☐ less than \$22,000

☐ \$22,000-35,099

☐ \$35,100-47,899

☐ \$47,900-64,900

☐ more than \$64,900

16. What is your parents' education level? (**Check in each column as appropriate**)

	Mother	Father
some high school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
finished high school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
some college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
college diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
some university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
university degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other (please specify) _____		

17. Please identify **your parents' occupation**: This includes part-time work. (**Check in each column, as appropriate**).

	Father	Mother
Homemaker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher/Educator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional/Technical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Executive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sales/Marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clerical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Craftsworker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Labourer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Farm Worker/Farmer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you checked "other", identify the occupation(s): _____

Stop. You have finished the questionnaire. Please check to make sure you have answered all the questions and then hand in your questionnaire. Thank you for your help.

APPENDIX H

The following interview guide lists the discussion areas used during the small focus group sessions.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell the story of the commercial. What happened?

-address each commercial individually

2. What were the most noticeable features. Why did they stand out?

3. How would you change the commercial to make it more appealing to you?

4. Are these commercials realistic?

For the interviewer, use the associated questions if necessary to direct conversation-are the black athletes in the commercials similar to blacks in "real life"?

-what do these commercials tell you about blacks?

For the interviewer -In this question, cover the following topics

- a) socioeconomic class of the characters
- b) myth of social mobility through sport
- c) enlightened racism idea

5. Who are your favourite athletes to watch on television? Why?

For the interviewer- In this question, talk about style, personality, "attitude"

6. How does the use of celebrities affect your opinion of the commercial?

7. Would it make a difference if the athletes in the commercials were white? If yes, how would it change it? -For the interviewer- In this question, look compare the traits of blacks and whites in the commercials

8. How much experience do you have with blacks? Do you have any black friends?

-For the interviewer-How do they compare to what you see on television?

9. What do you learn about blacks from television?

10. Do you notice the race of the athletes in the commercials when you watch them?

11. Do you think racism is a problem in society? Do you think blacks are disadvantaged or do they have the same opportunities as anybody else?

<u>Product Categories</u>	<u>Anglo-Euro only</u>	<u>Afro-Amer/Afro-Can only</u>	<u>Asian only</u>	<u>Mixed Anglo-Afro</u>	<u>Mixed Anglo-Asian</u>	<u>Mixed Afro-Asian</u>	<u>Mixed Anglo-Afro Asian</u>	<u>No People</u>	<u>No Ident Figures</u>	<u>Total</u>
Personal Hygiene/Health	14	0	0	10	0	0	0	3	0	27
%	51.85	0	0	37.04	0	0	0	11.11	0	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	58.33	0	0	41.67	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	100
Automotive	54	0	0	36	0	0	3	58	7	158
%	34.18	0	0	22.78	0	0	1.9	36.71	4.43	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	58.06	0	0	38.71	0	0	3.23	n/a	n/a	100
Clothing	7	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	14
%	50	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	50	0	0	50	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	100
Communications-										
Delivery	24	2	0	15	11	0	1	10	1	64
%	37.5	3.13	0	23.44	17.19	0	1.56	15.63	1.56	100.01
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	45.28	3.77	0	28.30	20.75	0	1.89	n/a	n/a	99.99
Soft Drinks/Sport Drinks	5	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	15
%	33.33	0	0	66.67	0	0	0	0	0	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	33.33	0	0	66.67	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	100
Food	15	0	0	21	0	0	5	0	3	44
%	34.09	0	0	47.73	0	0	11.36	0	6.82	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	36.59	0	0	51.22	0	0	12.20	n/a	n/a	100.01
Leisure/										
Travel/										
Vacation	9	0	0	21	11	0	3	1	0	45
%	20	0	0	46.67	24.44	0	6.67	2.22	0	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	20.45	0	0	47.73	25.00	0	6.82	n/a	n/a	100
Athletic										
Apparel	1	0	0	23	0	0	7	0	0	31
%	3.23	0	0	74.19	0	0	22.58	0	0	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	3.23	0	0	74.19	0	0	22.58	n/a	n/a	100
Total Commercials	232	5	0	166	23	0	21	113	19	579
Total %	40.07	.86	0	28.67	3.97	0	3.63	19.52	3.28	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	51.90	1.12	0	37.14	5.15	0	4.70	n/a	n/a	100.01

Table 2

Representation of Racial Groups in the NBA Playoff Commercial Messages

Note: The number of commercials in each racial category are listed across from the product category (e.g. in the automotive commercial type, 106 out of a total of 293 commercials were Anglo-European only). The percentage of the total commercials in a racial category appears below the commercial total (e.g. in the automotive commercial type, 36.18 percent of the commercials were Anglo-European only). The percentage of total commercials with identifiable figures is listed below this.

Product Categories	Anglo-Euro only	Afro-Amer/ Afro-Can only	Asian only	Mixed Anglo-Afro	Mixed Anglo-Asian	Mixed Afro-Asian	Mixed Anglo-Afro Asian	No People	No Ident Figures	Total
Power Equipment/ Hardware/ Home Improvement	38	0	1	8	0	0	0	5	0	52
%	73.08	0	1.92	15.38	0	0	0	9.62	0	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	80.85	0	2.13	17.02	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	100
Automotive Accessories	51	6	0	7	0	0	0	35	2	101
%	34.65	5.94	0	6.93	0	0	0	34.65	1.98	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	79.69	9.38	0	10.94	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	100.01
Automotive	106	2	0	24	1	0	1	133	26	293
%	36.18	.68	0	8.19	.34	0	.34	45.39	8.87	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	79.10	1.49	0	17.91	.75	0	.75	n/a	n/a	100
Communications/ Delivery	24	1	0	7	3	0	2	7	0	44
%	54.55	2.27	0	15.91	6.82	0	4.55	15.91	0	100.01
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	64.86	2.70	0	18.92	8.11	0	5.41	n/a	n/a	100
Beer	63	0	0	32	3	0	3	18	2	121
%	52.07	0	0	26.45	2.48	0	2.48	14.88	1.65	100.1
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	62.38	0	0	31.68	2.97	0	2.97	n/a	n/a	100
Personal Hygiene/ Health	36	2	0	12	0	0	10	5	3	68
%	52.94	2.94	0	17.65	0	0	14.71	7.35	4.41	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	60	3.33	0	20	0	0	16.67	n/a	n/a	100

Leisure/Travel										
Vacation	14	0	0	0	11	0	1	1	0	27
%	51.85	0	0	0	40.74	0	3.7	3.7	0	99.99
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	53.85	0	0	0	42.31	0	3.85	n/a	n/a	100.01
Business/Financial										
Services	25	3	0	12	2	0	8	9	6	65
%	38.46	4.62	0	18.46	3.08	0	12.31	13.85	9.23	100.01
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	50	6	0	24	4	0	16	n/a	n/a	100
Computer/Electronics	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	15	1	22
%	13.64	4.55	0	0	0	0	9.09	68.18	4.55	100.01
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	50	16.67	0	0	0	0	33.33	n/a	n/a	100
Food	50	2	0	52	1	0	12	8	1	126
%	39.68	1.59	0	41.27	.79	0	9.52	6.35	.79	99.99
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	42.74	1.71	0	44.44	0.85	0	10.26	n/a	n/a	100
Soft Drinks/Sport Drinks	7	2	0	32	0	0	7	8	0	56
%	12.5	3.57	0	57.14	0	0	12.5	14.29	0	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	14.58	4.17	0	66.67	0	0	14.58	n/a	n/a	100
Athletic Apparel	2	28	0	12	0	0	0	1	0	43
%	4.65	65.12	0	27.91	0	0	0	2.33	0	100.01
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	4.76	66.67	0	28.57	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	100
Armed Forces	0	0	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	18
%	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	100
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	100
Total										
Commercials	419	47	1	216	21	0	46	245	41	1036
Total %	40.44	4.54	.10	20.85	2.03	0	4.44	23.65	3.96	100.01
% (not including no people and no ident. figures)	55.87	6.27	0.13	28.80	2.80	0	6.13	n/a	n/a	100

Table 3

Number of Identifiable Figures by Race During NCAA Commercial Messages

Note: The number of identifiable figures in each racial category are listed across from the product category (e.g. in the automotive category, there were 635 Anglo-Europeans out of a total of 701 identifiable figures in all automotive commercials). The percentage of the total number of identifiable figures that were counted in a racial category appear below the identifiable figure total (e.g. in the automotive commercial type, 90.58 percent of the identifiable figures were Anglo-European).

Product Categories	Anglo-Euro	AfroAmer/- Afro-Canad	Asian	Other	Totals
Beer	110	5	0	0	115
%	95.65	4.35	0	0	100
Business/ Financial Services	267	11	2	2	282
%	94.68	3.90	.71	.71	100
Power Equipment/ Hardware/ Home Improvement	42	2	1	0	45
%	93.33	4.44	2.22	0	99.99
Automotive Accessories	107	10	0	0	117
%	91.45	8.55	0	0	100
Automotive	635	63	3	0	701
%	90.58	8.99	.43	0	100
Clothing	64	7	0	0	71
%	90.14	9.86	0	0	100
Communic- ations/ Delivery	513	84	15	3	615
%	83.41	13.66	2.44	.49	100
Personal Hygiene/ Health	99	20	0	0	119
%	83.19	16.81	0	0	100
Computer/ Electronics	57	12	1	0	70
%	81.43	17.14	1.43	0	100

Food	299	68	5	0	372
%	80.38	18.28	1.34	0	100
Soft Drinks/ Sport Drinks	74	34	0	0	108
%	68.52	31.48	0	0	100
Leisure/ Travel/ Vacation	393	46	177	45	661
%	59.46	6.96	26.78	6.81	100.01
Athletic Apparel	316	219	7	0	542
%	58.30	40.41	1.29	0	100
Total People	2976	581	211	50	3818
Total %	77.95	15.22	5.53	1.31	100.01

Table 4

Note: The number of identifiable figures in each racial category are listed across from the product category (e.g. in the automotive category, there were 522 Anglo-Europeans out of a total of 571 identifiable figures in all automotive commercials). The percentage of the total number of identifiable figures that were counted in a racial category appears below the identifiable figure total (e.g. in the automotive commercial type, 91.42 percent of the identifiable figures were Anglo-European).

	Anglo-Euro	AfroAmer- AmerCana	Asian	Other	Totals
Power Equipment/ Hardware/ Home Improvement	208	11	2	0	221
%	94.12	4.98	.90	0	100
Automotive Accessories	166	14	0	1	181
%	91.71	7.73	0	.55	99.99
Automotive	522	47	2	0	571
%	91.42	8.23	.35	0	100
Leisure/ Travel/ Vacation	250	38	1	0	289
%	86.51	13.51	.35	0	100.01

Beer	941	165	6	0	1112
%	84.62	14.84	.54	0	100
Personal Hygiene/					
Health	200	46	10	0	256
%	78.13	17.97	3.91	0	100.01
Communications/					
Delivery	114	18	11	4	147
%	77.55	12.24	7.48	2.72	99.99
Food	896	233	19	14	1162
%	77.11	20.05	1.64	1.20	100
Business/					
Financial					
Services	279	91	10	0	380
%	73.42	23.95	2.63	0	100
Computer/	48	16	2	0	66
%	72.73	24.24	3.03	0	100
Armed					
Forces	116	49	0	0	165
%	70.30	29.70	0	0	100
Soft					
Sport	690	418	12	2	1122
%	61.50	37.25	1.07	.18	100
Athletic					
Apparel	53	203	0	0	256
%	20.70	79.30	0	0	100
Total					
Commercial	4483	1349	75	21	5928
Total %	75.62	22.76	1.27	.35	100

Table 5

Celebrity Representation and Description in NCAA Tournament Commercial Messages

Celebrity Name	Ethnicity	Reason for Celebrity Status	Product Advertised
Randy Johnston	Anglo-European	athlete (baseball player)	Seattle Mariners season tickets
Chevy Chase	Anglo-Europeans	actor/comedian	Doritos Potato Chips
Sam Perkins	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Mitsubishi televisions
Candace Bergen	Anglo-European	actress	Sprint telephone systems
Bob Uecker	Anglo-European	actor	Lite Ice and Lite Beer
Larry Bird	Anglo-European	athlete (basketball player)	Starter Athletic Apparel (#1)

Florence Griffith-Joyner	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (Olympic sprinter)	Starter Athletic Apparel (#1)
Lenny Dykstra	Anglo-European	athlete (baseball player)	Starter Athletic Apparel (#1)
Rodney Dangerfield	Anglo-European	comedian/actor	Starter Athletic Apparel (#2)
Jazzy Jeff	Anglo-European	rap artist/actor	Starter Athletic Apparel (#2)
Lenny Dykstra	Anglo-European	athlete (baseball player)	Starter Athletic Apparel (#2)
Florence Griffith-Joyner	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (Olympic sprinter)	Starter Athletic Apparel (#2)
Frank Thomas	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (baseball player)	Reebok
Michael Jordan	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball/baseball player)	Nike
Jackie Joyner-Kersey	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (Olympic heptathlete)	Nike
Dick Vitale	Anglo-European	sportscaster	Adidas

Table 6

Celebrity Representation and Description in NBA Playoffs Commercial Messages

<u>Celebrity Name</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Reason for Celebrity Status</u>	<u>Product Advertised</u>
Ted Williams	Anglo-European	athlete (baseball player)	Upper Deck Trading Cards
Michael Jordan	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Upper Deck Trading Cards
Joe Montana	Anglo-European	athlete (football player)	Upper Deck Trading Cards
Cal Ripkin	Anglo-European	athlete (baseball player)	Upper Deck Trading Cards
Wayne Gretzky	Anglo-European	athlete (hockey player)	Upper Deck Trading Cards
Reggie Jackson	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (baseball player)	Upper Deck Trading Cards
Dwight Clark	Anglo-European	athlete (football player)	Upper Deck Trading Cards
Jimmy Johnson	Anglo-European	football analyst/football coach	Econolodge/Rodeway Inn
John Madden	Anglo-European	football analyst/football coach	Tinactin foot powder
Charles Barkley	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Right Guard deodorant
Bob Uecker	Anglo-European	actor	Krylon building supplies
Johnny Bench	Anglo-European	athlete (baseball player)	
Dick Vitale	Anglo-European	sportscaster	Taco Bell
Michael Jordan	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball/baseball player)	McDonalds
Charles Barkley	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	McDonalds
Larry Bird	Anglo-European	athlete (basketball player)	McDonalds
Jason Alexander	Anglo-European	comedian/actor	Rold Gold Pretzels
Harry Anderson	Anglo-European	actor	Fridays restaurant
Billy Crystal	Anglo-European	actor/comedian	Harvey's
Sinbad	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	comedian/actor	Polaroid Captiva
Rick Fox	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	AST Computers
Candace Bergen	Anglo-European	actress	Sprint telephone systems
Jim Palmer	Anglo-European	athlete (baseball player)	The Money Store
Kate Smith	Anglo-European	actress	Mercury Grand Marquis

Ernie Irvin	Anglo-European	athlete (race car driver)	Havoline
Michael Jordan	Afro-American	athlete (basketball/baseball player)	Gatorade (#1)
Mugsy Bogues	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Sprite
Karl Malone	Afro-American Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Gatorade (#2)
Hakeem Olijawan	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Gatorade (#2)
Patrick Ewing	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Gatorade (#2)
Clyde Drexler	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Gatorade (#2)
Derek Coleman	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Gatorade (#2)
Dominique Wilkins	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Gatorade (#2)
Harold Minor	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Gatorade (#2)
Shawn Kemp	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Gatorade (#2)
Danny Manning	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Gatorade (#2)
Michael Jordan	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball/baseball player)	Gatorade (#3)
Shaquille O'Neal	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Pepsi
Deon Sanders	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (baseball/football player)	Powerade
Dennis Rodman	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#1)
David Robinson	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#1)
Tim Hardaway	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#1)
Artis Gilmore	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#2)
George Gervin	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#2)
Dennis Rodman	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#2)
Chris Webber	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#3)
Latrell Spreewell	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#3)
Chris Webber	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#4)
David Robinson	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#5)
Dennis Rodman	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#5)
Tim Hardaway	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#5)
George Gervin	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#5)
Derek Coleman	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Pro Player Jackets

Chris Webber	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#6)
Alonzo Mourning	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (basketball player)	Nike (#6)
Dennis Hopper	Anglo-European	actor	Nike (#7)
Sterling Sharpe	Afro-American/ Afro-Canadian	athlete (football player)	Nike (#7)
Dennis Hopper	Anglo-European	actor	Nike (#7)
Junior Seau	Other	athlete (football player)	Nike (#8)
Dennis Hopper	Anglo-European	actor	Nike (#8)

APPENDIX K

AUDIENCE STATISTICS FOR 1994 NBA PLAYOFF GAMES

Note: The following table is a replica of the audience statistics sheet sent by The Sports Network (TSN) documenting the audience composition for 6 NBA Playoff games during 1994.

<u>Audience Composition</u>	<u>24 hr</u>	<u>NBA Playoffs</u>	<u>Index to Conventional TV</u>
Male	46.9%	77.3%	165
Female	53.1%	22.7%	43
<u>% of 2+</u>			
Teens 12-17	5.5%	16.4%	297
Adults 18-24	6.3%	18.2%	287
Adults 25-34	15.9%	16.4%	103
Adults 35-49	21.3%	16.4%	77
Adults 50-54	6.5%	5.5%	84
Adults 55+	36.4%	23.6%	65
Adults 18-34	22.2%	34.5%	156
Adults 18-49	43.5%	50.9%	117
Adults 25-54	43.6%	38.2%	88
<u>% of Adults</u>			
Men 18-34	12.0%	40.9%	341
Men 18-49	24.2%	52.3%	216
Men 25-54	24.0%	34.1%	142
<u>Education</u>			
Public School	28.1%	38.6%	137
High School	45.6%	25.0%	55
University/College	26.2%	34.1%	130
<u>Household Income</u>			
less than \$35M	39.6%	12.8%	32
\$35-75M	46.6%	61.5%	132
\$75M+	13.8%	23.1%	167
<u>Occupational</u>			
Clerical	7.6%	6.6%	90
Service\Construction	11.7%	18.2%	156
Sales	3.2%	11.4%	350
Professional\Manager	19.0%	20.5%	108