

The Effects of African American Children's Skin Complexions in Television  
Commercials on the Self-Perception of African American Children

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### Abstract

This study examines the effects of the complexion of African American children in television commercials on the self-perception of African American children. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted. A total of 347 commercials were examined from Saturday morning television programming on broadcast stations in the Lynchburg, Virginia area during March 2007. The results of the quantitative analysis found a lack of darker complexion African American females in the pre-recorded commercials. A qualitative analysis was conducted with focus groups of African American children ages 6-10 who were asked questions after viewing 8 to 10 of the pre-recorded commercials from the Saturday morning programming to determine their perceptions of the varying skin complexion of children in the commercials. The qualitative analysis results were inconclusive regarding skin complexion preference, but noteworthy information was found for future research, including the children noticing the roles given to the African American children in the commercials.

*Dedication*

*In memory of my great grandmother Margaret Scott Richardson, a true example of an African American woman of character, elegance, intelligence, and sophistication.*

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### Personal Significance of Research

As an African American, I am often categorized by Whites as well as Blacks based upon my complexion. Furthermore, I find myself categorizing African Americans based upon stereotypical images developed from my childhood through my current university years. In the Contemporary English Version of the Bible, Matthew 7:1-5 states,

*Don't condemn others, and God will not condemn you. God will be as hard on you as you are on others! He will treat you exactly as you treat them. You see the speck in you friend's eye, but you don't notice the log in your own eye. How can you say 'My friend, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you don't see the log in your own eye? You're nothing but showoffs! First, take the log out of your own eye. Then you can see how to take the speck out of your friend's eye.*

Like most people, I dislike being condemned or judged based upon my skin complexion, but as the scripture states, I first must “take the log out of my own eye” before I can criticize others for judging me. This research is to expose a generation to an issue, “colorism,” that is present in many aspects of our society particularly in television advertising. The attitude of skin tone bias or colorism which was very present in the beginning of United States history and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century among African Americans seems to have left an unconscious brand on the mindsets of many African Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## Chapter I: The Problem

*If you're White, you're right,*

*If you're yellow, you're mellow,*

*If you're brown, stick around,*

*If you're Black, get back.*

The saying quoted above was once common among Blacks (Maddox & Gray, 2002, p. 250). The first and last lines reflect the discriminatory divide between White and Black Americans; the second and third lines reflect a peculiar phenomenon in the Black community. Skin tone bias is the tendency to perceive or behave toward members of a racial category based on the lightness or darkness of their skin. Although similar to racial stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, racial skin tone bias is distinguished by its focus on the physical characteristics of individuals within a racial category (p.250). Another term used to describe skin tone bias is “colorism,” and these two words will be used interchangeably as well as Black and African American throughout this study.

One effect of skin tone bias is the development of a form of hierarchy in which lighter skinned individuals are at the top of the hierarchy and darker skinned individuals are at the bottom. Hunter (2002) notes in the article “If You’re Light You’re Alright: Light Color as Social Capital for Women of Color”:

Much of the literature on colonialism and slavery focuses on the domination of African and indigenous peoples by Europeans. Skin is often discussed in literature in terms of the creation of hierarchies. Light skin is associated with Europeans and is assigned a higher status than darker skin, which is associated with Africans or indigenous people and who are assigned a lower status. Furthermore, Blauner

in 1972 theorized that even after traditional forms of colonialism no longer exist, a system of internalized colonialism continues for people of color in the United States. (pp.175-176)

Skin tone bias was apparent during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when social clubs, churches, fraternities, and sororities used a variety of methods to weed out potential dark skinned applicants to create and maintain social distance between light and dark skin (Maddox & Gray, 2002, p. 250). The “paper bag test” and “blue vein test” are just a few examples of some of the tactics used as signifiers of skin complexion acceptance. The “paper bag test” was one obstacle to membership for dark skinned Blacks. This test required applicants to place their arm inside an ordinary brown paper bag. An individual was not allowed into these social clubs or fraternities if his or her skin tone were darker than the bag.

Fast-forwarding to the 21<sup>st</sup> century a question is posed, “Is colorism still an issue among Black Americans in the United States?” On March 4, 2005, ABC News reporter John Stossel reported on “colorism” or what he calls “Black on Black discrimination.” Stossel conducted an experiment in which he asked individuals to look at 60 photos of faces and rate the intelligence of the people in the photographs on a scale from one to five. Mixed in the 60 photos were pictures of the same person, but the photos were altered to make the person look darker skinned (ABC News 20/20). The results of Stossel’s test exhibited that colorism is still a factor; both the White and Black participants perceived the lighter individual to be more intelligent, wiser, and happier. Hence, the darker individual received lower scores. Stossel concluded that many Blacks

don't discriminate, but they do treat other Blacks differently based upon shade of complexion (ABC News 20/20).

#### Justification of Research

Stossel's study is just one example that colorism or skin tone bias is still an issue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Another example would be the documentary film, "A Girl Like Me." In this film, Kiri Davis re-creates a famous 1940s experiment conducted by Kenneth Clark that studied the psychological effects of segregation on Black children (ABC News GMA). In the original test, the children were given a Black doll and a White doll, and asked which one they thought was better (ABC News GMA). The results of Davis' experiment were very similar to the findings of Clark. Clark concluded that prejudice, discrimination and segregation caused Black children to develop a sense of inferiority and self-hatred (ABC GMA). In Davis' test 15 out of 21 Harlem Day School children between the ages of four and five said that the White doll was "good" and "pretty," and that the Black doll was "bad" (ABC GMA). The result of Davis' research further establishes the need to examine African American children and their development of self-perception and self-esteem.

Three questions are posed about the findings of these examples: When did these individuals, specifically African Americans, develop the mindset that light skinned African Americans are more intelligent, wiser, and happier? Secondly, could this construction have taken place from life experiences? Finally, does the media's portrayal of lighter and darker skinned African Americans influence the development that lighter skinned African Americans are better than darker skinned African Americans? As stated

earlier, this behavior seems to be an unconscious behavior among African Americans today, but based upon the above study it appears that history is being repeated.

### Background of Problem

John Henrike Clarke once said:

History is a compass that people use to find themselves on the map of human geography. History tells a people where they have been, what they have been, where they are and what they are. Most importantly, history tells a people where they still must go and what they still must be. (Jenkins, 2006, p.130)

According to Jenkins (2006), “the African-American experience became a chaotic one beginning roughly during the years between 1641, when a Virginia court first made the distinction between a White and a Black indentured servant, sentencing the latter into a life of servitude, and 1664, when then New Netherlands fell to the British, creating New York and New Jersey and the subsequent capitulation articles became the first to recognize slavery as a legal institution” (p.130). Hill (2002) noted in his research more about the history of African Americans and skin tone bias in the United States:

To justify racial slavery, slaveholding interests espoused a White supremacist ideology which held that persons of African descent were innately inferior to Whites. Whiteness became identified with all that is civilized, virtuous, and beautiful; Blackness, in opposition, with all that is lowly, sinful and ugly. In this racialized context, phenotype came to be the preeminent indicator of social standing and moral character: physical traits such as skin color, eye color, hair texture, nose shape, and lip prominence became powerfully loaded symbols of beauty, merit, and prestige. Such color distinctions filtered into the African

American population during slavery, as light-skinned mulattos—often children or other relatives of their white owner—commonly received special advantages in comparison with darker slaves. (pp. 77-78)

It is not surprising that skin color became the most important index for evaluation of African Americans by Whites and African Americans, playing a fundamental role in African Americans' search for identity (Wade & Bielitz, 2005, p. 216). Maddox and Gray (2002) note:

White slave owners often favored their lighter-skinned slaves over others by giving them coveted assignments (e.g., as house servants rather than field workers) and limited training in skilled trades because slave owners perceived the lighter skinned slaves as more intelligent and skilled laborers. Furthermore, light-skinned Blacks also brought a higher price than their darker counterparts when sold on the slave market. (pp. 250-251)

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a growing body of empirical research suggested that the African American community had internalized a variant of the traditional American bias against dark skinned and African features, even after the civil rights and Black pride movement in which the coining phrase, “Black is beautiful,” claimed to pull away from White superiority notions by appreciating dark skin features. However, Lincoln in 1968 reported that skin tone bias or colorism still continued despite the two movements (as cited in Wade and Bielitz, 2005, p. 216). The phenomenon of “colorism” is rarely discussed openly among Black Americans, suggesting that skin tone bias is no longer a factor in interpersonal perception (Maddox & Gray, 2002, p. 251), but some still believe skin tone bias to be present among African Americans.

The Black woman is particularly affected by skin tone bias especially in the American society that focuses on beauty and complexion as a means of respect. After the civil rights changes that called for the hiring of more African Americans, Lincoln found that fair-skinned African Americans were the ones more likely to be hired (as cited in Wade and Bielitz, 2005, p. 216). In a 2002 article, “Skin Color Perception of Attractiveness among African Americans: Does Gender Make a difference?” Hill found:

Black women seeking to be perceived by others as feminine and attractive feel compelled to emulate White—often painfully through the use of skin bleaches, hair dyes, and straightening combs. In matters of beauty, manner, social graces, and womanly virtues, the White woman is elevated by American society to the status of a near goddess. Everywhere, the Negro hears about and sees these nymphlike creatures. The Negro’s world is thoroughly invaded by the white woman—the mass media, newspapers, magazines, radio, and especially television bring these lily sirens into the Blackness of the Negro’s home and mind. (p. 80)

Margaret Hunter (2002) conducted a study that focused on light skinned color as social capital for women. Using statistics from the 1980 National Survey of Black Americans and the 1980 National Chicano Survey, she hypothesized that light-skinned African Americans and Mexican Americans complete more years of school, receive a higher annual personal earning and that they also marry higher status men than their darker counterparts. By analysis of six variables: skin color, mother’s education, father’s education, age, marital status and urban residence, she found her hypothesis to be true that lighter skinned women complete more years of school, receive a higher annual personal earning, and marry higher-status men.

### *The African American Image in Advertising*

Before television came into existence, African Americans were typically humiliated in print advertisement. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, often the pictorial portrayal of African Americans, for example, visually included demeaning images having huge lips, bulging eyes, and mammy figures like Aunt Jemima. Furthermore, names often were verbally insulting brand names like Nigger Head canned vegetables and stove polish (Harris, 2004, p. 66).

Until the 1960's, there were almost no African Americans as models in mainstream U. S. advertising, and the only African Americans in prime-time television programming were limited to a few stereotyped and debasing roles (Harris, 2004, p. 66). The civil rights movement ushered in significant changes in media, hence African American models were used in advertising with none of the feared offense taken by Whites. However, many of these roles still were stereotypical (Grossberg, Wartella & Whitney, 1998, p. 221) such as the buffoonery and posturing of J.J. on *Good Times* and George Jefferson from *The Jeffersons* (Harris, 2004, p.67).

Walter Lippman (as cited in Grossberg, et. al., 1998, p. 221) referred to stereotypes as “pictures in our heads” of other people or more accurately, of the identity or, nature of other groups of people. Stereotypes can be defined as some people’s expectations of how groups in our society are supposed to behave (p.221). Dates and Barlow concluded that “Black media stereotypes are not the natural, much less harmless, products of an idealized popular culture; rather, they are more commonly socially constructed images that are selective, partial, one-dimensional and distorted in their portrayal of African Americans” (as cited in Bristor, Lee, and Hunt, 1995, p. 48).

In an April 2002 *Essence* magazine article called “But Mommy White Dolls are Prettier,” author Yolonda Caviness, addresses the topic of African American girls self-concept and skin tone discrimination. Caviness (2002) writes, “consider television commercials, White dolls are promoted as star headliners to the Black understudy who’s relegated to a quick shot just before the announcer adds, ‘Batteries sold separately’ and the screen begins to fade” (p.124). In relation to self-perception of African American children, Jane Ward states, “When Black children look in the mirror, they see that there is a total mismatch between the image staring back at them and the one the media has embraced (as cited in Caviness, 2002, p. 124).

Caviness does not neglect to mention that negative comments from individuals of African American descent also contribute to the positive or negative self-perception of African American girls. Caviness (2002) states, “the truth is, some of the most hurtful messages directed at Black children can come from within our own community: the dark skinned child called blackie by lighter-skinned classmates; the aunt who laments that her niece’s hair is so “coarse” (p.126).

### *Theories of Mass Communication*

The media play a major role in the development of identity, self-perception, bias and stereotypes. Television programming has an influence on an individual’s attitudes toward people group and self perception, hence the development of Cultivation Theory, Social Learning Theory and Uses and Gratification Theory. In relation to children’s gender identities, Berryman-Fink, Ballard-Reishch, & Newman found that children begin to form their gender identities at a very young age, basing that identity not only on what they observe about real people, but also on what they see in the mass media (as cited in



Larson, 2001, p.41). Children are often perceived as the most influenced by television because of their level of maturity and because many are heavy viewers of television. Guthrie and Hall agree that children and adolescents spend more time watching television than they do engaging in formal education (as cited in Stroman, 1991, p. 314).

In Carolyn Stroman's article, "Television's Role in the Socialization of African American Children and Adolescents (1991)," Stroman gives two reasons why African American children are more susceptible to being influenced by television. One reason Stroman provides is based upon the results of one of her previous studies and also from a study by Murray that found for some African American children weekly television viewing exceeds their parents' 40-hour work week. Secondly, Anderson, Williams and Dates concluded that African American children and adolescents may also be more susceptible to television's effects because they often use television as a source of guidance (p. 315).

This study examines the effects of television commercials on African American children's self-perception and the portrayal of African American children in television commercials. Furthermore, it provides research linking the portrayal of African American children in television commercials and the development of skin tone biases in African American children.

This project includes a quantitative analysis of the frequency of representation of African American children in television commercials during pre-recorded Saturday programming on non-cable channels of ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox during Saturday March 10, 2007 and March 17, 2007. This analysis was designed to discover the extent to

which African American children are depicted in television advertisements and whether their depiction has an influence on the audience of African American children.

After the analysis of the representation of African American children in the pre-recorded Saturday morning television commercials, five focus group sessions were conducted. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather an understanding of the mindset of the African American children in relation to skin tone bias. Three focus groups included five children and two included four children comprised of African American children ages 6 to 10. The children watched 8 to 10 pre-recorded television commercials from the Saturday programming that featured African American children. Following the showing of each commercial the children were asked to answer questions about the commercial that relate to identity, self-perception, and who they desire to be, the lighter skinned child or the darker skinned child. Cultivation Theory, Social Learning Theory, and one assumption of the Theory of Social Comparison will be used as the basis for this research.

The results of the content analysis and focus groups were then discussed in relation to the research questions: Is there a significant difference between the depiction of lighter complexion African American children in dark complexion African American children in Saturday morning programming on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox? Secondly, will African American children after viewing the selected 8 to 10 Saturday morning and/or Saturday children's programming television commercials, desire to be of lighter complexion?

### Summary

The behavior of colorism or skin tone bias is still present today. Although it might be subtle, it has an impact on the self-perception of African Americans and on how African Americans treat each other based upon complexion. The portrayal of African Americans in the media complements the mindset of society's stereotypical depiction of African Americans.

Furthermore, African American children are heavy viewers of television compared to children of other races. Cultivation Theory assumes that heavy viewing of television causes one to psychologically view what is presented on television as reality. Caviness' article on African American girls and their identification of beauty suggests that African American girls believe White is beautiful based upon the image presented in television advertisements. The culture in which a child is raised obviously has an influence on that child's view of what complexion of an African American is "good" or "bad." However, the media potentially persuades the thoughts of African American children just as much as the culture. Since commercials are mainly full of White children, would Black children want their complexion to be as close to white as possible?

The following chapter will examine media effects theories as well as theories of socialization and reviews of prior studies that pertain to African Americans' self-perception in relation to colorism, the effects of the media on African Americans, and the portrayal of African Americans in the television commercials.

## Chapter II: A Review of the Literature

The theories discussed in this chapter build a theoretical foundation for the research that was conducted throughout this study. Several theories reflect the influence of the media on its audience both in the area of media effects and socialization. Also this chapter reviews prior studies conducted that focus on the effects and depictions of African Americans in the media specifically television and television commercials on African Americans.

### *Theories of Media Effects and Socialization*

Cultivation Theory, developed by George Gerbner and his colleagues, suggests that extensive repeated exposure to media (especially television) over time gradually shapes our view of the world and our social reality (Harris, 2004, p.28). These researchers believe that television is the great common experience of almost everyone and it has the effect of providing a shared view of the world (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 316).

Television is a centralized system of storytelling. It is part and parcel of our daily lives. Its drama, commercials, news, and other programs bring a relatively coherent world of common images and messages into every home. Television cultivates from infancy the very predispositions and preferences that used to be acquired from other primary sources. Transcending historic barriers of literacy and mobility, television has become the primary common source of socialization and everyday information (mostly through the form of entertainment) of an otherwise heterogeneous population. The repetitive pattern of television's mass-produced messages and images forms the mainstream of a common symbolic environment. (p.317)

One of the major constructs of Cultivation Theory is mainstreaming, the homogenization of people's divergent perceptions of social reality into a convergent mainstream. This happens through a process of construction, whereby viewers learn facts about the real world from observing the world of television (Harris, 2004, p. 28).

Cultivation analysis is concerned with the totality of the pattern communicated cumulatively by television over a long period of exposure, rather than by any particular content or specific effect (Littlejohn, 2002, p.317).

Littlejohn expounds more concerning the effects and influence of media from a Marxist post-structuralist viewpoint:

Communication, especially through the media, has a specific role in affecting popular culture through the dissemination of information. The media is extremely important because it directly presents a way of viewing reality. The irony of media, especially television, is that it presents the illusion of diversity and objectivity, when in fact they are clear instruments of the dominant order. Producers control the content of media by particular ways of encoding messages. For example, advertisers carefully design television commercials to create a certain image and thereby sell the product . . . audiences use their own categories to decode the message, and they often reinterpret media messages in ways never intended by the source. As a result of alternative meanings, oppositional ideologies can and do rise in a society. The intended meaning of a commercial may be completely lost on certain parts of the audience that interpret it in different ways. For example, an advertiser may use sex appeal for men, but feminist viewers may see the image as demeaning to women. (p.218)

In the 2004 article, “Does Race Matter? Effects of Idealized Images on African American Women’s Perceptions of Body Esteem,” author Cynthia Frisby used the Theory of Social Comparison for her study. The purpose of Frisby’s research was to examine the effects of physical attractive images of Caucasian and African American women in print ads on African American women’s self perception of body esteem. The social comparison theory assumes that people have a drive to evaluate their opinions and abilities and that, in the absence of objective bases for comparison, the need to evaluate can be satisfied by engaging in a social comparison with similar others (pp. 325-326).

From a mass communication perspective, Social Comparison Theory would prove extremely useful in developing a theory focused on information processing and the effects and use of mass media messages. As Goethals’ 1986 study articulated:

It can be hard to hear an extremely intelligent person on the radio, or see an extremely handsome one in the grocery store, or participate on a panel with an expert without engaging in social comparison no matter how much we would like not to. (p.326)

Based upon the previous statement and research on social comparison, people do engage in some type of social comparison, when encountering other people and images depicted in the media. Furthermore, the main aspect of this research focuses on the comparisons and self-identification of African American children’s self-perceptions based upon the representation of African American children’s skin complexions in television commercials.

The Social Comparison Theory process is divided into four assumptions, self-evaluation, self-improvement, self-enhancement, and the concept of similarity. Self-

evaluation is the need for accurate information that informs and provides the status of how one relates to what they are comparing oneself against. The second assumption is self-improvement. The self-improvement assumption results from an individual's interest or desire to feel successful, refreshed and encouraged by comparing oneself to individuals who are more advanced and in better predicaments. The next comparison of self-enhancement occurs as the result of one's comparisons of oneself with others who are not as privileged. The main assumption that is applied to this study is the concept of similarity. The basic foundation for this concept is described by Festinger:

Social comparisons only occur when an individual makes comparisons with others who are similar with respect to skin color, stature, opinions, abilities, and so forth. It is believed that comparisons with similar others provide more knowledge and more useful information. Without a similar other, individuals cannot determine or accurately assess their abilities. (as cited in Frisby, 2004, p.329)

The concept of similarity is vital in relation to children because they identify with characters in the media and situations that relate to their personal lives. Based upon this identification, children will often imitate the behaviors of the individuals they identify with in the commercials.

Many socialization theories reflect on how the media affects children's perceptions of the world. Social Learning Theory as applied to the study of media effects tells us that the media offers many models on which to imitate depicted behavior. For example, Meyrowitz and Postman argue that children are socialized into the role of adults far earlier in the age of television than had been the case for several hundred years

previously (Harris, 2004, p.30). Children imitate the role of an adult because of their perception of reality which is taught by television. Furthermore, Harris describes television as the window through which children learn about the world of adults, which is no longer kept secret.

Judith van Evra (as cited in Harris, 2004, p. 31) argues that the cumulative media effects on children are the greatest when the purpose of viewing is diversion and when they perceive the media content to be realistic, perhaps due to lack of a critical thinking mode present during the viewing. Socialization effects are especially strong on frequent viewers who have few information alternatives and relevant life experience available. For example, a boy who watches a lot of sitcoms for entertainment and perceives as realistic the portrayals of ethnic groups with whom he has little personal contact is likely to be heavily affected (p.31).

Carolyn Stroman (1984) in the article, “The Socialization Influence of Television on Black Children,” mentions how previous scholars describe the socialization and influence of television.

Berger, Luckman, and Dorr note how increasingly, television is being added to the list of institutions assuming key roles in the socialization process, the process by which one learns information, cognitive processes, values, attitudes, social roles, self-concepts, and behaviors that are generally accepted within the American society. Berry maintains that many youngsters used televised information, messages, and portrayals as a way of reinforcing and validating their belief and in the process, grant television a role comparable to the traditional socializing agents. Similarly, Comstock et al. describe television as a source of



vicarious socialization that competes with other socializing agents in providing role models and information that affect children's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. (Stroman, 1984, p.79)

Based upon the above information the images and ideas that children view on television play a strong role in their construction of identity and defining of self-perception.

Chan and McNeal (2004) mention in the article "Children's Understanding of Television Advertising: A Revisit in the Chinese Context" how children perceive advertisements:

Young children generally think that television advertising is informative, truthful, and entertaining. Integrating Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Sellman's stage theory of social development, John proposed a model of consumer socialization that has been shown to be particularly useful in characterizing children's response to advertising. In the model, learning to be a consumer is a developmental process from the perceptual stage from 3-7 to the analytical stage of 7-11 to the reflective stage of 11-16. In terms of knowledge children in the perceptual stage can distinguish commercials from programs on the basis of perceptual features such as length. Children in the analytical stage can distinguish commercials from program based on the persuasive intent. (p.29)

Chan and McNeal conducted their study in China, but their results show that the effects and influence of television commercials are not just related to children in the United States but children around the world. Another finding of this study is that the age of a child is a key component to his or her level of understanding commercials.

The easy persuasiveness of children because of their lack of ability to discern between fiction and reality has been a concern for scholars for centuries. Giles (2003) expounds about this issue of naiveté:

The esteem in which fiction has been held has often turned to worry when contemplating its influence on young children. Even Plato was concerned that the Greek poets were seducing children with lies: “A child can not distinguish the allegorical sense from the literal, and the ideas he takes in at that age are likely to become indelibly fixed; hence the great importance of seeing that the first stories he hears shall be designed to produce the best possible effect on his character.” (p.132)

Moreover, as stated by Ward, Levinson, and Wackman in their 1972 study, “Children’s Attention to Television Advertisements,” young children generally think that television advertising is informative, truthful, and entertaining (as cited in Chan & McNeal, 2004, p. 28). The media provides viewers with a source of knowledge, likened to the role of a friend in which one is drawn into a relationship because of the friend’s wealth of information, entertainment qualities, and ready accessibility.

Our relationships with the mass media are at least partly determined by the perceived utility of the information we gather from them (Davis & Gandy, 1999, p. 367). More than anything, what nearly everyone in America shares, whatever school or church he or she attends, whatever job he or she has, is the mass media (Grossberg, et al., 1998, p. 206). The term “media,” implying “mediation” between the audience and the world (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 303), provides pictures of people, descriptions of different social

groups and of their social identities (Grossberg, et al., 1998 p. 206). Denis McQuail metaphorically describes the media as:

windows that enable us to see beyond our immediate surroundings, interpreters that help us make sense of experience, platforms or carriers that convey information, interactive communication that includes audience feedback, signposts that provide us with instructions and directions, filters that screen out parts of experience and focus on others, mirrors that reflect ourselves back to us and barriers that block the untold truth (as cited in Littlejohn, 2002, p. 303).

If someone has never seen any member of a particular group—then it is likely that what one might think of such people will be the result of what one sees, hears, or reads about them in the media (Grossberg, et al., 1998, p.220). Media representations play an important role in informing the ways in which we understand social, cultural, ethnic, and racial differences (Davis & Gandy, 1999, p. 367). Grossberg, Wartella, and Whitney (1995) found that the sense of unity among people, created by such powerful identities defined by religion, nationality, and work, has increasingly been undermined by the powerful representations of difference on television that have come to shape social life (p.206). The media ultimately shapes one's worldview by identifying the way in which one perceives cultures in our society, furthermore how an individual within a culture develops a perception of oneself within his or her culture.

### *Self-Perception and the Media*

Davis and Gandy (1999) believe that what influences how one interprets the media is our racial identity. Racial identity is defined by Davis and Gandy as being shaped by the cumulative experience and as enacted in reaction to context-specific social

interaction (p.368). For example, the everyday experiences of African American women and men determine the values, norms, beliefs, and morals that become the fundamental components of social identity (p.368). The media is a part of the everyday experience of individuals whether it is audio, print, or visual media, and therefore it has the ability to shape identity.

Advertisers purposely present material in certain magazines and broadcast specific commercials during programming that relates to their products as a form of rhetoric to persuade the audience to believe in the reality of their products. These advertisers provide a definition of acceptance that their perceptions in the minds of their audience are the idealized image of reality and the audience's identity. Hope as cited in Hill and Helmer expounds, "Advertising endorses and legitimates consumerism by saturating the culture with images intended to position commodity and purchase at the center of identity ( p.155)." Ultimately, the media's ability to produce people's social identities, in terms of both a sense of unity and difference, may be their most powerful and important effect (Grossberg, Wartella & Whitney, 1995 p. 206). This effect in turn has influenced the representation and depiction of minority groups in the media particularly African Americans.

#### *Studies of African Americans in Television and Television Commercials*

Using the method of content analysis, Bristor, Lee, and Hunt (1995) researched a theoretical assumption that racism in television advertising is reflected by a low minority visibility and the use of certain stereotypes (p. 49). In this study they recorded commercials aired on ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC in the Raleigh/Durham/Fayetteville, North Carolina area from 8:00 a.m. -11:00p.m., excluding commercials that did not

contain live people and those for theater movies, radio stations, and television programs (p. 50). One of the themes in their analysis was cultural cues in television advertisements. They found that cues signifying African-American culture and ethnicity were more notable for their absence than their presence:

By using predominantly light-skinned models, the advertising industry has historically capitalized on a “hierarchy of skin color” that often exists among African-Americans. African Americans with lighter skin are often seen, by Whites and sometimes African-Americans, as being superior to those with darker skin. Prior to the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 70s, darker-skinned African Americans were ignored or considered inferior in contrast to their lighter-skinned counterparts, who received more freedom and recognition by both Whites and African Americans. (p. 55)

Other themes addressed by Bristor, Lee and Hunt were numerical representation, role portrayals, families, status/power balance and screen presence. The stereotypical behaviors found in their study of television commercials was of the African American athlete, which they believed is rooted in the assumption that African Americans, especially men, possess genetically endowed physical skills that are not accorded to Whites (p.51). Another stereotypical role is of a fast food or other low wage worker often happily helping a White customer. They found that the image of the African American family was lacking. Concerning screen presence, the emphasis was on the commercials having merely a token Black person in the commercial with the camera distance being further than White actors, and the time of exposure being less. In advertisements of status and power, Bristor, Lee and Hunt found that advertisements

including both African American and White characters often depicted differences between their socio-economic status and power (p. 54).

Some researchers contribute to the objectionable portrayal of African Americans as a result of insensitivity and ignorance in the messages and how they are produced (Fuller, 2002, p. 121). Fuller (2002) found this statement to be true concerning a Zatarin's commercial:

An example of this insensitivity is the 1999 version of a commercial for Zatarin's Jambalaya. This fast-paced commercial features New Orleans jazz and a Black male narrator with a raspy-sounding voice and Black dialect that reminds one of the legendary jazz great, Louis Armstrong. He asks, "Why not jazz up dinner tonight?" The video features a coal-black silhouette of a man dancing and playing a horn-like instrument. The silhouette resembles a minstrel. A White family is shown eating. The offensive part of the commercial is the Black male silhouette. Arguably, not everyone will be offended by the commercial. People who are aware of the offensive nature of a minstrel of Blacks will be particularly touched by the portrayal. Minstrels had skin color as black as coal; they acted as buffoons. They were depicted with exaggerated features such as large ruby lips and a toothy grin. Minstrels were symbols of racial inequality and were portrayed as compulsively musical, inept, and inferior. (p.121)

Several studies have been conducted showing a significant increase of African Americans in television commercials. Because of this increased inclusion, how African Americans are depicted in commercials has become more important (Fuller, 2002 p.120). The media can communicate racial prejudice in a number of ways, including omission,

stereotyping, and showing African Americans in disproportionate number of “bad” or low status roles (Bristor, Lee & Hunt, 1995, p.49).

Blacks have typically been featured in integrated ads for foods, cars, alcohol, or institutional/service advertisements, with the value of the product inversely related to the interaction with Black models (Mastro & Stern, 2003, p.639). In Mastro and Stern’s 2003 study, they conducted a content analysis of the representation of race in prime-time advertising. Using Social Cognitive Theory and assuming that the ads have social significance, they asked five questions: What is the comparative frequency of portrayals of race in television commercials? Do characters’ age and sex vary by race? What occupational and familial roles are associated with which groups? What physical attributes are associated with which groups? What personality characteristics are associated with which groups (p. 640)?

From their study of national commercials of a one-week sample of prime-time television programming across the six broadcast networks, they found Blacks are portrayed generally in more diverse, equitable manner, and at a rate commensurate to the population. Blacks and Whites have the greatest number of potential models in current television, and when compared to the 2000 U.S. Census figures Blacks are represented proportionally. Mastro and Stern concluded that based on Social Cognitive Theory, it would be expected that Black viewers might be less likely than others to develop harmful self-perceptions as a result of exposure, especially when considering that characters’ mere presence in ads suggests social relevance and group legitimization (p.645).

Another suggestion for the depiction of African Americans in media is that portrayals of minorities tend to reflect Whites’ attitudes toward minorities and, therefore,

reveal more about Whites themselves than about the varied and lived experiences of minorities (Bristol, et al., 1995, p. 48). If this is true, one can conclude that the portrayal of the African Americans in commercials does not just reflect Whites' attitudes towards African Americans, but the attitude of the commercials' producers concerning African Americans, whether that producer is African American or White.

*The Effects and Influence of Television and Television Commercials on African American Children*

Currently, there is more representation of minority children in television commercials than there has ever been in the past. Bang and Reece (2003) in their study provide a historical glance at prior content analysis studies of children's advertising. The studies highlighted as cited in chart Bang & Reece, 2003 were conducted by:

- Barcus, 1977, *TV Commercials During Weekends and Weekday Afternoons*
- Atkins and Heald, 1977, *Saturday Morning TV Commercials*
- Seiter, 1990, *Commercials Showing Children During Various Day Parts*
- Licata and Biswas, 1997, *Commercials in Five Typical Prime Time Shows and Top Five "Black-oriented shows"*
- Taylor and Stern's, 1997, *Commercials during Prime Time on Major Networks*

From the previous listed studies there is some notable information concerning African American children and African American representation in television commercials.

Barcus' 1977 study found that Blacks appeared mainly in snack commercials and were portrayed primarily as children and teens rather than as adults (Bang & Reece, 2003, p. 45). In 1990 a qualitative study of racial representation by Seiter found a low number of minority portrayals in day time commercials (p. 45), but the minority group that was portrayed the most was African American children. Seiter found that the Black children in these commercials did not speak and were featured in outdoor settings. Seiter observed



many stereotypes in the commercials and contended that such portrayals perpetuate stereotypes associated with different races, reinforce such broad generalizations and cultivate certain expectations (Bang & Reece, 2003, p.48).

Some of these expectations found in television, consequently can have detrimental effects on the development and socialization of children (Orange & George, 2002, p. 301). In the case of children, the average child in the U.S. may see more than 20,000 commercials per year, in addition to some television programs that are actually hour-long commercials for toys or games (Bang & Reece, 2003, p. 42). Orange and George (2002) compare television to the children's story *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. The piper, who started out doing a good deed, became a villain in the span of three short notes on his pipe, which can be compared to television that made its debut doing good deeds such as delivering good programming. Television assumes the role of the media piper in homes daily, delivering programming that is not in the best interest of children (Orange & George, p. 294), and this programming which infiltrates homes, such as television commercials (Bang & Reece, 2003, p. 42), has become an important part of the socialization process. America's media managers create, process, refine, and preside over the circulation of images and information that determine our beliefs, attitudes, and ultimately our behavior (Orange & George, 2000, p. 296).

Bang and Reece (2003) from their study found:

By transmitting selective images and ideas, television commercials not only teach young consumers to buy and consume certain products, but they also teach children to accept certain beliefs and values. Thus, what children think of various

ethnic minorities such as Blacks, Hispanics, or Asian Americans are often influenced by what they see on television programming and advertising. (p. 42)

Studies indicate that many young African American children and teenagers consume a lot of television with little or no adult supervision (Orange & George, p. 298). Strasburger contends that children from lower income backgrounds and most African American children have been found to watch more television than their White counterparts; furthermore, Black families spend more on cable television than other ethnic groups (Orange & George, 2000, pp. 298-300).

Cognizant of the fact that television programs and characters may exert an influence on children's behavior, attitudes, values, and beliefs, Black parents and professionals are particularly concerned that television might (1) influence Black children's attitudes toward their own racial group; (2) facilitate Black children's development of low self-concepts through its non-recognition or negative, stereotyped treatment of Blacks; and (3) compete with Black family socialization by teaching attitudes and behavior that are not taught at home (Stroman, 1984, p. 79-80). Since African American children watch television more than any other social group, Social Learning Theory (Bang & Reece, 2003, p. 42) predicts they will more than likely learn certain beliefs and behaviors based on their observation of other people's behaviors. These behaviors, through extensive exposure to television commercials based upon Cultivation Theory, may have an effect on their development of their corresponding belief about particular groups (p. 43).

Davis and Gandy (1999) noted there is a primary emphasis on the implications of often negative stereotypical images in television commercials of African American children:

Because African American audiences are perceived as victims of negative, one-dimensional, and stereotyped media images, the images are internalized by Black children and adolescents and lead to negative self-concepts and low self-esteem. Thus, the overall conclusion is that, a high level of television entertainment viewing is associated with low self-esteem among African American audiences. (Davis & Gandy, 1999, p. 375)

This further stresses the influence of television on African American children and their self-perception.

In 1998, Children Now conducted a study that surveyed 1,200 children aged 10 to 17, with equal representation of the four largest ethnic groups, Caucasians, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians (Bang & Reece, 2003, p. 43). From this survey, Children Now discovered several things about what children perceive of other cultures by what is represented in the media. According to the poll results, African American, Asian, and Hispanic children overwhelmingly felt that it was important for them to see people of their own race on television because it sends a message that they matter. These results support Barry and Hansen's 1973 finding that Black children prefer and are positively influenced by commercials that include Black characters (as cited in Stroman, 1984, p. 88). Secondly, children of all races indicated a belief that minority groups were more likely to be negatively portrayed than Caucasians (p. 43). Finally, the survey found that children value diversity and want to see more on television (p. 43).

Bang and Reece (2003) conducted a study to examine minority children's advertising in mainstream television. Bang and Reece study analyzed the following aspects of minority portrayals: minority representation in numbers, prominence, and age; single group representation and representation by product type; setting and relationships depicted in the ad (p. 45). They concluded from their study that since Caucasians appeared more frequently and in leading roles (p. 63), minority children might be negatively impacted. Because the importance of their existence in the world is reduced in the world of television, African American children's self-perception would be harmed. Furthermore, because minority children mostly had background roles, Bang and Reece believe (p. 63) that if a child repeatedly sees a model of his or her ethnic group playing a minor role or major role, it can lead to somewhat unrealistic self-perception.

#### Summary

In conclusion, the media has a heavy influence on the socialization and children's self development because of their level of maturity. Furthermore, the children who are heavy viewers of television will be most influenced by the messages presented in television and more apt to imitate the behavior perceived based upon Cultivation Theory and Social Learning Theory. However, as most children grow older they are able to distinguish between fiction and reality because of increase in knowledge and life experiences. Unfortunately for some, despite maturity in age, they are less knowledgeable about the persuasiveness of television commercials and these commercials thus have the potential to be a strong influence because of the messages they present.

Since many studies indicate African American children believe in the reality of television more than any group of children and identify closely with the television characters, particularly Black characters (Stroman, 1984, p. 90), they are the minority group of children most influenced by television. The depictions of African Americans in television commercials are often stereotypical and based upon the producers' construction of an idealized image of African Americans. Bristor, Lee, and Hunt (1995) believe advertisers reconstruct the "hierarchy of color" in their depiction of African Americans. That hierarchy of color depicted by advertisers is the same attitude of colorism which has the potential to influence the self-perception of African American children.

While the influence of television commercials on African American children has been documented and researched, not much research has been conducted on whether or not African American children do have skin tone biases and if those biases are formed based upon what is viewed on television or in television commercials. In Chapter III, the methodology for this study is presented to answer several questions: To what extent are African American children depicted in Saturday morning television commercials and (2) what is their skin complexion? (3) Do African American children's skin complexions in television commercials have an influence on the self-perception of the African American children who view these television commercials? (4) Does the African American child viewing the commercial identify more with the lighter skinned children in commercials or darker skinned children in the commercials?

### Chapter III: Methodology

In order to discover the answer to the question, what are the influences of the skin complexions of African American children in television commercials on the self-perception of African American children who view the commercials, a quantitative and a qualitative analysis was conducted. First, a quantitative content analysis was conducted to determine the proportional representation of African American children in television commercials during broadcast channels ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox Saturday morning and Saturday children's programming. According to Cultivation Theory, heavy viewing of television commercials has the potential to cause some viewers to believe that what is presented on television is reality. What messages are advertisers and commercial producers sending to African American children about their importance in this society based upon their representation in television commercials? Furthermore, African American children watch television more than any minority children's group, so they are more susceptible to believe that what is presented about societal norms in advertising in relation to them is the truth.

For the quantitative part of this study, the units of analysis were the number of television commercials broadcast, the representation of children that appear to represent the African American race, and the complexion of the children featured in the commercial. The null hypothesis for the quantitative analysis was that there is no significant difference between the depiction of lighter complexion African American children and dark complexion African American children in Saturday morning programming on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox. The alternative hypothesis was that there is a significant difference between the depiction of lighter complexion African American

children and dark complexion African American children in Saturday morning programming on ABC, CBS NBC, and Fox.

For the qualitative analysis the null hypothesis tested was African American children after viewing the selected 8 to 10 Saturday morning and/or Saturday children's programming television commercials, will not significantly desire to be lighter complexion. The alternative hypothesis was that African American children after viewing the selected 8 to 10 Saturday morning children's programming television commercials significantly will desire to be lighter complexion. Through the use of focus groups the hypotheses for the qualitative study were tested.

#### *Data Collection*

Data was collected for the content analysis from broadcast stations that air in the Lynchburg, Virginia area. Television commercials were recorded that aired on these channels. On ABC affiliate station WSET-13, programming was recorded from 7:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 10, 2007. The first hour of programming was Good Morning America Weekends, and beginning at 8:00 a.m. the Saturday children's programming, "ABC Kids." ABC Kids programs are Disney channel television shows like *Hannah Montana*, *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*, *That's So Raven* and cartoons like *The Replacements* and *The Emperor's New School*. The shows are mentioned because often advertisers will cater their products towards the anticipated audience who normally view certain programs.

Programming was recorded from NBC Affiliate station WSLS-10, from 7:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 10, 2007 and from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday March 17, 2007. For NBC, programming was recorded beyond 12:00 p.m. because the

station WSLs-10 children's programming last beyond 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. NBC's children's programming segment is called "Qubo Kids." Television programs that aired during Qubo Kids are *Veggie Tales*, *Dragon*, *Babar*, *3-2-1- Penguins and Larry Boy*, and *Jane and the Dragon*.

Programming for Fox was also recorded from 7:00 a.m. to 12 p.m. Beginning at 8:00 a.m., "Fox's 4Kids" segment aired. Programs like the *Winks Club*, *Bratz*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Yu-Gi-Oh*, and *Chaotic* aired on the specific Saturday that commercials were recorded.

CBS morning children's programming begins at 6:00 a.m., so recording began for that channel at that time. From 6:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. a children's segment called "KOL Secret Slumber Party" was recorded. The KOL Secret Slumber Party segment includes programming such as *Trollz*, *Horseland*, *The New Adventures of Madeline*, and *Sabrina the Animated Series*.

The television commercials that were excluded were the advertisements that were previews for upcoming shows, advertisements for the Saturday children's programming segment and infomercials. The ads promoting movies or DVDs were eliminated because the frequency of racial models and their roles are a function of the type of movie advertised during a slow part of the year for the movie industry (Licata & Biswas, 1993, p. 872). The commercials that were examined were advertisements for food products, toys, or local events, or public service announcements. If a commercial have a tag (e.g. a McDonald's commercial followed by a brief tag for action figures), unlike in Larson study in which tags were not coded, they were also coded in this study. Commercials that



ran more than once were coded for each time they ran, inasmuch as every exposure to a commercial is an “impression.” (Larson, 2002, p. 227)

#### *Coding of Complexion*

In Mary Strom Larson’s study, “Race and Interracial Relationships in Children’s Television Commercials,” skin tone and facial features were used as determinants of race (Larson, 2002, p. 227). African American children or animated African American children in the television commercials that appear to be between the ages of 5 to 12 were coded. For example, girls with apparent breasts, boys or girls driving cars, hitchhiking or attending rock concerts were not coded (Larson 2002, p. 227).

The complexion of the African American in the television commercials were coded in three categories. The categories were yellow, brown, and black. The children were placed in one of three categories based upon how closely their skin complexion matched the specific color. The categorization of colors scale is based upon the shades of three crayons (yellow, brown, and black) which are found in the 16 pack of Crayola nontoxic crayons. The yellow crayon is representative of a light skinned African American. The brown crayon represents an African American child medium and is between light skinned and darker skinned. The black crayon is representative of darker complexion African Americans. This variable is dependent upon the variable of representation of African American children.

#### *Qualitative Analysis: Focus Groups*

Focus groups were conducted to provide an understanding of the influence of the representation of African American children in television commercials on the African American children who viewed the commercials. Most of the pre-recorded commercials

from the four channels aired between programming that was rated TV-Y7. When a program is rated TV-Y7 this means as stated by TVguidelines.org:

The program is designed for children age seven and above. It may be more appropriate for children who have acquired the developmental skills needed to distinguish between make-believe and reality. Themes and elements in this program may include mild fantasy violence or comedic violence, or may frighten children under the age of seven. Therefore, parents may wish to consider the suitability of this program for their very young children. (TV Guidelines)

The programs listed earlier as well as this rating system listed above serve as the guidelines for the age range of the children selected for the focus groups. Also, advertisers purchased the time that they want their commercials to air often based upon what program is being broadcast. The participants for the small mixed gendered focus group sessions were African Americans children between the ages of 6 and 10. Children who appeared to be interracial were excluded from the focus groups, because their representation might have had an influence on the openness of responses from children who are full African American.

Children were selected from two Lynchburg, Virginia community youth centers after school programs. The community youth centers were located in middle to low income areas of the city of Lynchburg. If the children were a part of a youth center, the supervisor of the youth center along with parents gave permission for the children to take part in the study.

The children watched eight to ten of the pre-recorded commercials from the local Lynchburg broadcast channels' Saturday children's programming. The commercials or

public service announcements chosen featured at minimum one African American child that was easily visible in the commercial.

After each commercial, the children were asked the following lead in questions to ignite discussion:

- Have you seen this commercial before?
- How often and how long do you watch Saturday children's programming?
- Did you notice any African American children in the commercial? How many?
- Which child reminds you of yourself, the lighter complexion African American child or the darker complexion child in the commercial? Why?

Which child would you want to be your friend? Why?

- Which color do you think the children should be in these commercials, dark skinned (referring to African Americans), light skinned (referring to African Americans), or White?

Children were also asked more questions as the discussion proceeded to gather more information.

In the room in which the focus groups were conducted there was a facilitator, an audio recorder and parents upon request. If a parent of a child desired to sit in the room he/she was asked to sit in an area in which the parent would not be a distraction to the child. For example in an open room the parent was asked to sit behind the child and to remain silent during the focus group session. Parents were also allowed to receive documented information of the focus group upon request.

## Chapter IV: Results

After extracting the television advertisements that were previews for upcoming shows, advertisements for the Saturday children's programming segment, infomercials, and news announcements, 347 commercials were analyzed (found in Appendix B). The variables that were coded were the number of African American children in the commercials, the complexion of the African American children, and the gender of the children in the commercials. Commercials that aired more than once were counted every time they were broadcast in this analysis. The findings are taken from Saturday programming on ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC. Commercials were pre-recorded from 7a.m.-12 p.m. on ABC and Fox. On CBS commercials were recorded from 6:00a.m.-8:00a.m., and on NBC from 7:00a.m.-1:00p.m. The null hypothesis for the quantitative analysis was that there is no significant difference between the depiction of lighter complexion African American children and dark complexion African American children in Saturday morning programming on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox. The alternative hypothesis was that there is a significant difference between the depiction of lighter complexion African American children and dark complexion African American children in Saturday morning programming on ABC, CBS NBC, and Fox.

### *Results of Commercials with African American Children*

Out of 347 commercials 52 (15%) commercials included children that appeared to be African American based upon skin complexion, hair, and facial features. On ABC, 17 out of 104 commercials (16%) featured children that appeared African American between the ages of 5-12. Out of 129 commercials on NBC, 12 commercials (9%) had children who appeared African American between the ages of 5-12. On CBS, 9 out of 44

commercials (20%) featured African American children that appear between the ages of 5-12. Finally on Fox, 13 out of 70 commercials (19%) featured children that appear to be African American and between the ages of 5-12.

### **Figure 4.1 Results of African Americans in Saturday Morning Television**

#### **Commercials**

	<i>FOX</i>	<i>ABC</i>	<i>CBS</i>	<i>NBC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Commercials with children that appear African American and between the ages of 5 -12	13	17	10	12	52
Total number of pre-recorded Saturday commercials per channel	70	104	44	129	347
Approximate Percentage of African American and between the ages of 5-12 that appeared in the pre-recorded commercials	19%	16%	20%	9%	15%

#### *Results of African American Children's Complexion*

The complexion of the children in the commercials was analyzed based upon three shades that broadly reflect the complexion of African Americans. The three colors were yellow, meaning light skinned, brown, meaning medium complexion, and black, meaning dark skinned when relating to African Americans. The colors were selected from a box of 16 Crayola non-toxic crayons. Because there are multiple complexions for African Americans, the children's' complexions in the television commercials were placed in each category depending on how closely their complexion resembled one of the three colors. For example, if a child were light brown, the child was placed in the yellow category.

Out of the 52 commercials that were examined there was a total of 104 children that appeared to be African American between the ages of 5 and 12. A total of 37 children that appeared to be African American were depicted in commercials aired on ABC Saturday programming from 7:00 a.m.-12 p.m. There were 8 yellow children, 17 brown children, and 12 black children. On NBC out of the 12 commercials that depicted children that appeared to be African American between the ages of 5 and 12, there was a total of 23 children in the commercials from the combined recording from 7a.m. -12 p.m. and on another Saturday from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. Out of those 23 children, 9 were categorized as yellow, 8 as brown, and 6 as black. CBS Saturday morning children's programming from 6:00 a.m. - 8:00a.m. featured 10 commercials with children that appeared between the ages of 5 and 12. On CBS there were a total of 17 African American children that appeared to be between the ages of 5 and 12. Five of the children were in the yellow category, 11 were brown and one was black. From the 13 commercials that featured African American children between the ages of 5 and 12 on Fox, 14 children were categorized as yellow, eight as brown, five as black and 1 child appeared to be African American but was animated without color. The total numbers of children depicted for each category were, 36 children were yellow or light skinned, 44 were categorized as brown, 24 were black and one child was animated.

**Figure 4.2 Numbers of Children per Channel and Complexion Category**

	<i>FOX</i>	<i>ABC</i>	<i>CBS</i>	<i>NBC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yellow Children	14	8	5	9	36
Brown Children	8	17	11	8	44
Black Children	5	12	1	6	24
Animated Children that appeared African American	1	0	0	0	1
Total of Children per channel	28	37	17	23	105

*Gender and Complexion of Children in Commercials*

From the 105 children that appeared to be African American between the ages of 5 and 12, 67 were males and 38 were females depicted in the commercials.

On NBC, 6 males were yellow, 2 were brown, and 6 were black. There were three yellow females, six brown females, and six black females in the pre-recorded commercials that aired on NBC. NBC had a total of 14 males and nine females in the 12 commercial that aired featuring children that appeared to be African American between the ages of 5 and 12.

**Figure 4.3 NBC Gender and Complexion of African American Children between ages of 5 and 12**

	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Total per Gender</i>
Male	6	2	6	14
Female	3	6	0	9
Total per Category	9	8	6	23
Total Percentage	39%	34%	26%	100%

ABC had a total of three yellow males, 10 brown males, eight black males, five yellow females, seven brown females, and four black females. All together, the total gender of the African American children that appeared between the ages of 5 and 12 in television commercials that aired on ABC was 21 males and 16 females.

**Figure 4.4 ABC Gender and Complexion of African American Children between ages of 5 and 12**

	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Total per Gender</i>
Male	3	10	8	21
Female	5	7	4	16
Total per Complexion	8	17	12	37
Total Percentage	22%	46%	32%	100%



CBS had a total of two yellow females, four brown females, three yellow males, seven brown males, and one black male. The total of number of African American children that appeared between the ages of 5 and 12 on CBS Saturday programming between 6:00 a.m.-8:00 a.m. was six females and 11 males.

**Figure 4.5 CBS Gender and Complexion of African American Children Between ages of 5 and 12**

	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Total per Gender</i>
Male	3	7	1	11
Female	2	4	0	6
Total per Complexion	5	11	1	17
Total Percentage	29%	65%	6%	100%

On Fox, there were a total of 10 yellow males, five brown males, five black males, four yellow females, and three brown females. The total number of males on Fox Saturday programming from 7:00 a.m.-12 p.m., was 21 males and seven females.

**Figure 4.6 Fox's Gender and Complexion of African American Children between ages of 5 and 12**

	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Animated</i>	<i>Total per Gender</i>
Male	10	5	5	1	21
Female	4	3	0	0	7
Total per Complexion	14	8	5	1	28
Total Percentage	50%	29%	18%	3%	100%

The total result of the combination of gender and complexion on all four channels was 22 yellow or light skinned males, 14 yellow or light skinned females, 24 brown or medium skinned males, 20 brown females, 20 black or darker skinned males, and four occurrences of black or dark skinned females.

#### *Qualitative Study Results*

A total of five focus groups were conducted for the qualitative analysis. Four of the focus groups contained four children and the last focus group contained five children. The children in the focus groups were between the ages of 6 and 10. A total of eight African American females and 13 African American males were in the focus groups. The null hypothesis tested was African American children after viewing the selected 8 to 10 Saturday morning and/or Saturday children's programming television commercials, will not significantly desire to be lighter complexion. The alternative hypothesis was, African

American children after viewing the selected 8 to 10 Saturday morning children's programming television commercials significantly will desire to be lighter complexion.

**Figure 4.7 Focus Groups 1-5**

**Focus Group One**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Complexion</i>
female	9	yellow
female	9	brown
male	9	yellow
male	10	brown

**Focus Group Two**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Complexion</i>
female	7	black
male	8	black
male	8	yellow
male	8	brown

**Focus Group Three**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Complexion</i>
female	9	yellow
male	10	brown
male	10	brown
male	10	brown

**Focus Group Four**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Complexion</i>
female	9	black
female	8	brown
female	9	yellow
female	8	brown

**Focus Group Five**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Complexion</i>
male	6	brown
male	9	brown
male	8	brown
male	9	black
male	9	brown

The complexion of the children in the focus groups varied based upon the categories used in this study. The children were shown between 8 to 10 commercials depending on the consistency of the responses to the questions asked. The children only viewed each commercial once.

**Figure 4.8 Descriptions of Commercial, Children, Complexion, and Gender**

<i>Description</i>	<i>Number of African American Children</i>	<i>Complexion of African American Children in Commercials and Gender</i>
Quaker Granola Bites	4	2 brown males 1 brown female 1 black male
PSA: U.S. Health and Human Services: Flu Shot	7	1 yellow male 2 yellow females 3 brown males 1 brown female
Kool-Aid S.U.U	1	1 yellow female
McDonald's Happy Meal (Dentist)	2	1 yellow male 1 black male
Scholastic (Reading)	2	2 brown females
Tooth Tunes	4	1 yellow male 1 brown male 1 brown female 1 black male
PSA: Join PTA	2	1 yellow female 1 black female
McDonalds Happy Meal (Swimming)	2	1 brown male 1 brown female
PSA: School Nutrition Association	4	1 brown male 1 brown female 2 Black males
Chuck-E-Cheese	2	2 Yellow females

Only 2 out of the 21 children said that they did not watch Saturday morning programming. Most of the children had previously seen the commercials viewed in the focus groups. This was concluded based upon the children's reactions and their singing of the commercial jingles or quoting lines from the commercials.

The commercials that were chosen to be presented to the focus groups included at least one African American child between the ages of 5 and 12. Only the Kool-Aid S.U.S. commercial had one African American child, but the other nine commercials included two or more African American children. The Kool-Aid commercial was included in the commercials to watch, because the African American child in the commercial was one of three main characters, so the child was assumed to be easily recognizable.

After viewing the first four commercials the children began to notice the repetition of questions, hence the answers to the questions seemed to turn into random responses in some of the focus groups. To maintain consistency, a summary of the responses of the children from all five focus groups are listed below for the first four commercials seen by each group. Below are the children's responses to the Quaker Granola Bites commercial, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Flu Shot commercial, Kool-Aid S.U.S. commercial and McDonald's Dentist Happy Meal commercial. For the last focus group the first four commercials, School Nutrition Association commercial, Chuck-E-Cheese, Quaker Granola Bites, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Flu-Shot commercial were watched.

For most of the commercials, the children in the focus groups were able to recognize that there was at least one African American child in the commercial. The

commercials in which the children did not always identify that there was an African American child in the commercials were the Quaker Granola Bites, McDonald's Happy Meal swimming commercial, and the School Nutrition Association commercial.

The McDonald's Happy Meal swimming commercial featured two African American children. Two out of five focus groups did not notice any Black children in the commercial. Also, in one of the focus groups three out of four of the children said that they did not see any Black children in the School Nutrition Association commercial. This commercial was coded as having four African American children.

#### *Quaker Granola Bites Commercial*

The Quaker Granola Bites commercial was coded with having four African American children in the commercial. The children's gender and complexion were coded as two brown males, one brown female, and one black male. This commercial was the first commercial shown to each focus group. In two out of five focus groups all the children said that they did not see any African American children in this commercial. In the other two focus groups the majority of the children noticed that the Quaker Granola Bites commercial included African American children. For the two groups that did identify that there were African American children in the commercial, they noticed that the children were both light skinned and dark skinned.

When asked which color the children in the commercial should be, light skinned, dark skinned or White, nearly all of the children responded suggesting that all colors should be in this commercial. Nevertheless, one male child with brown complexion that was 10 years old from Focus Group 1 responded, "Every commercial I see, I think it's all White people, so I think it should be Black people because they never have a chance to

get on the commercials.” Another male child of brown complexion from Focus Group 3, when asked which color children should be in the commercial responded “except for White people.” A brown complexion male child answered the same question, “everybody.” In response to the brown complexion male child that said, “except for White people,” in Focus Group 3 said, “White people only” and the only female child who would be categorized as yellow in the group responded, “I think it should just be mixed with light skinned Black people.”

*PSA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Flu Shot*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services commercial was the second commercial viewed by the children and was coded as having seven African American children in the commercial. There were one yellow male, two yellow females, three brown males and one brown female. In all four focus groups the children recognized that there were African American children in the commercial both light skinned and dark skinned. When asked who they identify with the most or who they want to be their friend, the children responded with a variety of answers. Two children, one female age seven brown and a black male age eight, from Focus Group 2 identified with a girl that appeared Latino and was holding a pan full of fresh baked cookies. In Focus Group 1, both females age nine identified with a young girl in the commercial who was African American categorized as yellow. One of those females was brown complexion and the other was yellow complexion. A yellow complexion female in Focus Group 3 said she identified with the “light skin” children in the commercial, whereas a female of dark complexion from Focus Group 4 said “dark skinned.” When asked who they think should be in this commercial, light skinned or darker skinned people the response by one lighter

brown complexion male in Focus Group 1 stated, “I think black, like dark complexion, like my complexion and high yellow [high yellow is a phrase used to describe very light complexion African Americans that appear very close to White] because I like high yellow kids.”

*Kool-Aid S.U.S. (Serving Up Singles)*

The Kool-Aid commercial was shown to the children in all the focus groups. This commercial was the third commercial shown to the children and also the shortest commercial. As stated earlier this commercial was the only commercial that featured one African American child. Only 1 child out of the 21 children in the combined number of children in focus groups was unable to recognize there was a Black child in the commercial. In Focus Group 1, the children recognized that there was a yellow child in the commercial, but two out of the four stated they saw “light” skinned and “dark” skinned people in the commercial. Also in Focus Group 4, one female child saw two Black people. The children from Focus Group 1 unanimously stated that the light skinned girl would be the child they want to be their friend. Hence, the children in focus group two agreed that they wanted the child with the binoculars to be their friend. The child with the binoculars was a White male. When children from Focus Group Four were asked who should be in the commercial, one replied, “White people.” Another child replied, “All kinds of people.” In response to the previous answer “White people,” another child said, “Asian Black people from North America and South America Black people.”

*McDonald’s Happy Meal Dentist Commercial*

The McDonald’s Happy Meal Dentist commercial featured one yellow and one black male. The children in the focus groups did notice the African American children in



the commercials and their complexion. When asked the question about identification with characters in the commercial from Focus Group 1, the brown complexion male child said, “the little black boy, because he has hair like me.” From that same Focus Group 1 both females said the little girl in the commercial (the little girl in the commercial appeared to be of Latino descent). One of the two females said she identified with the girl because “she had a green shirt.”

### Summary

From the 347 commercials 52 commercials actually featured children between the ages of 5 and 12 that appeared to be African American based upon skin complexion, hair, and facial features. Out of the 52 commercials there was an overall total of 105 African American children found in the television commercials.

Overall more males were depicted in the commercials than females. Out of the 105 children found in the 52 (commercials that featured African American youth between the ages of 5 and 12), 64 % were males and 36 % were females. The complexion and gender that was featured most out of the commercials recorded was both the brown complexion African American male and female. There were 24 (23%) brown complexion males out of the 105 males found in the 52 commercials that featured African American children that appeared between the ages of 5 and 12. A total of 20 (19%) brown complexion females were featured out of the 105 children featured in the 52 commercials that featured African American children between the ages of 5 and 12. The complexion and gender that was featured least in the commercials recorded, excluding the one animated child, was the black complexion African American female and male. There were only 20 (19%) black complexion males out of the 105 featured in the 52 pre-

recorded commercials. There were merely 4 (4%) black complexion African American females depicted in the 105 children in the 52 commercials.

**Figure 4.9 Total Results of Complexion and Gender out of 52 commercials**

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total per</i>
	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Animated</i>	<i>Gender</i>
Male	22	24	20	1	67
Approximate Percentage	21%	23%	19%	1%	64%
Female	14	20	4	0	38
Approximate Percentage	13%	19%	4%	0%	36%
Total Number	36	44	24	1	105
Approximate Percentage	34%	42%	23%	1%	100%

Overall, there were more brown or medium complexion African American children between the ages of 5 and 12 depicted on all four channels with an approximately 42% of the children. The next highest complexion represented was yellow complexion African American children with approximately (34%). The lowest complexion represented was the percentage of black complexion African American children between the ages of 5 and 12 with approximately 23% of the children.

The channel with the highest percentage of occurrence of light skinned or yellow African Americans was Fox with 50%. The channel with the highest percentage of occurrence of brown or medium skinned children was CBS with 65%. The channel with the highest percentage of occurrence of black or darker skinned children was ABC with 32%. The channel with the lowest percentage of occurrence of light skinned children was ABC with 22%. The channel with the lowest percentage of occurrence of brown skin

children was Fox with 29%. The station with the lowest occurrence of black or dark skinned African American children was CBS with 6%.

**Figure 4.10 Channels with Highest and Lowest Percentage per Yellow Complexion**

<i>Channels</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Yellow</i>
Highest Percentage: Fox	50%
Lowest Percentage: ABC	29%

<i>Channels</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Brown</i>
<b>Highest Percentage: CBS</b>	<b>65%</b>
Lowest Percentage: Fox	29%

<i>Channels</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Black</i>
Highest Percentage: ABC	32%
<b>Lowest Percentage: CBS</b>	<b>6%</b>

All the children in the focus groups responded to the question, which child reminds you of yourself, based upon the role of the child in the commercials and not the

complexion of the child’s skin (see appendix C). When asked, who do you want to be your friend, collectively from the focus groups there were 19 responses for a light skinned child versus five responses for a black/dark skinned child. Next, when asked who they would play with on the playground from the commercials, most of the children identified the character by their role, but some of the children did respond based upon complexion. From the children who responded to the question who would you play with on the playground by complexion: three said everybody, one said a White person, one said a dark skinned person, three said light skinned and one said “me.”

**Figure 4.11 Children’s Responses to Whom They Would Play with on the Playground**

	<i>Everybody</i>	<i>Myself</i>	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black/Dark Skinned</i>
Children’s Responses	3	1	3	1	1

The children were asked who do you identify with the most or who reminds you of yourself? From all of the focus groups, ten children said they identified most with the Black children in the television commercials. Six children said they identify most with White people or that White people reminded them of themselves. Three children said that they identify with everybody or anybody. The children were asked, who do you think should be in these commercials? The overall results of that question from all the focus groups and all the commercials are 14 children said everybody/anybody should be in the commercial, eight children responded with Black people in general should be in the commercial, eight children said light skinned children should be in the commercials, and

eight also responded that dark skinned people should be in the commercials. Only one respondent indicated that mixed people should be in the commercials, and four children indicated that they wanted to see White people.

**Figure 4.12 Children Responses to Who they think should be in the Commercials**

	<i>Everybody/Anybody</i>	<i>Blacks in General</i>	<i>Yellow/Light Skinned</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black/Dark Skinned</i>
Children's Responses	14	8	8	4	8

Hence, when asked who do you want to see more of in the commercials, four children responded dark skinned people, two children said light skinned people, and one child said brown complexion. Further discussion about the results of the focus groups and the quantitative analysis will be discussed more in the next chapter.

## Chapter V: Discussion

This study attempted to discover whether African American children's self-perceptions were influenced by the skin complexion of the African American children they see in television commercials. The study sought to uncover, through both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis, if the attitude of "colorism" or "skin tone bias" exists in television commercials and among African American children who viewed these commercials. The quantitative analysis was used to measure the number of African American children featured in television commercials, the complexion of those African American children, and the gender of those African American children during Saturday morning television programming. The qualitative analysis was used to gather an understanding of how African American children perceive other African American children in television commercials based upon complexion. Questions were asked in focus group discussions to African American children between the ages of 6 to 10 that related to identity of complexion and self-perception.

The null hypothesis for the quantitative analysis was that there is no significant difference between the depiction of lighter complexion African American children and dark complexion African American children in Saturday morning programming on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox. The alternative hypothesis was that there is a significant difference between the depiction of lighter complexion African American children and dark complexion African American children in Saturday morning programming on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox.

Although the question of the number of commercials that depicted African American children was not the main emphasis of this study, it was very important to the

result of the hypothesis for the quantitative study. There were 347 commercials pre-recorded from the combining of Saturday programming on ABC and Fox from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., CBS from 6:00 a.m.-8:00 a.m., and from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on NBC affiliate channels that air in the Lynchburg, Virginia area. Out of the 347 commercials 15% of the commercials featured African American children that appeared to be between the ages of 5 and 12. According to the U.S. government 2000 census, a total of 36.4 million people or 12.9% reported being Black or African American (US Census). Mastro and Stern's study which was mentioned earlier (p.22) also found, that Blacks are represented proportionally in television commercials in comparison to the 2000 U. S. Census report. The quantitative study in this research supported Mastro and Stern's conclusions.

The null hypothesis was not supported; however, the alternative hypothesis was supported that in the pre-recorded television commercials there is a difference between the depiction of lighter complexion African American children and dark complexion African American that appeared in television commercials during Saturday morning programming on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox. The commercials were coded based upon a color scale that condenses the complexions of African Americans. The children were divided into three colors yellow, brown, and black. The colors of the children were compared to the shades of yellow, brown, and black found in a 16-pack of Crayola crayons. Forty-two percent (44) of the African American children coded in the commercials were of brown complexion and 34% (36) of the children were of yellow complexion. The overall sum of lighter complexion children found in the commercial

was 76%, thus supporting the alternative hypothesis that there is a difference in the depiction of lighter complexion children because they appeared more in the commercials.

Based upon these results, there is a neglect of black/dark complexion African American children in television commercials, thus reinforcing the attitude of colorism or skin tone bias. Twenty-three percent (24) of the African American children were categorized as black in the pre-recorded Saturday morning programming. This attitude underlines the mindset of producers, as they market the individuals in their commercials to a specific demographic that they want to reach.

Cultivation Theory suggests that heavy viewing of media by an individual evolves into the concept that what is viewed on television is reality. Regardless of the broadcast channel that was recorded in our study, an African American child who is a heavy viewer of any of these channels would believe brown complexion or yellow complexion is the idealized complexion of African American children in the United States. Only on ABC were black complexion African American children featured more than yellow complexion African American children in the commercials. CBS's programming featured barely one child (2%) in the 44 commercials that were coded during the hours in which the programs were recorded. Furthermore, based upon Cultivation Theory, black complexion African American children that are heavy viewers would want to be of a lighter complexion based upon the heavy representation of light skinned children.

In addition, the merging of complexion and gender would suggest that the African American children whose presence was neglected in the television commercials assessed in our study were black complexion African American females. From the four channels in which commercials were recorded with a cumulative total of 18 hours of



programming only on ABC was a black complexion female featured in commercials. The other channels featured the black complexion African American male, but the black complexion female's presence was extremely low, and, that only black complexion African American female was featured in a Captain Crunch commercial that aired four times during the allotted time of recording. The total representation of black complexion African American children that are females in the pre-recorded commercials was 4 (1%) out of the 347 commercials.

The second null hypothesis tested was that African American children after viewing the selected 8 to 10 Saturday morning and/or Saturday children's programming television commercials, will not significantly desire to be lighter complexion. The alternative hypothesis 2, African American children after viewing the selected 8 to 10 Saturday morning children's programming television commercials will desire to be lighter complexion. Based upon the children's responses from the focus groups, both hypotheses were found to be inclusive. There was not a strong significance found that would support either hypothesis; however, the children did have some noteworthy responses to the questions asked during the focus groups that indicate their preference for lighter skin.

### *Identification*

The children in the focus groups were asked several questions that related to the identification of the image of African Americans in the commercials. Questions of identification that were asked included: Did you notice any Black people in the commercial? How many? Where they light skinned or black skinned? Most of the children responded that they did notice African American children in the television

commercials that were viewed during the focus groups. The children also noticed the complexions of the African American children in the television commercials.

For example, in Focus Group 5's closing comments the males responded to the question: Whom do you see more in commercials, light skinned African Americans or dark skinned? Two brown complexioned male children responded that they "saw more dark skinned African Americans," but one male child responded that he saw "both." However, in the School Nutrition Association's commercial and the McDonald's swimming commercial the children did not notice any African American children, although all of the commercials did include African Americans. However, in Focus Group 2, the children often responded positively to seeing more children in the commercials than the number actually featured. The children in Focus Group 2 might have responded to seeing more, because of the age of the children in the room. Three of the children in this focus group were eight and one child was seven. This average of the age of the children in focus group 2 is 7.8. This is much lower than the average age of the children in the other four focus groups who averaged 8.2 or higher.

**Figure 5.1 Average age of the Children in the Focus Groups**

	<i>Focus Group</i>	<i>Focus Group</i>	<i>Focus Group</i>	<i>Focus Group</i>	<i>Focus Group</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Average age	9.3	7.8	9.8	8.5	8.2

Based upon the assumption of social comparison, individuals will make comparisons with similar others that resemble the individual based upon skin color.

Social comparisons only occur when an individual makes comparisons with others who are similar with respect to skin color, stature, opinions, abilities, and so forth. It is believed that comparisons with similar others provide more knowledge and more useful information. Without a similar other, individuals cannot determine or accurately assess their abilities. (as cited in Frisby, 2004)

In relation to the study, in Focus Group 4 which was compromised of two brown complexion females, a yellow complexion female, and a black complexion female, 3 out of 4 of the ladies desired to be lighter. The one light skinned female said she would like to remain her complexion. When these young ladies were asked who they wanted to be in the Kool-Aid S.U.S. commercial, they wanted to be Black, but 3 out of 4 said that they wanted to be the lighter skinned child, once again lighter than their current complexion.

The children in the focus groups did realize the function of the commercials and that the commercials were trying to sell a product. For example in Focus Group 1, the brown complexion male expounded about his dislike for the School Nutrition Association commercial because the main character in the commercial was doing his homework too fast. In relation to skin complexion, to help the children assess the skin complexion of the children in the commercials, questions were asked: Who do you identify with in this commercial? Is that person light skinned or dark skinned? Who would you play with on the playground? In Focus Group 5, which was comprised of all males, the children, when asked who they would play with on the playground, light skinned or dark skinned, overall said that they didn't care what child they played with on the playground. However, in Focus Group 4, which was comprised of all females, two of the females said that they would play with all light skinned people on the playground and that "it has to be a boy."

It is assumed by the responses of the children in Focus Group 4 that there is a connection between complexion and gender when it relates to their acceptance of an individual as a friend.

As stated earlier, the children began to notice the repetition of questions. For example, after viewing a McDonald's commercial and before being asked any questions concerning the commercial, one of the male children from Focus Group 3 stated, "Man, there were only White people. Where are all the Black people at?" When asked did he find this a problem, he replied, "Yeah, they should have everybody in there, every color." The facilitator responded, "Are you saying more Black people, light skinned or dark skinned?" The child responded, "Yeah, and some mixed people." Another child who was a female from the same Focus Group 3 responded, "I think that one should be White and mixed, because Ronald McDonald, he's White."

After viewing the Chuck-E-Cheese commercial the children from Focus Group 3 were asked, "Who do you want to see more in commercials, Whites, Blacks, and light skinned African Americans or dark Skinned African Americans?" One brown skinned male child replied, "I want to see medium colored people because I'm medium colored." The child's response to this question further stresses that children do relate the complexion of the characters in the commercial to the complexion of their own skin; hence, in this example the brown skinned male child in Focus Group 3 identified with and desired to see in commercials more children who had his same complexion. Children in Focus Group 5, when asked who should be in the School Nutrition Association commercial, which was the first commercial shown to their group, three out of the four that responded to this question said, "light skinned people," and one male responded with

“any people.” This question was asked to gather an understanding of who they considered “friendly” and “good” in the commercials. Also, in Focus Group 3, the only female in the group said she would like to see light skinned and White people in the commercials.

Another area in which the children identified with or would want to be their friend was based upon the role of the child in the commercial. The children in the focus groups would often respond that they would want to be the child who was the leading character or as in the Quaker Granola Bites commercial, which was set on a playground, the children would want to be the child that was playing a game that they would want to play on the playground.

In conclusion, the children in the focus groups did not noticeably identify the lightness and darkness of the African American children in the commercials. After the facilitator asked the children questions about complexion, then the children’s responses came concerning which complexion of African American children they would play with on the playground. The facilitator asked these questions about complexion because skin tone bias is something that is unconscious among African Americans like in John Stossel’s study mentioned in Chapter 1. However, if one looks at complexion beyond the African American race, the children did notice the representation of African American children in the commercials which they viewed in comparison to the representation of White children.

#### Limitations

It is apparent that both brown and yellow are lighter than black. This is considered a limitation because the shades of African Americans are so broad. Hence when one views a commercial, the determinant of complexion is based upon the individual’s

perception of what is light or dark. For example, an individual who would be classified as yellow based upon the scale in this study could potentially consider someone that is classified as brown in this study's scale as being black, because of the broadness of African American complexion shades. The opinion of the yellow complexion individual might change when the person that is categorized as brown is compared to someone of a darker shade of complexion. Potentially, the person that is categorized as brown will now be considered light skinned compared to the darker individual.

This study was conducted during the month of March, which follows Black History Month. In three out of five of the focus groups, the children mentioned the name of Martin Luther King Jr. and the equality of representation when asked who should be in the commercials. Thus, the children's responses might have been different if the study was conducted during the summer or fall seasons. Also, if the commercials were recorded during all four seasons, the commercials would be different and the percentage of African American children in television commercials potentially might be different. This might strengthen or weaken the support of the hypothesis. Another limitation of the study was that it only focused on broadcast channels, ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC. The results of the quantitative analysis potentially could have varied if cable channels were examined, such as Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network.

With a focus on technology used to analyze the results of the focus groups, video recording would have provided a visual documentation of the complexion of the children within the focus groups. The focus groups were recorded audibly to maintain the privacy of the children who were included in the focus group. However, if video were used, to further this research on self-perception, one could comprise a group of researchers to

compare the complexion of the children in the focus groups with their responses to questions about the complexion of the children in the television commercials. Another limitation would be the results of the qualitative analysis. It is somewhat impossible to accurately determine the thinking pattern of any individual whether child or adult. However, if a quantitative analysis were conducted based upon the results of the focus groups there might be stronger evidence of support for the hypothesis which in turn would project results in favor of the second hypothesis.

#### Future Research

The children in the focus groups did notice the lack of African American children in broadcast television commercials. During the Focus Group 3, one young lady commented on how if she could produce a commercial she would have Black people in it and the one White person should be happy to be in the commercial. For future research, to better emphasize and to discover if bias towards complexion exists among African American youth, a study could be conducted similar to Stossel's study mentioned in chapter one. In Stossel's study he asked individuals to look at photos of faces and determine the intelligence of the people in the photographs on a scale from one to five. But mixed in the photos were pictures of the same person, with his or her complexion altered to make that person look darker. In relation to this study for future research, three commercials can be produced in which the setting and plot are the same, but the complexion of the African American children of both male and female in the television commercials are different. Using computer technology, an alteration of the skin complexion of the children would take place in which the commercial viewed will have the same children but their complexion would be altered. For example, one commercial

would show the children as light skinned African American children, another with all dark skinned children, and the third commercial both light skinned and dark skinned children. The questions asked to the children in the focus group sessions would include: Which person in the commercial reminds you of yourself? Which character is beautiful or who is ugly? Who is “good” and who is “bad?” Who are smarter, lighter complexion children or darker complexion children? Do black complexion African American children in television commercials appeal to African American children?

The purposes of these questions are to determine whether dark complexion children view themselves as lighter than they actually are, or if they desired to be of lighter complexion, as well as, to determine how African American children view other African Americans based upon the lightness or darkness of complexion. Are darker complexion people viewed as ugly and bad or attractive and smart? The children in the focus groups would be African American, but the complexion of the children in each focus group would be the same. For example, one focus group would include all dark skin children and another would include children of lighter complexion, and the last would include children of very light complexion, as a child in Focus Group 1 would say, “high yellow.” The commercial would be shown in random order to limit the detection from the children that they are watching the same children and the commercials, but the children have a different complexion.

Another study for future research is to survey television commercial producers. The survey would ask questions to discover how producers chose child actors and actresses for their commercials. Furthermore, are African American children included in television commercials, based upon beauty, skin complexion, or acting ability? This



examination of producers' mentalities will also address the role of African American children in the television commercials. The same young lady in Focus Group 3 that said, "If she made a commercial with all Black people, one White person should be happy to be in it," also asked the question, "How come in the commercial the White people are doing the most interesting stuff and the Black people are just standing there all stiff and stuff?" The same concept behind that young lady's question would be asked to the producers if they consciously place African American children in minor roles or if it happens unconsciously? Do the African American children in the commercials that the producers' produce lack acting ability or are they in the minor/background roles because of the complexion of their skin?

Two more areas for future research are: (1) an examination in further detail of how gender and complexion potentially might be conjoined when children select a friend and decide to become a part of a social group and (2) an examination of African American children from various socio-economic status households to determine if African American children from different socio-economic households view and treat African American children of light and dark complexion differently?

### Recommendations

Although Mastro and Stern's study identified that Whites and Blacks are represented in television commercials the most and proportionally in comparison to the 2000 U.S. Census, the children in the focus groups of this study wanted to see more Black people (children) in television commercials. Based upon Cultivation Theory and Social Learning Theory and the comparison assumption of Social Comparison Theory, children who are heavy viewers of television will believe that what they are seeing is real,

compare themselves to the characters in the commercials that look like them and imitate the characters' behavior. That is why it is important for parents and teachers to educate children about the fictitiousness of television commercials and television in general. Finally, a recommendation to television commercial producers who create commercials targeted at children is to ponder about the message they are sending to their audiences based upon the complexion and roles of the children depicted in the television commercials. Hence, these messages that producers send through television commercials potentially can persuade and change a child's behavior and self-perception.

#### Summary

The alternative hypothesis for the quantitative analysis was supported. There was a considerable difference between the depiction of lighter complexion African American children and dark complexion African American children in Saturday morning programming on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox. The demographic that was found in less than 2% of the commercials was the black complexion African American child, more specifically the black complexion African American female that appears between the ages of 5 and 12.

Neither the second null hypothesis nor the alternative hypothesis tested during the qualitative analysis was supported due to lack of strength of significance based upon the findings from the focus groups. However, the results did conclude that African American children after viewing the selected 8 to 10 Saturday morning children's programming television commercials did equally respond that they would play with anybody (of any complexion or race) on the playground or with someone who they considered light skinned African American.

Aside from the focus of this study three things were noticed about the depiction of African American children in television commercials by the children in the focus groups: (1) the percent of representation of the African American children in television commercials, (2) the gender of the African American children that are in the commercials, and (3) the role of the African American children as being a background character. Even though the children in the focus groups did notice a lack of representation of African American children, in all of the focus groups they suggested that children of all colors should be featured in television commercials. In conclusion, skin tone bias, whether conscious or unconscious, still exists in the African American community. Furthermore, it is still found in the media and in television commercials.

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## Appendix A: Definitions of Terms

African American: an American of African and especially of black African descent

Blacks or Black American: see African American

Caucasian: of, constituting, or characteristic of a race of humankind native to Europe, North Africa, and southwest Asia and classified according to physical features -- used especially in referring to persons of European descent having usually light skin pigmentation

Colorism: see skin-tone bias

Self-Concept: the mental image one has of oneself

Self-Perception: the mental image of oneself

Skin-tone bias: a leaning or prejudice formed based upon the darkness or lightness of an individual's complexion.

White: an American classification of an individual by the light pigmentation of skin

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## Appendix B: Description of Focus Group Commercials

The commercials described below are the 10 commercials that were shown to the children in the focus groups. The ellipses in the text indicate a break in speech within the commercial.

### 1. Quaker Granola Bites

*Description: The children are on the playground playing different playground games.*

**Announcer:** Now when there out having a ball...it's even better to have them around...new Quaker granola bites yeah...ground breaking bites size snacks rolled in granola oats...New Quaker Granola Bites... kids cheering...yeah...

**Announcer:** Keep the goodness going!

### 2. PSA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Flu Shot

*Description: In this commercial, each child quotes a line about how they are waiting for their relative to come home.*

It is something very important...Grandma had to go out for just a little bit...Gramps said he won't be long...

**Announcer:** When fall comes around it time to get out for your annual flu shot...

He'll be right back...Nana always hurries home...

**Announcer:** The CDC recommends that all seniors get a shot to protect against influenza...

I'm keeping Grandpa's favorite seat warm for him...

**Announcer:** Because the flu can cause serious problems...

Grandma makes the best cookies but don't tell mom...

**Announcer:** Each year complication from the flu cause an average of 36,000 deaths...



Papa never misses lunch...

**Announcer:** So be sure to get your shots soon...

When Grandpa gets back were going to wrestle...

**Announcer:** After all it's important to a lot of people...

Grandma says I'm the best ...

**Announcer:** Be smart be well get your flu shot...

Here he comes...

**Announcer:** A Public Service Message from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

### **3. Kool-Aid S.U.S.**

*Description: Three children are flying in a search helicopter looking for the Kool-Aid cartoon character.*

We got to help him...look there he is ...we saw your S.O.S...

**Announcer:** S.U.S stirring up singles... Kool-Aid singles you make it yourself...grab a glass...Kool-Aid singles there best in a glass or a bottle... Oh yeah... kids cheering

### **4. McDonald's Happy Meal**

*Description: A boy is sitting in a dentist chair looking at a young lady eating a happy meal while the dentist hygienist is cleaning his teeth.*

Oh my...there you go...oh my goodness...my you certain are a drooling one ha he

**Announcer:** Their futuristic high tech and programmed for fun Robosapiens is at McDonalds...I can get a highly evolved toy in my McDonald's Happy Meal...McDonald's theme music

### **5. Scholastic**

*Description: The children in this commercial are creating a story. Each child is shown in the director's chair as they add a line to the story.*

White hair...and she has like a little gray hair here...and she has this pony tail...  
big eyes, big eyes... (sound)...and he lived in the lake of tears...which is really gross...  
There this other one ...looks like a hotdog...and he has hair all over him ...and he has a  
huge bump on his nose...and he's like slumped...basically ugly monsters (noise of  
monster)...

**Announcer:** Reading, everybody is doing it!

## **6. Tooth Tunes**

*Description: The children are in a factory setting being commanded on how to brush their teeth and then a young man interrupts the dictator to tell the children about a new toothbrush.*

Up down up down up down...Enough, check this out...Song (I want to rock and roll all night)

**Announcer:** This new tooth brush will rock your world. Introducing tooth tunes you get two minutes of music for two minutes of continuous brushing. Tooth tunes is the only brush that sends music to your teeth and into your head. Put some music into your mouth and choose from some of your favorite artist tooth tunes each sold separately. Music styles vary while brushing.

## **7. PSA: Join PTA**

*Description: The children are standing on steps positioned for a class photo. The children together are quoting a message to their parents.*

We need you to be involved in our school because when you are we get better grades and have a higher rate of graduation...we need you we need you to get involved with our school and maybe even get a pony...

Announcer: Hear what your kids are saying... get more involved...join your local PTA.

### **8. McDonald's Happy Meal**

*Description: The children are at sitting at the edge of a pool preparing to jump into the pool.*

Ok at the sound of three everybody in ...everybody...everybody Ronald...ooh kay...1-2-3 ...I told you it was no big deal...ba-da-ba-ba-ba

### **9. PSA: School Nutrition Association**

*Description: This commercial begins with the children in a classroom and one student is called to the board to solve a problem. The text below is what was said while the children were eating in the cafeteria.*

What did he eat for breakfast...you going to drink that orange juice?

**Announcer:** a well rounded school breakfast including whole grains, dairy, protein, and juice or fruit helps kids perform better in the classroom. Breakfast the best start to their day.

### **10. Chuck-E-Cheese**

*Description: The children are inside a Chuck-E-Cheese restaurant playing games.*

Chuck E Cheese-Uh huh...mmmhum...Oh yeah...Oh yeah...Oh yeah. Oh yeah...Chuck-E-Cheese...Chuck-E...Chuck-E...Chuck-E-Cheese it's cool for real.

## Appendix C: Focus Group Sessions

**Focus Group 1**

**Facilitator: I did not make these commercials. These are commercials that I took off Saturday morning children programs, and so when you watch ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, I kind of grab those commercial off of that. Let's go to the first commercial and what I want you to do is watch, and then I'm going to ask you some questions after the first commercial. OK, alright? I'm going to show you 10 commercial that comes on Saturday mornings.**

*Quaker Granola Bites Commercial*

**Facilitator: Have you ever seen this commercial before?**

Brown Female: yes

**Facilitator: you seen it before, you seen it before...**

**How often do you all watch TV on Saturday mornings?**

Yellow Male: I watch it two to four hours

Brown Male: I don't watch it that often, cause I don't like to watch it too long

Yellow Female: I watch it all day

Brown Female: I watch it on Saturdays

**Facilitator: Did you all notice any African American children in that commercial?**

Brown Male: I saw one

**Facilitator: The child that you saw was it [he or she] light skinned or dark skinned?**

Yellow Male: dark

**Facilitator: Based upon what you saw, which child in the commercial kind of reminded you of yourself on the playground?**

Yellow Male: child kicking the ball

Brown Male: the one that was on the playground playing basketball

Yellow Female: I saw one on the swing

**Facilitator: Out of all of the children, which one would you want to be your friend?**

Brown Male: the good one

**Facilitator: The good one alright is he Black, White...**

Yellow Male: he's dark skinned

Brown Male: I saw a high yellow kid on the commercial kid

Yellow Female: light skinned kid

Brown Female: light skinned

**Facilitator: High yellow on the commercial too?**

Yellow Male: yes

**Facilitator: How about you?**

Brown Female: light skinned kid

**Facilitator: Which color do you think the kids should be in the commercial, light skinned, dark skinned or all white?**

Yellow Male: I think all colors

**Facilitator: All colors?**

Brown Male: every commercial I see I think its all white people, so I think it should be black people because they never have a chance to get on the commercials

**Facilitator: next?**

Yellow Female: all colors

Brown Female: all colors

**Facilitator: For the Black people that are not in the commercials that don't have a chance to show their face, who should be in the commercial light skinned or dark skinned?**

Brown Male: both

*PSA: U.S. Health and Human Services: Flu Shot*

**Facilitator: Have you ever seen that commercial before?**

Brown Male: no, but they look really happy because they got a chance to show their face.

Yellow Male: yes, they are talking about flu shot. There was a little bit of Black people

**Facilitator: Looking at that commercial, which child in that commercial reminds you of yourself?**

Brown Female: the little girl

**Facilitator: Which little girl?**

Brown Female: the one with the curly hair

**Facilitator: Why does this one remind you of yourself?**

Light Female: the one that was sitting on the bed, because of the curly hair

**Facilitator: Was she Black or White?**

Yellow Female: Black

**Facilitator: What about you?**

Brown Male: the one that said, I can't wait til grandpa get home because we gonna wrestle.

**Facilitator: Which child in that commercial would you want to be your friend?**

Brown Male: the one that talk about wrestling in stuff

Yellow Male: the wrestling one, because I like to fight.

Brown Female: the little girl with the curly hair

Yellow Female: the one dressed like a princess

**Facilitator: What color people do you think should be in the commercial?**

Brown skinned Female: all colors

Light skinned Female: all colors

Brown Male: Jamaican people, because they get real happy because when Martin Luther King was there won't no white people treating us equally...some of the people get in the commercial is White, so they chose White.

Yellow Female: I think Black, like dark completion like my complexion and high yellow because I like high yellow kids, I like tease them and I like to say high yellow

**Facilitator: OK, I'm going to another commercial now**

*Kool-Aid S.U.S Serving Up Singles*

**Facilitator: Have you seen the commercial before?**

Brown Male: yep

Rest of the kids nodded: yes

**Facilitator: Alright, did you guys see any black people?**

Brown skinned Male child: I did

**Facilitator: Light skinned or dark skinned?**

Yellow Male: light skinned and dark skinned

Yellow Female: I saw light skinned and dark skinned, white and I think it should be the female

Brown Female: I saw light skinned people or dark skinned people

Brown Male: I only seen one light skinned girl and I thought she was light skinned and that kind of scared me

**Facilitator: Alright which child would you like to be your friend?**

Yellow Male: the Kool-Aid dude

Brown Male: the coco nut

**Facilitator: I'm talking about children (jokingly)**

Yellow Male: the light skinned girl, high yellow kids, and the dark skinned kids in the tree house

Brown Male: the light skinned girl

Yellow Female: the light skinned girl

Brown Female: light skinned girl

*McDonald's Happy Meal Dentist*

**Facilitator: Ok, how many Black kids did you see?**

Yellow Male: two Black kids

Brown Male: one

Yellow Female: I saw one Black kid

Brown Female: I saw 2

**Facilitator: Were they light skinned or dark skin?**

Yellow Male: won't they light skinned

Yellow Female: dark skinned and light skinned

Brown Male: I like this commercial because I like McDonalds

**Facilitator: Which child in that commercial reminds you of your self?**

Yellow Male: the little boy in the child



Brown Male: him and the other little boy

Yellow Male: the little girl

**Facilitator: Why?**

Yellow Female: not because she is mean because she has a green shirt

Yellow Male: the reason why I like the little boy because he got the happy meal he has the same hair as me, and when I see the commercial I think of the dentist.

Brown Male: because he look at girls a lot and I'm hungry

*Scholastic*

**Facilitator: Alright, have you ever seen that commercial before?**

Yellow Female: nope

Brown Female: yes

Brown Male: I haven't seen it before, I like that one because they talk about hotdogs

**Facilitator: Did you notice any children that you would like to be your friend?**

Yellow Male: the boy that um...um... everybody in the commercial, because I like to read and they like to read, one of like to eat hotdogs

Brown Male: I like the girl – she was light skinned

Brown Male: I like the boy because he like hot dogs

Yellow Female: the girl with the brace, because I'm going to get braces...I like the girl – she was light skinned and white mixed together

Brown Female: I like the girl and umm and they were all mixed...the girls were different colors

**Facilitator: Who do you think should be in the commercials?**

Yellow Male: me

Brown Male: me and hotdogs

Light Female: the same people and me and my friend- she's light skinned and dark skinned

*Tooth Tunes Commercial*

**Facilitator: How many Blacks did you see on that commercial?**

Yellow Male: I saw four

Brown Female: I saw six

Yellow Female: I saw five

**Facilitator: What about you?**

Yellow Female: about ten

**Facilitator: light skinned or dark skinned?**

Brown Male: light skinned

Yellow Female: light skinned

Yellow Male: light skinned, dark skinned, high yellow

**Facilitator: Which kid reminds you of yourself?**

Yellow Male Child: the little boy

**Facilitator: What about you?**

Yellow Female: I think the girl in the 2<sup>nd</sup> row

Brown Male: I like girls

Brown Female: I like the girl in the blue shirt because she looks like a couple of my friends and me –

**Facilitator: What color was she?**

Brown Female: she was mixed

**Facilitator: Have you seen this commercial before?**

All: yes, we have seen commercial before

*PSA: Join PTA*

**Facilitator: How many black people did you see?**

Yellow Male: I saw two because my cousin is in there and another little boy

Yellow Female: I saw one

Brown Male: I saw three,

Brown Female Child: one dark skinned

**Facilitator: Who do you think should be in this commercial?**

Brown Male: I think there should be more black people

Yellow Male: it should be equally like Dr. Martin Luther King said, equal, that's what Martin Luther King wanted

Brown Male: some people might not agree, let's say um I am Black for me it's White, and then she might not agree with some Black people. Then she might want equal White people and then I might want it equal White people, then everybody's happy and equal, that's what Martin Luther King Jr. wanted

**Facilitator: Which one would you want to be your friend?**

Brown Female: the Black girl

Yellow Female: the Black girl

**Facilitator: How about you?**

Yellow Male: the one that's say we can get a pony

**Facilitator: The White boy?**

Brown Male: I don't know

**Facilitator: Have you guys seen this commercial before**

Yellow Male: No

**Facilitator: Was that your first time?**

Yellow Female: yeah

Brown Female: nodded yes

Brown Male: I don't know

*McDonald's Happy Meal Swimming*

**Facilitator: Did you all see any Black people in there?**

Yellow Male: no

Brown Male: Yes, a couple

**Facilitator: you saw a couple?**

Yellow Female: no

Brown Female: no

Yellow Male: I saw a Black girl

Yellow Female: I saw a light skinned girl

*School Nutrition Association*

**Facilitator: Alright, any Black people?**

Yellow Male: I saw four

**Facilitator: Light skinned or dark skinned?**

Yellow Male: dark skinned

Brown Male: I didn't see none, I don't like that commercial...it

Yellow Female: I think about three black and light skinned people

Brown Female: I saw four and they were dark skinned and light skinned

**Facilitator: Which one would you want to be your friend?**

Brown Female: light skinned one

Yellow Male: light skinned

Brown Male: the light skinned boy

Yellow Female: the light skinned girl, because I think she was motivated

*Chuck-E-Cheese Commercial*

**Facilitator: Alright how many Black people did you all see in that commercial?**

Yellow Male: I saw six

Brown Female: I saw one

Yellow Female: I saw three

Brown Male: one was light skinned two were dark skinned

Yellow Male: one that I saw was dark skinned

**Facilitator: Which one would you want to be your friend?**

Brown Male: nobody

Yellow Female: I think all of them

**Facilitator: That's it, thank you!**

## Focus Group 2

**Facilitator:** This is what going to take place I'm going to show you guys 10 commercials. OK, ten commercials. I just want you guys to pay really close attention and I'm going to ask you questions about what you saw in the commercials, OK, we're going to get you started...

**Facilitator:** Before we get started how often do you guys watch TV on Saturdays?

Yellow Male: lots of TV

**Facilitator:** One Saturday, every Saturday...All of you guys? Like how many Saturdays? One Saturday, every Saturday like once or twice a month...

Black Male: like once or twice

Black Female Child: every Saturday!

Yellow Male: twice, sometimes more.

**Facilitator:** Alright, are you all ready?

All Children: yes.

*Quaker Granola Bites*

**Facilitator:** Alright so that's my first commercial, ok? Now I'm going to ask you some questions. OK....Have you ever seen this commercial before?

Group: yes

Black Female: I did

**Facilitator:** (directing question to a particular child) **Have you ever seen that commercial before?**

Yellow Male: no

Black Female: yes

**Facilitator: Yes?**

Black Male: yes

**Facilitator: OK, alright, in that commercial did you all notice any Black people in there?**

Black Male: no

Black Female: no

Brown Male: just White people

Yellow Male: all White people

**Facilitator: All White people? You didn't notice any Black people in there?**

Black Male: I didn't see any

**Facilitator: you didn't see any, OK, OK, now on the playground which child out of all of those kids would you want to people would you want to be your friend?**

Yellow Male: umm...the person that that had the bat and ball

**Facilitator: Why would you want them to be your friend?**

Black Female: I don't know

Black Male: I don't know

Brown Male: I don't know

**Facilitator: You don't know... (directing question to another child) What about you?**

Yellow Male: I don't know

**Facilitator: You don't know. What about you? (asking another child)**

Black Female: I like the girl that was pushing the ball

**Facilitator: Pushing the ball...OK, cool, cool. Ok, now in that commercial you guys saw kids, right? What color kids do you think should be in that commercial? Light**

**skinned African American kids, Dark skin Black kids or African American kids or White children? Which ones?**

Yellow Male: I think all of them

**Facilitator: All of them**

Black Female: I think all of them too

Yellow Male: I think it suppose to be the White...all the colors that is up in the world

Brown Male: yeah, me too

Yellow Male: Martin Luther King had a speech for everybody.

Black Male: everybody

*U.S. Health and Human Services: Flu Shot*

**Facilitator: Alright, in that commercial right there...How many Black kids did you all see?**

Black Male: one

Yellow Male: umm... like 10

Black Female: 15

**Facilitator: you?**

Brown Male: seven

**Facilitator: Seven black kids, OK now, were they light kids or dark kids?**

Yellow Male: dark skin

Brown Male: light skin

Black Male: both

**Facilitator: Both, ok...next question would you want to be your friend...let's start right here...**



Brown Male: the one that said that the people are in dead

Yellow Male: girl with the cookies

Brown Male: I like the girl with the cookies

**Facilitator: Why you like the girl with the cookies**

Black Female: because she says don't tell her mom

**Facilitator: Was she white or black?**

Light Male: White and other children...White...no...kinda White, I forgot

Black Female: kind of light skin

**Facilitator: Which color do you think kids should be in the commercial?**

Black Female: huh

**Facilitator: Which color do you think kids should be in the commercials, light skin, dark skin, Black?**

Yellow Male: equal

Black Female: Black

**Facilitator: Light skinned black people or dark skinned black people?**

Black Male: light skinned Black

Yellow Male: both

Brown Male: equal

*Kool-Aid S.U.S Serving Up Singles*

**Facilitator: Alright in that Kool-Aid commercial, did you all see any Black people in there?**

Brown Male: no

Yellow Male: a Black girl and White one

**Facilitator: Black girl and White one**

Black Female: Black girl and two white girls

Black Male: all White, one Black

**Facilitator: Light skinned or dark skinned**

Yellow Male: same color

**Facilitator: Same color as you (light) she said she saw some black people too right here, were they light skinned or dark skinned?**

Black Male: light skinned

Brown Male: a little bit dark skinned

**Facilitator: Ok out of all of those kids which ones would you want to be your friends?**

Yellow Male: the one had the goggles

Brown Male: the one who said I saw your SOS

Black Male: oh yeah me too

*McDonald's Happy Meal Commercial Dentist*

Yellow male: oh I saw this one before

Black Female: me too

**Facilitator: Ok, how many Black kids did you see?**

Yellow Male: one

Black Male: one

Brown Male: one

Black Female: I saw five

Yellow Male: that is not right.

**Facilitator: You saw how many Black? There is no wrong answer**

Black Male: one

**Facilitator: Light skin or dark skin?**

Yellow Male: Light skin

Black Male: Dark skin

**Facilitator: Out of that commercial which commercial reminds you of yourself?**

Yellow Male: ahhh, the boy that ...the boy that had the things over his mouth

Brown Male: the boy with the ...the...the

Yellow Male: things up in his mouth

Brown Male: yeah!

Brown Male: the girl that was eating the chicken nuggets

**Facilitator: The girl that was eating, what?**

Black Female: the girl that was eating the chicken nuggets

**Facilitator: Why was that?**

Black Male: I don't know

*Scholastic Commercial*

**Facilitator: Alright out of that commercial how many Black people did you see?**

Yellow Male: one

Black Female: two

Black Male: one

Brown Male: seven

**Facilitator: Seven black people, one light skinned...two light skinned...how about you?**

Brown Male: light skin

Black Male: light skin

Yellow Male: dark skin like...

**Facilitator: my complexion (facilitator complexion is medium brown)?**

Black Female: light skin

Yellow Male: dark, dark

**Facilitator: Which child would you like to be your friend?**

Brown Male: dark

Yellow Male: The one who said his ...taste like a hot dog.

Black Female: I like the girl who said... in the yellow

Yellow Male: I like the blue shirt ...it reminds me of somebody

Black Male: the girl with the braces

**Facilitator: Ok, which one reminds you of yourself?**

Yellow Male: The boy in the blue shirt, who takes his shirt off, that's what I do

*Tooth Tunes Commercial*

Black Female: Up down

Yellow Male: Up down

**Facilitator: Alright in that commercial, how many Black kids did you see?**

Brown Male: None

Yellow Male: I saw like I think 1 because I couldn't see all of them

Black Female: None

**Facilitator: None, how many Blacks did you see?**

Brown Male: three

Yellow Male: four

Black Female: I say one, I say one

**Facilitator: Which person in that commercial reminds you of yourself?**

Yellow Male: the first little Black one

Brown Male: the one that looks like he's eating this thing and I do that

**Facilitator: Was he White or Black?**

Brown Male: White

Black Female: the black hair

**Facilitator: Was he White or Black?**

Black Female: White

Black Male: the person that said nothing

**Facilitator: nothing? OK, which one would you like to be your friend?**

Yellow Male: The boy who use his tooth brush

Brown Male: The boy who washing back here? White boy

**Facilitator: Washing back here? OK**

Brown Female: I don't know

**Facilitators: Alright, have you guys seen that commercial before**

Black Female: yes

Yellow Male: yes

*PSA: Join PTA*

**Facilitator: Alright, have you guys seen that one?**

Yellow Male: naw

Black Female: I've seen all of those commercials

**Facilitator: Alright, my questions anybody seen any African American?**

Black Female: two

Yellow Male: Black people

Brown Male: light Black people

Black Female: I see two of them right in the front

Yellow Male: two, I see two

**Facilitator: Ok, my question for you guys is which one would you want to be your friend?**

Black Female: the girl that was singing

Black Male: the last boy that was singing

Yellow Male: same thing, the last one that was singing

Brown Male: last one that was singing

*McDonald's Happy Meal Swimming:*

**Facilitator: Alright, how many Black people did you see?**

Yellow Male: all white

**Facilitator: All white, what about you?**

Yellow Male: I'm nine years old and they were all white

Black Female: white

Black Male: I seen a whole bunch of black people

**Facilitator: Is that the first time you seen this commercial?**

Black Female: no, I've seen it cause the boy that said no big deal

Yellow Male: oh yeah, I've see a whole bunch

**Facilitator: OK watch this one right here**

*School Nutrition Association*

**Facilitator: Ok, how many black people?**

Yellow Male: ahhh, none

Brown Male: none

Black Male: None

**Facilitator: None?**

Black Female: five

Black Male: I seen ...none

**Facilitator: Who do you think should be in that commercial?**

Yellow Male: equal

Black Male: equal

**Facilitator: White, Black, what people?**

Black Male: White people

**Facilitator: White people?**

Yellow Male: All

**Facilitator: Next commercial**

Black Female: When you go to Chuck-E-Cheese, you can smack those things

*Chuck-E- Cheese Commercial*

**Facilitator: Alright last commercial, how many Black people did you see in there**

Black Female: two

Black Male: two

Yellow Male: one

Brown Male: two

**Facilitator: Who would you want to be your friend?**

Brown Male: boy with the ball

**Facilitator: Why would you want the boy with the ball to be your friend?**

Brown Male: I want, I want the person who is in the restaurant, because we can play ball

**Facilitator: Which one reminds you of your self?**

Black Male: the ball, the boy that play ball

Yellow Male: the boy that was in the pin, playing basket ball

**Facilitator: Ok, what about you?**

Brown Male: the person with the shooting

**Facilitator: the person with, what?**

Brown Male: the shoes

**Facilitator: That's everything... Thank you guys...**



### Focus Group 3

**Facilitator:** Hold up let me tell you what we are about to do okay. I'm going to need your attention the more you get it together the quicker you guy can get out of here and do what you have to do. Now I am doing a project for my school. I go to Liberty University and I'm writing a very huge paper it's called a thesis.

Yellow Female: it's another woman that comes here that goes to Liberty University named Jan, the tutor.

**Facilitator:** Okay, I want to show you some commercials and ask you a couple of questions about the commercials okay?

Yellow Female: at your school?

**Facilitator:** No, these are commercials right here! So, what you are going to do is you're going to watch the commercials and after that commercial I'm going to ask you a couple of questions.

**Facilitator:** My first question is how often do you guys watch Saturday morning TV?

Yellow Female: I don't watch TV, I'm at home outside

Brown Male (1): I watch TV at home on Saturday, but the only commercials I see are about violence wrestlers and video games and about people trying to persuade us to go to Wal-Mart's and buy there stuff

**Facilitator:** What about you?

Brown Male (2): Red ball commercials and slapping crack cocaine in their faces

**Facilitator:** My question is do you watch Saturday morning's children programs?

Brown Male (3): yeah

Yellow Female: no

**Facilitator: okay we are about to watch these commercials so pay attention**

*Quaker Granola Bites Commercial*

**Facilitator: Have you guys seen that commercial before?**

Brown Male (1): yeah

Yellow Female: no

Brown Male (3): I eat his oatmeal

**Facilitator: How many Black people did you notice in that commercial?**

Yellow Female: one

Brown Male (1): none

Brown Male (2): lots

**Facilitator: Okay for the ones that you guys noticed were they light skinned or dark skinned?**

Brown Male (3): lighted skinned

Brown Male (2): some light skinned, some dark skinned

Brown Male (1): I just saw white people

**Facilitator: My question is out of all the kids that you saw in that commercial which ones did you identify with most?**

Yellow Female: that girl that was playing with that ball

**Facilitator: Who would you play with on the playground then, out of all those kids?**

Brown Male (2): anybody

Brown Male (1): that Quaker dude

Brown Male (3): myself

Yellow Female: the little girl hitting the ball

**Facilitator: So out of what you saw who do you think should be in that commercial light skinned African Americans, dark skinned African Americans or White people?**

Brown Male (1): every race, everybody

Brown Male (2): except for White people

Brown Male (3): White people only

Yellow Female: I think it should just be mixed with light skinned Black people

**Facilitator: we're going to the next commercial**

*PSA: U.S. Health and Human Services: Flu Shot*

**Facilitator: How many Black people did you notice?**

Brown Male (2): like four

Brown Male (3): they were light

Yellow Female: some Black people some white people

Brown Male (3): I saw six Black people

Brown Male (1): three White people

Yellow Female: it was a mixture of everybody

**Facilitator: Who did you identify with the most?**

All children: Black people

**Facilitator: The light skinned Blacks or the dark skinned Blacks?**

Brown Male (1): the lighted skinned ones

Yellow Female: I saw more Black people than white people in that one

*Kool-Aid S.U.S. Serving Up Singles*

**During Commercial: I wish I was on that Island...**

**Facilitator: Who did you see in this commercial?**

Yellow Female: I saw a whole lot of white people but only one black girl

**Facilitator: Was she light skinned or dark skinned**

Yellow Female: kind of light skinned

Brown Male (2): I saw two white boys and one black girl

Brown Male (1): three girls

Brown Male (1): I saw all white people

**Facilitator: Who did you identify with the most?**

Yellow Female: the white people

Brown Male (2): the white people

**Facilitator: Who do you think should be in the commercial?**

Brown Male (2): White people

Yellow Female: all kinds of black types

Brown Male (1): Asian blacks people North America black people, South America black people

*Scholastic Commercial*

Brown Male (2): I saw white and mixed people

Brown Male (3): I saw one black person

Yellow Female: two mixed people

**Facilitator: Which color people do you think should be in this commercial?**

Yellow Female: Black

Brown Male (2): Black

**Facilitator: dark skinned or light skinned?**

Brown Male (2) & Brown Male (3): dark skinned

Brown Male (1): light skinned

**Facilitator: My complexion?**

Brown Male (2): dark skinned, your complexion and my complexion

Yellow Female: I'm medium skinned

*PSA: Join PTA*

**Facilitator: What did you see?**

Brown Male (3): Black girl

Brown Male (1): a lot of White people and no Black people

Brown Male (2): no mixed people, none

*McDonald's Happy Meal Swimming*

Brown Male (1): man there were only White people, where are all the Black people at

**Facilitator: Do you find that is a problem?**

Brown Male (1): yeah they should have everybody in there, every color

**Facilitator: Are you saying there should be more Black people in this McDonald's commercial?**

Yellow Female: yeah

**Facilitator: light skinned and dark skinned**

Brown Male (2): yeah and some mixed people

Brown Male (1): I think that one should be white and mixed, because Ronald McDonald he's White

*Chuck-E-Cheese Commercial*

Yellow Female: all white people

Brown Male (3): all white people

Brown Male (1): all white people

**Facilitator: Who do you want to see more in commercials Whites, Blacks, light skinned African Americans or dark skinned African Americans?**

Brown Male (2): I want to see medium colored people because I'm medium

Yellow Female: light skinned, White people

*Tooth Tunes Commercial*

**Facilitator: Did you all see any Black people in this commercial?**

Brown Male (1): we saw everybody, every color something for every kid

Brown Male (2): no it's just every color

Brown Male (3): we saw everybody white

**Facilitator: Do you find that the majority are white people in commercials?**

Yellow Female: It's more White people in the world than blacks, man

**Facilitator: Who were the majority of the people that you saw?**

Light skinned girl: light skinned

**Facilitator: Would you desire to be in any of these commercial?**

Yellow Female and Brown Male (2), Brown Male (3): yeah

Brown Male (1) child: no

**Facilitator: This is my last questions for you guys. Being that there are more Whites in commercials do you guys want to see a change?**

Brown Male (2): yeah, the one where the boy said, "we can get a pony"

**Facilitator: When do want to see them?**

Brown Male (3): I want to see them so that everybody will get a chance to be in a commercial

**Facilitator: If you could substitute any of these people which one would you want to be and in which commercial?**

Yellow Female: the White

Brown Male (2): the one with the dude with the tray

Brown Male (3): the Chuck-E-Cheese one

Brown Male (2): the one that say can I get a pony

Brown Male (3): I want to be in the one with the Kool-Aid people

#### Focus Group 4

##### *Quaker Granola Bites Commercial*

**Facilitator: For the commercial that you saw what did you see?**

Brown Female (1): I saw lots of kids and they had granola bites

Yellow Female: children playing basketball put it in the hoop

**Facilitator: Did you guys see any Black people in these commercials?**

All Females: no

**Facilitator: No Black people?**

All Females: no

**Facilitator: Who do you think should be in these commercials?**

All Female: Black people

**Facilitator: Should they be light skinned or dark skinned?**

Black Female: light skinned and dark skinned

Yellow Female: dark skin

Brown Female (2): about your color

**Facilitator: light skinned like me?**

**Facilitator: Out of all those kids in the commercial which ones did you identify with most?**

Black Female: I would play with the black person.

Brown Female (1): I would let the white people play me too but they better be nice.

Yellow Female: I play with all kinds

**Facilitator: You have to say who you identify with on this commercial.**

All Females: the blacks



Yellow Female: dark skinned

Black Female: light skinned and dark skinned

Brown Female (1): light skinned

*PSA: U.S. Health and Human Services: Flu Shot*

**Facilitator: how many black people did you see in that?**

Brown Female (2): none

Black Female: I saw four

Brown Female (2): I saw like five of them

**Facilitator: Out of the ones that you saw which ones did you identify with the most?**

Brown Female (2): the little girl on the bed

Brown Female (1): most white people

**Facilitator: Do you mean that you want to be like White people or like the Black people?**

Brown Female (1): No, I want to be like the Black people

Brown Female (2): How come in most commercial there are only White people?

**Facilitator: hmm...in most commercials there are only White people. What would you like to see in those commercials?**

Black Girl: Black people

**Facilitator: What kind of Black people, dark skinned male or female?**

Black Female: Both, male and female

Brown Female (1): How come in the commercial the White people are doing the most interesting stuff and the Black people are just standing there all stiff and stuff?

**Facilitator: What about you?**

Brown Female (2): White people better not be having fun we Black people are having fun

Black Female: we have fun

Brown female (1): if I was part of the community I would put some Black people up in there ...more Black people. The White people better be happy there are some White people up in there.

Brown Female (2): they should have more Black people in commercial than White people

Black Female: White people ain't all that and a bag of chips

*Kool-Aid S.U.S. Serving Up Singles*

**Facilitator: How many black people did you see in there?**

Yellow Female: I saw two Black people

Brown Female (2): I seen one white girl

Brown Female (1): How come in every commercial they put white people in the commercials?

Black Female: the people who buy the shows they are white so they put white people in commercials

Brown Female (2): Why do they have to keep on putting white people on the commercials?

**Facilitator: Who do you want to be in that commercial?**

Black Female: I want to be the Kool-Aid

Brown Female (2): I want to be a Black people

Brown Female (1): I want to be a Black person, I don't care but it better be some chocolate up in there

**Facilitator: light skinned or dark skinned?**

Black Female: light skinned

Yellow Female: dark

Brown Female (2): I want to be lighter

Black Female: I want to be light skinned

Brown Female (1): I want to be my complexion I am now

Black Female (2): I want to be a Black person

**Facilitator: like darker than you are now or lighter?**

Brown Female (2): lighter

Yellow Female: no kind of darker

Black Female: I want to be lighter, no, I want to be dark, dark

Brown Female (2): I want to be lighter

Brown Female (1): I want to be lighter too

*McDonald's Happy Meal Dentist*

Yellow Female: I only saw two Black people

Brown Female (1): I saw two Black persons, one of them drooling, I saw this girl kind of light skinned girl, it was a whole lot of white people it's a whole lot of Black people how come the pal

Black Female: We need to get another Martin Luther King Jr. in here

Brown Female (2): We need more Black people and not more White people

**Facilitator: Who do you guys want to see more of in these commercials dark skinned or light skinned?**

Black Female: light skinned

Brown Female (2): dark skinned

Brown Female (1): dark skinned

Black Female: dark skinned...light skinned

Yellow Female: dark skinned

*Scholastic Commercial*

**Facilitator: How many Black people did you all see in that commercial?**

Black Female: I only saw three black people

Brown Female (2): there were more light skinned people

Brown Female (1): it was these white people playing and more like two lighted skinned people

**Facilitator: more what?**

Brown Female (2): It was two lighted skinned people

**Facilitator: There were more light skinned people?**

Yellow Female: not really it was more like two light skinned people and more Black people

Brown Female (2): I saw eight White people in there

**Facilitator: you didn't see any black people**

Brown Female (1): I only saw three Black people

**Facilitator: eight white people**

Black Female: That is just sad they forgot about how Martin Luther King had everything?

**Facilitator: um good question**

Brown Female (2): okay we need more Black people not more white people

Black Female: didn't I just tell you that we need more Martin Luther King in this world

**Facilitator: okay then who did you identify most with in this commercial?**

Black Female: White people

Brown Female (2): Black people

Brown Female (1): I identify most with Black people

**Facilitator: Who would you want to be in this commercial?**

Black Female: I want to be a Black person

Yellow Female: I to be a Black person

Brown Female (2): I want commercials with black people

**Facilitator: okay, okay guys so**

Brown Female (2): like on the news there is only two Black women and eight Black man on there

**Facilitator: y'all ready? I'm gonna give you another one**

*PSA: Join PTA*

**Facilitator: Have you guys seen this before?**

Black Female: No, but it's funny

**Facilitator: I think you had your hand raised**

Brown Female (1): I only saw like three or four black people in there and I probably saw about five white people

Yellow Female: I saw three Black people up in there

**Facilitator: hold-up guys, let's take this serious**

Brown Female (2): I only saw one Black woman

**Facilitator: One Black woman or one black child?**

Black Female: One Black child

**Facilitator: Male or female?**

Black Female: Female

*McDonald's Happy Meal Swimming*

**Facilitator: alright, now from that commercial right there how many Black people did you see?**

Brown Female (2): I only seen one Black child and they need more Black people

Black Female: it was like only three of them

Brown Female (1): in that commercial I didn't see no Black people

Yellow Female: I only saw one Black person, it looks like I saw a like skinned person like me

**Facilitator: you didn't see any Black people**

Brown Female (1): no

**Facilitator: okay what did you see?**

Black Female: I only saw one Black person and it looked like he was in the background

Yellow Female: It looked like I saw a light skinned person like me

**Facilitator: now from that commercial that you just saw who did you identify with?**

Black Female: White people

Brown Female (2): Black people

Yellow Female: Black people

Brown Female (1): I forgot what identify means

**Facilitator: identify means who do you relate to**

Brown Female (1): The Black people

**Facilitator: who you have something in common with?**

Brown Female (2): We have something in common, we want more black people

*Chuck-E-Cheese Commercial*

Brown Female (2): I didn't see any Black people

**Facilitator: you didn't**

Brown Female (1): I saw both Black people and then about like eighteen more White people

**Facilitator: okay**

**Facilitator: so who should be in this commercial?**

Brown Female (1): Black people

Black Female: Black people

Brown Female (2): we need Black people

**Facilitator: we need more Black people in this commercial**

Brown Female (1): what you needed us for?

Brown Female (2): she's just asking a question, what are we watching these for?

**Facilitator: for my project, when I'm finished with it I'll come back and share it with you guys, okay?**

**Facilitator: one more**

*Tooth Tunes Commercial*

*During commercial: brown skinned girl, said I saw eighty of them*

**Facilitator: wait a minute, one question did you guys see any Black people in there**

Black Female: yes

**Facilitator: you did**

Yellow Female: no

**Facilitator: you said yes first, yes or no**

Black Female: no

**Facilitator: what about you?**

Yellow Female: I saw something like one Black person and that was a girl

**Facilitator: that was a girl**

Brown Female (2): I saw a million White people

Brown Female (1): I saw some Black people and a gazillion White people

**Facilitator: So, would you play with any of these people on the playground?**

Brown Female (1): no

Black Female: no

**Facilitator: why not?**

Brown Female (1): because they would be too bossy

Black Female: you know White people

**Facilitator: so who would you rather play with a light skinned person or a dark skinned person?**

Brown Female (2): a light skinned person

Black Female: light skinned and I would like to play with a dark skinned person

Brown Female (1): and it has to be a boy

Black Female: yeah it has to be a boy

**Facilitator: okay guys, this is my last question before you guys. Do you guys have any comments?**

Brown Female (1): yes, I do

**Facilitator: what do you want to say?**



Brown Female (2): we need more black people

**Facilitator: okay, what do you want to say?**

Brown Female (1): that's a great commercial but I want to see some more black people

I'll be happy

**Facilitator: light skinned or dark skinned?**

Black Female: light skinned

Brown Female (1): if I see a commercial with mostly black people in it I would go pop  
some popcorn

**Facilitator: you would pop you some popcorn?**

Brown Female (1): and just make a nasty combination and just eat it if I saw some black  
people

**Facilitator: alright, thank you guys**

**Focus Group 5**

All watch Saturday morning programming.

Brown Male (1): I don't watch Saturday morning...

Brown Male (3): I don't have cable

*PSA: School Nutrition Association*

Brown Male (3): I've seen this...

**Facilitator: For that commercial right there, what did you guys think about that commercial?**

Brown Male (1): It's about lunch in school

Brown Male (5): It was about eating breakfast and making you smarter

**Facilitator: did you guys see any Black people in that commercial?**

Black Male: Yeah

Brown Male (3): Yeah

**Facilitator: how many?**

Brown Male (1): I saw half

Brown Male (2): I saw one

Brown Male (3): I saw two

**Facilitator: what about you?**

Black Male: I saw three

**Facilitator: you said you didn't see any**

Brown Male (5): no

**Facilitator: okay, cool**

Brown Male (2): I was looking at the food.

**Facilitator: alright, now were they light skinned or dark skinned the ones that you saw?**

Brown Male (1): White and um light skinned

Black Male: Chocolate

**Facilitator: what about you**

Brown Male (3): Light

Brown Male (5): Light skinned

**Facilitator: light cool**

**Facilitator: now out of all those kids in the commercial which ones would you play with or want to be your friend?**

Brown Male (1): I want the dude that can smart

**Facilitator: the smart guy**

**Facilitator: what about you?**

Black Male: smart

Brown Male (3): smart...I make him do my homework and stuff

**Facilitator: who should be in this commercial though light skinned people, dark skinned people or white people?**

Brown Male (1): any people

Brown Male (3): light skinned

Black Male: light skinned

Brown Male (5): light skinned

**Facilitator: anybody**

Brown Male (1): I got some White friends and some light skinned and some dark skinned

Brown Male (3): I got friends of any color

Black Male: At my school I got a brown dude and I got three white dudes as my friend

**Facilitator: alright, cool**

**Facilitator: thank you guys I'm going to show you another one alright**

*Chuck-E-Cheese Commercial*

**Facilitator: so in that commercial did you guys notice any Black people in that one**

Brown Male (3): Yeah

**Facilitator: who did you notice?**

Brown Male (1): Chuck-E-Cheese

**Facilitator: he was Black**

Brown Male (5): He was White boy

**Facilitator: okay who did you notice?**

Black Male: I notice the boy who had the yellow shirt on he was dark skinned and I saw a light skinned person shoot the hoop

**Facilitator: what about you?**

Brown Male (5): me too

**Facilitator: what did you see?**

Brown Male (3): he shot in the hoop

**Facilitator: Now who do you think should be in this commercial?**

Brown Male (5): we

Black Male: we

**Facilitator: you guys**

Brown Male (5): yeah, cause I want to go to Chuck-E-Cheese

**Facilitator: okay**

**Facilitator: so who would you play with on the playground out of all those people?**

Brown Male (3): the one chunky

Black Male: the one that shot the basketball, he be on my team with somebody else

**Facilitator: alright I'm going to show you some more commercials okay?**

*Quaker Granola Bites Commercial*

Brown Male (3): I seen this commercial and I seen Chuck-E-Cheese too...boy I saw

Black people

**Facilitator: alright how many Black people did you all see in this one?**

Brown Male (1): I saw one

Black Male: I saw one

**Facilitator: what about you?**

Brown Male (4): I seen one

Brown Male (3): I seen one

**Facilitator: light skinned or dark skinned**

Brown Male (5): light skinned...it's like him (pointing to another male in focus group)

Brown Male (3): dark skinned

Brown Male (4): One

**Facilitator: one**

Brown Male (4): One dark

Brown Male (4): It's like him

**Facilitator: okay like brownish color**

**Facilitator: alright, so out of all those people who would you play with out of this commercial?**

Brown Male (1): Black person

Black Male: Chucky

**Facilitator: this is not chucky though this is another one**

Brown Male (1): that person that kicked the kickball

Brown Male (5): Basketball

Black Male: Sports

Brown Male (3): I might play with that little boy the hit that um

**Facilitator: okay I have a couple more to go, are you guys ready**

*PSA: U.S. Health and Human Services: Flu Shot*

Brown Male (3): I seen nine

**Facilitator: you saw nine Black people**

Brown Male (2): I seen like seven, eight, nine or ten

Black Male: I seen like eight or nine

Brown Male (5): I seen like white people and light skinned

**Facilitator: what about you?**

Brown Male (1): White people

**Facilitator: White people**

**Facilitator: who would you guys want to be your friends out of all these kids right here the light skinned children or the dark skinned children?**

All Males: Both

**Facilitator: both, alright here goes another one guys**

*Kool-Aid S.U.S. Serving Up Singles*

Brown Male (3): uhh! I've seen this commercial... I saw five

**Facilitator: five, Black people right**

Black Male: I saw like ten Black girls

**Facilitator: you saw ten Black people**

Brown Male (3): Twelve white people I meant

**Facilitator: twelve white**

Brown Male (5): I seen one red person

**Facilitator: one red person**

Black Male: Yeah, the Kool-Aid

Brown Male (2): One red person and one Black person

*McDonald's Happy Meal Dentist*

**Facilitator: for this commercial right here**

Brown Male (1): it was too many White people

**Facilitator: it was white people in there**

Brown Male (3): Brown people

**Facilitator: any Black people**

Black Male: I saw like five Black people

Brown Male (2): I saw like one Black person and three White people

**Facilitator: three White people, what did you see?**

Brown Male (5): I saw a Black boy and I saw a dark skinned boy

**Facilitator: so who would you want to be your friend?**

Brown Male (2): the dark skinned boy

**Facilitator: the one that was playing with the robot**

Brown Boy (2): yeah that the one that was like and the

**Facilitator: cool**

Brown Male (1): I didn't see no black person...

Brown Male (3): the dude was sitting in the chair

**Facilitator: you didn't see no Black people in there?**

Brown Male (1): oh yeah

*Tooth Tunes Commercial*

Brown Male (3): Oh I've seen this....that's what kind of toothbrush I got

**Facilitator: okay, how many Black people do you guys see in that commercial?**

Brown Male (3): five

Brown Male (2): ain't see none

Black Male: I seen one Black girl and I saw all White people

Boy child boy (5): I saw one Black girl and one White girl

**Facilitator: was she light skinned or dark skinned?**

Brown Boy (3): dark skinned

Brown Male (1): light skinned

**Facilitator: lighted skinned**

**Facilitator: of this commercial right here would you want a White child, light skinned African American or a dark skinned African American , who do you think should be in this commercial?**

Brown boy (3) child: light skinned

Black Male: All of them



Brown Male (2): a black skinned

Brown Male (3): a light skinned

Brown Male (5): a black skinned

Brown Male (4): a light skinned

Brown Male (1): anybody

**Facilitator: anybody**

Brown Male (1): Yeah, anybody

*McDonald's Happy Meal Swimming*

Everybody: oh, I seen this commercial before

**Facilitator: okay out of all that right there how many Black people?**

Brown Male (5): I see White people

Brown Male (3): I see one Black person

Brown Male (1): I saw White people

Black Male: I saw white and red person and a yellow person, his face was white and his hair was red

**Facilitator: Are you talking about Ronald?**

Black Male: yeah

**Facilitator: Okay so I'm going to ask you two more questions and then you guys can do what you have to do**

**Facilitator: So, who would you rather play with a light skinned person or a dark skinned person?**

Brown Male (1): anybody

Brown Male (2): anybody

Black Male: anybody

Brown Male (5): both

**Facilitator: Both, what about you**

**Facilitator: Who do think need to be in more commercials light skinned people or dark skinned people?**

Brown Male (1): dark skinned people

Black Male: dark skinned

Brown Male (3): or white people

Black Male: black people

**Facilitator: Alright you guys have any closing comments for me about the television commercials you just saw?**

All Males: no

**Facilitator: So, who do you see in the commercials most?**

Brown Male (3): Whites

**Facilitator: As far as African Americans, do you see more light skinned African Americans or dark skinned?**

Black Male: dark

Brown Boy (1): dark

Brown Male (2): both

**Facilitator: You got to see more of one than the other, which one do you see most?**

Brown Male (1): dark

Black Male: I saw more White

Brown Male (2): I see dark

Brown Boy (3): light skinned

Brown Boy (5): I see dark

**Facilitator: alright, that's it, thank you guys**

## Appendix D: Tables

**Figure 4.1 Results of African Americans in Saturday Morning Television****Commercials**

	<i>FOX</i>	<i>ABC</i>	<i>CBS</i>	<i>NBC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Commercials with children that appear African American and between the ages of 5 -12	13	17	10	12	52
Total number of pre-recorded Saturday commercials per channel	70	104	44	129	347
Approximate Percentage of African American and between the ages of 5-12 that appeared in the pre-recorded commercials	19%	16%	20%	9%	15%

**Figure 4.2 Numbers of Children per Channel and Complexion**

	<i>FOX</i>	<i>ABC</i>	<i>CBS</i>	<i>NBC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yellow Children	14	8	5	9	36
Brown Children	8	17	11	8	44
Black Children	5	12	1	6	24
Animated Children that appeared African American	1	0	0	0	1
Total of Children per channel	28	37	17	23	105

**Figure 4.3 NBC Gender and Complexion of African American Children between ages of 5 and 12**

	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Total per Gender</i>
Male	6	2	6	14
Female	3	6	0	9
Total per Category	9	8	6	23
Total Percentage	39%	34%	26%	100%

**Figure 4.4 ABC Gender and Complexion of African American Children between ages of 5 and 12**

	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Total per Gender</i>
Male	3	10	8	21
Female	5	7	4	16
Total per Complexion	8	17	12	37
Total Percentage	22%	46%	32%	100%

**Figure 4.5 CBS Gender and Complexion of African American Children Between ages of 5 and 12**

	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Total per Gender</i>
Male	3	7	1	11
Female	2	4	0	6
Total per Complexion	5	11	1	17
Total Percentage	29%	65%	6%	100%

**Figure 4.6 Fox's Gender and Complexion of African American Children between ages of 5 and 12**

	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Animated</i>	<i>Total per Gender</i>
Male	10	5	5	1	21
Female	4	3	0	0	7
Total per Complexion	14	8	5	1	28
Total Percentage	50%	29%	18%	3%	100%

Figure 4.7 Focus Groups 1-5

**Focus Group One**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Complexion</i>
female	9	yellow
female	9	brown
male	9	yellow
male	10	brown

**Focus Group Two**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Complexion</i>
female	7	black
male	8	black
male	8	yellow
male	8	brown

**Focus Group Three**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Complexion</i>
female	9	yellow
male	10	brown
male	10	brown
male	10	brown

**Focus Group Four**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Complexion</i>
female	9	black
female	8	brown
female	9	yellow
female	8	brown

**Focus Group Five**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Complexion</i>
male	6	brown
male	9	brown
male	8	brown
male	9	black
male	9	brown

**Figure 4.8 Descriptions of Commercial, Children, Complexion, and Gender**

<i>Description</i>	<i>Number of African American Children</i>	<i>Complexion of African American Children in Commercials and Gender</i>
Quaker Granola Bites	4	2 brown males 1 brown female 1 black male
PSA: U.S. Health and Human Services: Flu Shot	7	1 yellow male 2 yellow females 3 brown males 1 brown female
Kool-Aid S.U.U	1	1 yellow female
McDonald's Happy Meal (Dentist)	2	1 yellow male 1 black male
Scholastic (Reading)	2	2 brown females
Tooth Tunes	4	1 yellow male 1 brown male 1 brown female 1 black male
PSA: Join PTA	2	1 yellow female 1 black female
McDonalds Happy Meal (Swimming)	2	1 brown male 1 brown female
PSA: School Nutrition Association	4	1 brown male 1 brown female 2 Black males
Chuck-E-Cheese	2	2 Yellow females



**Figure 4.9 Total Results of Complexion and Gender out of 52 commercials**

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total per</i>
	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Animated</i>	<i>Gender</i>
Male	22	24	20	1	67
Approximate Percentage	21%	23%	19%	1%	64%
Female	14	20	4	0	38
Approximate Percentage	13%	19%	4%	0%	36%
Total Number	36	44	24	1	105
Approximate Percentage	34%	42%	23%	1%	100%

**Figure 4.10 Channels with Highest and Lowest Percentage per Yellow Complexion**

<i>Channels</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Yellow</i>
Highest Percentage: Fox	50%
Lowest Percentage: ABC	29%

<i>Channels</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Brown</i>
<b>Highest Percentage: CBS</b>	<b>65%</b>
Lowest Percentage: Fox	29%

<i>Channels</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Black</i>
Highest Percentage: ABC	32%
<b>Lowest Percentage: CBS</b>	<b>6%</b>

**Figure 4.11 Children’s Responses to Whom They Would Play with on the Playground**

	<i>Everybody</i>	<i>Myself</i>	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black/Dark Skinned</i>
Children’s Responses	3	1	3	1	1

**Figure 4.12 Children Responses to Who they think should be in the Commercials**

	<i>Everybody/Anybody</i>	<i>Blacks in General</i>	<i>Yellow/Light Skinned</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black/Dark Skinned</i>
Children’s Responses	14	8	8	4	8

**Figure 5.1 Average age of the Children in the Focus Groups**

	<i>Focus Group 1</i>	<i>Focus Group 2</i>	<i>Focus Group 3</i>	<i>Focus Group 4</i>	<i>Focus Group 5</i>
Average age	9.3	7.8	9.8	8.5	8.2

