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## **Interracial Advertising: A Comparative Analysis on YouTube Comments on a Controversial Interracial Commercial**

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Rochester Institute of Technology

School of Communication

College of Liberal Arts

Interracial Advertising: A Comparative Analysis on YouTube Comments on a Controversial

Interracial Commercial

by

Jeannine Alsous

*A Thesis* submitted

in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science Degree in

Communication & Media Technologies

Degree awarded:

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Interracial Commercial

Jeannine Alsous

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Master of Science in Communication & Media Technologies

Term Degree Awarded: Fall Semester 2016

Abstract

This paper examines online comments to an interracial family portrayed in two online commercials for Cheerios. The study focused on an in-depth review of literature of history, symbolic interaction theory, critical race theory and co-creation of value, followed by comparative content analysis of online comments and intercoder reliability test. Four-hundred total comments were analyzed; 100 positive from each commercial and 100 negative from each. The comments were chosen by a filtering method the social media site YouTube has to select and analyze the top and most popular comments from each. After collection, a comparative content analysis of the comments was conducted, classifying the comments in different categories. An intercoder reliability test was then conducted with three volunteers to categorize the comment in the section they best saw fit. The importance of this is to find trends of similarities in the comments posted targeting these interracial commercials. Several themes were common among all of the positive comments and of the negative comments in both videos. Both videos concluded that Supportive and Defensive were the most commonly selected themes among the positive comments and both videos concluded that Racism and Hate were the two most commonly selected themes among the

negative comments. Surprisingly after research was conducted, the answers of all three coders were very similar.

*Keywords:* interracial, Cheerios, race, brand, Symbolic Interaction Theory, Critical Race Theory

Interracial Advertising:  
A Comparative Analysis on YouTube Comments  
on a Controversial Interracial Commercial

It is not uncommon to see an interracial couple walking down the street, at the mall, at school or in any public establishment. Although interracial relationships are no longer prohibited by law, there still remains some social disapproval (Wong, 2012). “Given the history of slavery in America, African American/White marriages receive social stigma (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004) (but should no longer be a reason why this stigma continues) and such social stigma is linked to the rarity of these marriages” (Dunleavy, 2004). CNN reported on August 20, 2016 that “an interracial couple was attacked after a self-proclaimed white supremacist saw them kissing outside a Washington restaurant. The man confessed to stabbing the couple, saying he was a white supremacist” (Marco, 2016). Even in this post-racial society, there will always be those who disapprove and will fight against, even if this has become a norm.

Interracial families have been a hot topic in today’s media realm. The media has been used as a site for studying social trends and attitudes, specifically related to issues of race, gender, and class in America (Stewart, 2013). When it comes to interracial trends in advertising, there is still a negative stigma attached to the concept of an interracial couple. Marriages with spouses of a different race are likely to be at the receiving end of discriminatory behavior (Wong, 2012). The media is increasingly representing couples and families of the “interracial nature” broadcasted on national television, marketing a brand, or better yet a box of cereal, there is still unacceptance. Couples who are of a different race are also likely to lose social support from among their family and peers (Wong, 2012).

The term “interracial” is defined as “people of different races” (Interracial, 2013). According to the 2010 census, interracial and interethnic married couples have grown by 28% over the past 10 years (Newsroom, 2010). Interracial couples have become more common throughout the United States. The demographic increase in interracial relationships (IRRs) and bi- and multiracial people has generated a great deal of interest (Washington, 2012). With this interest, advertisers have taken advantage of this demographic when marketing their brand. Cheerios was among a national brand who was subject to scrutiny because of the casting choice in their commercial. It is evident that marketing professionals are becoming more aware of the diversified world and channeling that into their advertisements, especially the Cheerios brand. Shortly after the commercial was released, negative backlash and vitriolic comments surfaced on the company’s YouTube channel. The comments became so racist that Cheerios decided to disable their comments portion. Why so much drama over a cereal commercial? Looking back, there have been interracial commercials in the mainstream media. However, because Cheerios is such a ubiquitous brand, many would agree that is why they drew so much attention; positively and negatively.

Marketing communications work as representational systems and signifying practices that reflect, create and resolve cultural tensions of identity (Borgerson, Schroeder, Bloomberg, & Thorssen, 2006). The manner in which advertisements portray certain group identities, for example women, families and ethnic minorities, sparks debate among individuals (Borgerson et al., 2006). A recent Cheerios commercial sparked debate in viewers in the comments section of the commercial. The role of symbolic interaction theory (SIT) and critical race theory (CRT) can be used to examine the nature of the



comments. By conceptualizing the mind, self and society, SIT provides reasoning and interpretation for how interracial advertisements including couples and families resonate with the consumer. CRT “sets out to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines” (Santana, 2013). Companies such as the Swifter, Burlington Coat Factory, and Cheerios have utilized the increase in IRR’s in their advertisements.

### **Rationale**

Interracial and interethnic married couples have grown by 28% over the past 10 years (“Newsroom,” 2010). Advertisements are a way to portray certain group identities, for example women, families and ethnic minorities. This sparks debate among individuals (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002). These debates are most commonly seen on online forums or in the comment sections below videos and ads.

Examining the power of the Internet and the anxiousness of the commentators to express their opinion, it’s amazing in this era of technological advancement. Now that human beings are more and more exposed to digitally-mediated representations of human behavior and interaction, it is likely that the variety and size of actual human-to-human interaction declines. With this decline in human interaction, we as the human race have become more discriminate of one another. The reaction of these videos are not just opinions they possess reasoning behind every comment posted. Viewers apply symbols they see every day, apply their own opinion and then make a decision on how they relate with the product or message of the advertisement. Many advertisements act as a model of how life or society should be. In this research, the focus will be on the commercials, their comments and how the concept of the family having breakfast resonated positively or negatively to the viewer’s due to the race of the family.

### **Breakfast and Family: An American Staple**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that 82% of children eat breakfast at home before they head off to school (Basiotis, Lino, & Anand, 1999). The family environment is an important influence on the dietary behaviors of young people (Pearson, Biddle, & Gorely, 2009). Breakfast has always been a favorite among young children. They prefer over other types of breakfast food. As a child, many remember growing up eating Cheerios at the kitchen table with their parents and siblings. However, if that dynamic in any way portrayed something different, some individuals chose to speak up. When a national brand is displaying a certain culture in their advertisements, many viewers gravitate towards that brand due to their values or the sense of belonging. A brand is far more than its outward representation, like a logo, or advertising jingle and tagline. A brand is, “the set of expectations, memories...and relationships that account for a consumer’s decision to choose one product or service over another” (Alliance, 2016).

The culture and identity of a brand is what fuels marketers. The brand is one of an organization’s most valuable assets (Alliance, 2016). The team behind these advertisements were well aware of the message being sent but not all reactions can be predicted. Meredith Tutterow, Marketing Director for *Cheerios*, explained, “There are many kids of families and Cheerios just wants to celebrate them all.” Cheerios celebrates all families and promoted that thought with their average, lovable family ad (Daly, 2013). By conceptualizing the mind, self, and society, SIT provides reasoning and interpretation for how interracial advertisements including couples and families may resonate with the consumer. By focusing on the reasoning and interpretations of advertising will allow us as a society to gain a better understanding on how advertisements are created and designed.

With the *Cheerios* commercial, the company did not plan for an outrage; they were just using their beliefs in their workspace and created a commercial based around it. Above and beyond the visual image, there's a broader and more important matter at stake when it comes to a brand (Alliance, 2016) There is no doubt values and ideals among individuals are different; however, where is the line to be drawn between different and reality?

As mentioned above, the census proves that interracial and interethnic married couples have grown by 28% over the past 10 years. Cheerios' brand was at stake with their cultural representation in the 2013 and 2014 advertisements. It involves a reputation, or perceptions of everything the brand represents, conveying a sense of the kind of company that stands behind it (Alliance, 2016). Companies will use communications work as representational systems and signifying practices that reflect, create and resolve cultural tensions of identity (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2006). By resolving these tensions and practicing techniques that resonate with the majority of the consumers is how SIT plays a role in interracial advertising. This research seeks to help us understand what common themes are present when debate is sparked about an interracial family in a commercial by using a critical comparative content analysis of the comments about two interracial commercials for "Cheerios." The following review of literature will showcase interracial beginnings, symbolic interaction theory and critical race theory, visualization of "the family" and breakfast, along with SIT and ultimately Cheerios commercial and the national attention it has received. The coding method used generated common themes among the comments that were utilized in the comparative content analysis. Using an adapted coding method, common themes were seen when all three coders conducted the study. With this study, the following questions are looking to be answered:

1. *What percentage of negative comments include themes of racism, xenophobia, vulgar, threatening and hateful nature between the two videos?*
2. *What percentage of positive comments include themes that are supportive, personal identifying, socially progressive and defensive against racism?*
3. *How do the two commercials differ in the common themes presented in each of the comments' sections of both videos?*
4. *Does one commercial have more negative comments than positive due to the national attention the first commercial had?*
5. *When a "non-traditional" view of a family is expressed nationally, will the brand be affected negatively due to the reaction from online commentators and consumers?*

After extensive research on the history of interracial couples, the multiple theories that correlate to the research and the online rage that stemmed to the interracial nature of the commercials, the findings will show how all of these had an impact on the final results of this study. All of these concepts have been chosen to gain a better understanding as to why this uproar took place, the nature behind it and how we can justify the actions.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Interracial Beginnings**

Interracial friendships and romantic relationships have historically been discouraged or taboo in America. While we know that there have always been relationships between people of different races and ethnicities in the United States, it is also evident that the acceptance of these relationships by society as a whole has grown over time (Stewart, 2013). In the early 60s, interracial relationships were considered wrong to the timid

acceptance that such relationships existed (Magnuson-Cannady, 2005). The essence of an “interracial couple” was considered taboo among the majority. There was acknowledgment that these relationships existed, however there was a slim degree of acceptance. Marriages with spouses of a different race are likely to be at the receiving end of discriminatory behavior. Couples who are of a different race are also likely to lose social support from among their family and peers (Wong, 2002).

### ***Loving v. Virginia & Interracial Marriages***

It is important to look at the legal history that made marriages to someone of a different race legally acceptable. Richard Loving married Mildred Jeter in Washington, District of Columbia in June 1958 (Wong, 2012). They returned to their home in Virginia. The couple was later indicted by the Circuit Court of Caroline County for violating Virginia Code section 258 ban on marriage to someone of another race (Wong, 2012). In 1963, the Lovings filed a motion to dismiss their sentence and that the anti-miscegenation law violated the Equal Protection and Due Processes Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. “This motion to dismiss was denied by the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia in January 1965. Soon, the Lovings appealed to the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia” (Wong, 2012). The case then went to the U.S. Supreme Court and the convictions were reversed. Chief Justice Warren in delivering the opinion wrote:

The Fourteenth Amendment requires the freedom of choice to marry not be restricted to invidious racial discriminations. Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual, and cannot be infringed by the State. (Loving v. Virginia, 1967)

Between 1948 and 1967, thirty states either repealed their anti-miscegenation laws or the states’ laws themselves were struck down as unconstitutional by the 1967 Loving v.

Virginia Supreme Court decision (Magnuson-Cannady, 2005). Although these laws were slowly being annulled, interracial relationships, especially Black-White relationships, were still considered taboo in much of the country (Magnuson-Cannady, 2005).

Less than 50 years after the Supreme Court of the United States overturned the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals' judgment to uphold the conviction of Mildred Jeter and Richard Loving for violating Virginia's ban on interracial marriages in *Loving v. Virginia*, the demographic increase in interracial relationships and bi- and multiracial people has generated a great deal of interest (Washington, 2012). In the same way, as the courts failed to rule against the constitutionality of anti-miscegenation (marital racial segregation) laws in the years between the enactment of the 14th Amendment and the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court Case (which finally did rule them as unconstitutional) the court reinforced many peoples' hatred of racial mixing and the ideal of white racial purity (Magnuson-Cannady, 2005).

This resistance to Black and White interracial relationships is historically situated in America's struggle with its racist past (Bell & Hastings, 2011). Much of the opposition to interracial relationships exists "despite laudable progress since the Civil Rights Movement" (Orbe & Allen, 2008, p. 201). The racial divide represents recognition of how viewpoints and experiences are impacted and diverge along racial lines. Much of the opposition of interracial couples experience is from their families and the public. The mere recognition of potential disdain by some toward interracial dating may make some people resistant to the idea of dating someone from another race (Bell & Hastings, 2011). Additionally, people in interracial marriages keenly perceive the attitudes of the community around them. As a result, racism and prejudice still affect Black and White interracial couples (Orbe & Allen,

2008; West, 1993). An important question to consider after looking at the history of interracial couples is why do society still think this way? Symbolic interaction theory discusses why we as human beings form meanings for our behavior, self-concept, and how we adapt those meanings and beliefs to the everyday behaviors of society.

### **Symbolic Interaction Theory (SIT) & Semiotics**

Symbolic interactionism, proposed by Herbert Blumer, is the process of interaction in the formation of meanings for individuals (Blumer, 1986). Blumer believed that what creates society itself is people engaging in social interaction (Low, 2008). It follows then that social reality only exists in the context of the human experience (Low, 2008). Blumer was a devotee of George H. Mead, and was influenced by John Dewey. Dewey insisted that human beings are best understood in relation to their environment (Society for More Creative Speech, 1996). With this as his inspiration, Blumer outlined symbolic interactionism, a study of human group life and conduct (Griffin, 1997). Symbolic interactionism, a research stream in sociology, is suggested as a potentially very useful theoretical basis for advancing consumer self-concept and product symbolism research (Lee, 1990).

SIT studies the importance of meanings for human behavior, the importance of self-concept and the relationship between the individual and society. Blumer explains the core principles of this theory (Griffin, 1997). More simply, they are meaning, language, and thought. The importance of SIT and interracial advertisements is a way to validate our ideals and values through what we see in ads and on television. These core principles lead to conclusions about the creation of a person's self and socialization into a larger community (Griffin, 1997).

***Meanings for human behavior.*** The first core principle is meaning. This principle states that humans act toward people and things based upon the meanings that they associate to those people or things. SIT holds the principal of meaning as central in human behavior (Nelson, 1998). We can see this principle when looking at reactions to advertisements by consumers, as marketers like to call it “consumer behavior.” Consumers will react a certain way towards a product and with interracial advertisements, either with the intended message or not. In the case of this research, the behavior of humans in the comments section of an internet forum will display their behavior in response to the symbols they saw in the commercial. Whether the symbols cause a personal or cultural conflict with the consumer is unknown, but the symbols did affect them in one way or another.

***Language-meaning through symbols.*** The second core principle is language. Language gives humans a means by which to negotiate meaning through symbols (Nelson, 1998). Mead's influence on Blumer becomes apparent here because Mead believed that naming assigned meaning, thus naming was the basis for human society and the extent of knowledge. It is by engaging in speech acts with others, symbolic interaction, that humans come to identify meaning, or naming, and develop discourse (Nelson, 1998). Through showcasing an interracial couple or family in an advertisement, a meaning is developed for the different consumers watching, thus a language is being translated for the consumers. This language can resonate positively or negatively to the consumer, allowing them to comment their reactions in a “language” online that relates to their reaction to the commercials or advertisements.



***Thought or interpretation of symbols.*** The third core principle is thought. Thought modifies each individual's interpretation of symbols. Thought, based-on language, is a mental conversation or dialogue that requires role taking, or imagining different points of view (Nelson, 1998). This is seen in how different consumers interpret the way an advertisement is presented and what they believe it means. Depending on the execution of the advertisement, the reaction will exhibit the thought or interpretation the consumers will have with the product or service being advertised. All three of these factors explain the communication through symbols and how we as consumers react to it.

***Semiotics & symbols.*** Anything can be or become a symbol. Symbols mean something; semiotics is the study of meaning derived from symbols (Carson, n.d). Semiotics seeks to understand the meanings entrenched in all of the various symbols and symbolic systems that establish our world.

SIT is the communication through symbols; people communicating to each other through the different symbols presented (Griffin, 2009). Symbol systems are those cognitive “tools” that, often in written form, allow us to record and communicate ideas without the immediate presence and participation of actual things in the environment (Carson, n.d). Symbolic interactionism focuses on the process by which individuals understand their world. It assumes that people interpret the actions of others rather than simply reacting to them (Solomon, 1983). Much of human behavior is determined not by the objective facts of a situation, but by the meanings people ascribe to it. Subjective interpretations of reality help impact and help influence human behavior (Lynch & McConatha, 2006). The way different symbols are presented in advertisements will influence human behavior in the three categories described above. Symbols allow us to

entertain ideas because they serve by their presence to evoke those ideas. Some symbols represent things but they are also used to represent mental operations, aesthetic qualities, or anything that the mind is able to grasp (Carson, n.d). However, the nature of many comments online have a racial backing attached to how individuals respond to the symbols they are receiving in the advertisements. We should also realize that anything is potentially a symbol. Anything that evokes further meaning is a symbol (Carson, n.d).

The unavoidable problem with semiotics is that anyone can see any meaning in anything; positive or negative (Carson, n.d). With that said, symbols that the viewers resonate towards in advertisements are affecting each viewer in a different, way. With that said, the co-creation of value will discuss the attention the consumers put into a product.

### **Consumers and Attention: Co-creation of Value**

Co-creation refers to the processes by which both consumers and producers collaborate, or otherwise participate, in creating value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Strategic attention has moved beyond the market orientation's emphasis on consumers over products (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993), to emphasize how consumers create symbolic meaning and value via consumption (Firat & Dholakia, 2006). Wikstrom (1996) suggests that marketing philosophy does not focus on how companies create value for consumers, but rather on how they create value with consumers, signaling a change from a producer-consumer perspective to a co-creation perspective – as it is referred to within service dominant logic of marketing, in which the role of company and consumer has been recast from producer-consumer to co-creators of value (Vargo and Lusch, 2008).

At the same time, strategic brand communication has shifted from telling stories to consumers to sharing stories with consumers (Ponsakornrungruip & Schroeder, Theory,

2011). We can compare this concept with the SIT theory in a sense that the product has become a symbol that the consumers tend to resonate with. They become more familiar with a symbol that they can relate to. The co-creation of value is a “consumer revolution” in a sense that we aren’t just focused on the product in and of itself: we are more focused on the “central importance in the processes of value creation (Ponsakornrungronglip and Schroeder, Theory, 2011).

Tying together SIT, semiotics and the co-creation of value, Critical Race Theory (CRT) will provide another ideal in relation to the interracial importance and viewers’ perceptions. CRT discusses the relationship of race and our perceptions. The following section will show the parallel with YouTube and how CRT related to the comments posted online.

### **Critical Race Theory & YouTube**

During the mid-1970s, CRT emerged from the early work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, who were discontent with the slow pace of racial reform in the United States (Delgado, 1995). Critical race theory explores the relationship between racism and oppression (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). CRT asserts that race is a key-organizing construct in mainstream U. S. society (Oliha, 2011). Critical race theory also explores the unconscious, automatic or subtle — and more pervasive — forms of racism in society (Santana, 2013). On one hand, these relatively new comment boards, adopted by newspapers in their effort at creating an open space for a free exchange of ideas, have also opened the door to fulfilling a key aspect of critical race theory: the normalizing of racism. On the other hand, the subtle racism outlined in critical race theory, sometimes referred to as “racial microaggressions,” may appear to be in conflict with the public sphere and the

blatant racism expressed in online comment forums (Santana, 2013). The study of microaggressions looks at the impact of these subtle racial expressions from the perspective of the people being victimized, adding to the psychological understanding of the whole process of stigmatization and bias” (DeAngelis, 2009). YouTube is becoming a common site for these types of messages and comments to be displayed for the world to see.

YouTube is an online social community in which users with accounts are able to post videos that can be viewed by the public and commented on. YouTube’s tagline of “broadcast yourself” highlights the ability of users to broadcast personal or public videos that may be of interest to members of the online community (Oliha, 2011). Viewers also have the option of rating these videos and adding their own commentary. These commentary sections are often the site of coalescing, contesting, and sharing information on the content and quality of posted videos (Oliha, 2011). The Internet is critical for disseminating information, but it does not discriminate against information it carries. Hate speech and racist representations proliferate in social media, online news comment sections and community forums (Martin, McCann, Morales, & Williams, 2013). CRT opens up a counter theoretical space that cultivates an understanding of how present day socio-cultural relations and discourse covertly reflect the racial platform of the US and larger global structures (Oliha, 2011). CRT ultimately can assist with understanding the nature of the comments section below the commercials posted on YouTube. However, the symbols the commenters are seeing and responding to are referring to a family and how they see what a family should be.

### **Visualization of Family & SIT**

Symbolic interactionism's unique contributions to family studies are that families are social groups and that individuals develop both a concept of self and their identities through social interaction (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). The generation of the "concept of self" and identity through a social interaction is key when understanding SIT's relationship with advertising. It can be inferred that to be able to connect with consumers on an emotional level and allow them to relate with the values being presented is a marketing plan that all marketers want to achieve.

Marketing representations examine customer research and acknowledge the roles images play in building brand meaning and contributing to consumer identity (Borgerson and Schroeder 2005; Schroeder 2002). From a critical analysis perspective, pictures of families in ads "are not random collections of persons but deliberate constructions of the significant relationships among them" (Borgerson et al., 2006). In other words, people in an advertisement may be chosen and arranged to look like a coherently represented family, although they are perfect strangers in real life (Borgerson et al., 2006). Advertisements that portray families are meant to associate and relate to families of today's society to create relationships between the product and the consumer. Visual impression may be more important than the real life people who appear in the image because of their intention to create a "family" image (Schroeder, 2006).

The image of a family is a popular angle advertisers have used in promoting their products to reach that market. However, the typical view of a family is changing with the progression of our society and evolution of our species as a whole. Many different races and ethnicities are all intermingling with one another to create their own happy family. Cheerios is a prime example of showcasing a common form of a family in their

advertisements. An article in *AdWeek* explained “Cheerios beat their average content views by 137 percent” with their new family and love campaign, starring an interracial family (Heine, 2012). The tech company came to the findings by analyzing hundreds of millions of daily traditional Web, social Web, and mobile content views. Meanwhile, Cheerios, a General Mills brand, has chosen to disable comments on YouTube since users were getting out of control with messages about “racial genocide,” “troglydtes,” and other nonsense (Heine, 2012). Cheerios decided to showcase the development an average, American family. The backlash they received was not desired. *Cheerios* has always been characterized as the family brand for breakfast. The concept of an interracial family appeared to have been a shock for a number of viewers. The following section will explore this topic in more detail.

### **Cheerios & Interracial Appeal**

General Mills’ goal was to appeal to families across the nation by airing a family-oriented, modern commercial (Thomas, 2013). In July 2013, “General Mills aired a Cheerios commercial in which a little girl asks her mother, who is white, about the healthy heart benefits of Cheerios. The mother, dressed in business attire and engaged in what seems to be work-related activity, attentively listens to her daughter’s questions and after weighing certain related facts answers her question with a “yes” – it is good for your heart. The next scene shows the father, who is black, lying on the sofa with a pile of Cheerios on his chest, presumably placed there by his daughter in an attempt to protect him from heart disease. The daughter looked like a mix of the two” (Thomas, 2013).

Taking a look at social media regarding this commercial, specifically Twitter, viewers took to this outlet to express their opinion on the commercial. In 140 characters,

there definitely were some comments, positive and negative. The hashtag #interracial paired with #Cheerios in the same tweet was trending and resulted in many opinions and viewpoints on the commercial. Below are a few examples of some of the more popular tweets:

*@Aannaalisha tweeted "So proud to be from an interracial family that taught me to love regardless of the color of your skin #Cheerios."*

*@Lyndahpizarro tweeted "The #Cheerios commercial with the #interracial family is awesome and beautiful. People talking negatively about it = perfect example of ignorance."*

*@MarcusBarz\_SOBD tweeted "Is America SERIOUSLY complaining about the #Cherrios commercial because there was an interracial couple!!!! GET OVER IT"*

All of these tweets represent the reaction the viewers had over this backlash. Below will explain some of the theories and methods that were analyzed and used in relation to the sample researched.

When analyzing this commercial from a SIT and CRT method, the Cheerios commercial is paralleled as "electronically mediated imagery and symbolism that dictates meaning and influence on social and consumer behavior" (Lynch & McConatha, 2006). This commercial sparked national controversy, which originated in the YouTube comments section of the video. This commercial has ignited controversy over the inclusion of a mixed-race family. In retrospect, multicultural and multiethnic families are barely outside the mainstream (Daly, 2013). *The Washington Post* reported the 2012 Census, saying, "The number of mixed-race babies has soared over the past decade. More than 7 percent of the 3.5 million children born in the year before the 2010 Census were of two or more races, up from barely 5 percent a decade earlier. The number of children born to black and white couples and to Asian and white couples almost doubled" (Morello, 2012).

Cheerios intended this portrayal to follow a recent trend of advertisements being more diverse to provide an accurate representation of the American population and portraying normal people with normal families (Daly, 2013). The commercial ends with one simple word summarizing the meaning behind the commercial: “Love.”

Advertising acts as a powerful means of constructing, influencing and illustrating the consumer vision of the good life (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002). Advertising, whether we recognize its power or not, has an influence in the way we think, act and perceive the world in which we live in. There are the practical actions that a business takes, and how brand-supporting they are. These include internal practices and policies, like employment and advancement of minorities and women or cultural nuances, like family friendly policies (Alliance, 2016). In some cases, those perceptions being portrayed in a magazine ad or television commercial may be conflicting with the views of the consumer. Advertising images are a central part of the experienced visual world. Advertising and the mass media contribute to the visual landscape that constructs reality (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002). In the case of the Cheerios commercial, the marketing decisions that were made in developing the storyline of the commercial, the marketing department knew exactly what message they were sending. Efforts to uncover meaning in advertising often focus on managerial considerations (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002). According to Meredith Tutterow, Associate Marketing Director for Cheerios, she explained, “our actors reflect so many families across America that we are actually a little surprised to see this ad become a story on its own. Multicultural families are everywhere, including on television, so the attention this has received from the media is somewhat surprising” (Taste, 2013). The message being sent



was clear, however the reaction in which the consumer perceived it what as she said “somewhat surprising.”

Marketers use their brand as a platform to showcase their company’s values and beliefs. The managerial team at Cheerios wanted to maintain the identity that Cheerios celebrates all families and realizes there are many multicultural families that are underrepresented.

Branding ads based on the culture is becoming a strong sentiment in advertising. “Brands are no longer led by corporate activities but rather given means and value on the streets by opinion leading trendsetters who adopt the brands and give them cachet” (Holt, 2004, p. 29). Consumer good and companies send out cultural detectives to find the new trend. The race is to grab the newest, coolest culture and expand” (Holt, 2004, p. 29). By keeping up with society and the changes that reside in society, we can see why brand executives are taking note. In the infamous Cheerios commercial, the idea of the American family was challenged. The mastermind behind this commercial said that she “defends the ads and the campaign because it is portraying a typical American family.” However, racial questions began to arise because an interracial family is seen to be taboo and not “typical.” Cheerios defends the way this commercial was presented and wanted to preserve the brand of Cheerios as family oriented and celebrating all kinds of families. Consumer response in terms of individual and cultural meaning often is overlooked in favor of marketing implications (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002). Cheerios did not intentionally want to make a statement that caused uproar. They were just portraying an average American family.

### Research Questions

After extensive research seen in the research discussed above, there are many questions and curiosities that we intend to answer. In researching SIT, CRT, visualization, family role, and the backlash received from an interracial advertisement, the following questions are expected to be answered:

1. *What percent of negative comments include themes of racism, xenophobia, vulgar, threatening and hateful nature between the two videos?*
2. *What percent of positive comments include themes that are supportive, personal identification, socially progressive and defensive against racism?*
3. *How do the two commercials differ in the common themes presented in each of the comments' sections of both videos?*
4. *Does one commercial have more negative comments than positive due to the national attention the first commercial had?*
5. *When a "non-traditional" view of a family is expressed nationally, will the brand be affected negatively due to the reaction from online commentators and consumers?*

### Method

The main method used in the study is comparative content analysis. Content analysis is "a wide and heterogeneous set of manual or computer-assisted techniques for contextualized interpretations of documents produced by communication processes in the strict sense of that phrase (any kind of text, written, iconic, multimedia, etc.) or signification processes (traces and artifacts), having as ultimate goal the production of valid and trustworthy inferences" (Content, n.d). Research of this topic was conducted in a qualitative manner through a critical comparative content analysis of the comment sections

of the first Cheerios ad featuring the interracial family, and the most recent one after the controversy. Analyzing the comments from a qualitative perspective is important because the comments can have many different meanings to different viewers. It is expected to see the relationship the role of SIT, CRT and interracial couples and families in advertisements possess. Also, with looking at the way the different consumers reacted with the commercial before and after the national controversy, it would be interesting to see how the attitudes changed after national attention was brought to it. We are intending to find common themes in the comments about the two ads.

Analyzing the commercials and the comments from a SIT perspective, it is hoped that we can see how the symbols, positively or negatively affected the consumers in their comments on both commercials. Each commentator used symbols they associated with their own beliefs from the commercial, and then formed their opinion in the comments portion. The purpose is to categorize the different types of comments to find similarities, stereotypes and ultimate symbols that attach the interracial family or couple with a negative imagery before the controversy and after. The Cheerios example shows a positive portrayal, however the reaction that occurred was not. By separating the types of ads from family oriented, to couples to just racially based, the expectation would be to gain a better understanding of how the ads generate a symbol for the consumer and how the symbolic interaction theory solidifies the notion that symbols help develop our ideals and values.

***Just Checking (2013) & Gracie (2014)***

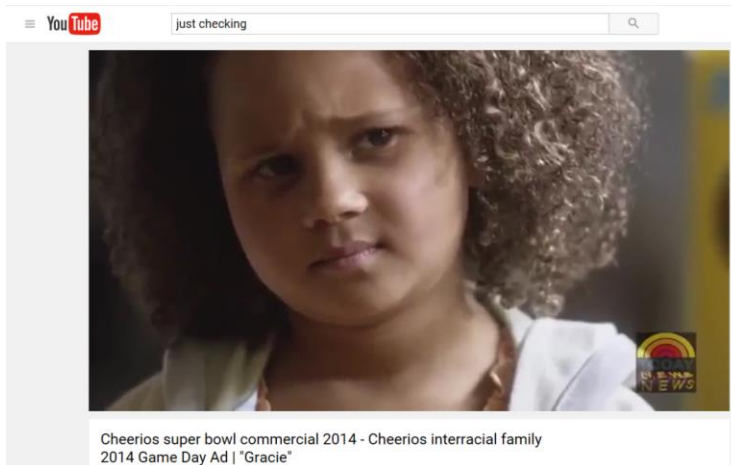
The original videos that the *Cheerios* Company posted have recently been taken down. During this study, both original commercials were still available, but since they have been hidden. However, if the reader was to go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and search either *Just Checking (2013)* or

*Figure 1: Just Checking*



*Gracie (2014)*. Both commercials being used in this study are available from multiple

*Figure 2: Gracie*



uploaders. There are a variety of videos on YouTube that speak of the controversy addressed in this research and provides opinions and expert advice from professionals in the advertising industry.

Advertising professional Donny

Deutsch, chairman of Deutsch Inc., said in an interview with the *Today Show* “what’s unfortunate is 97% of companies will stay away from this because they would say ‘I don’t need the letters’ which is shame because in reality, they will be fringe crazy people, but in reality you are making a statement about your company that we’re progressive, inclusive, we are about today. Great advertising hold up a mirror of who we are and where we are

going. But the shame is advertising is very late to the game. My challenge to advertisers out there is to get with where the country is going” (Today Show, 2013).


### **Sample**


Each comments section for each video, *Just Checking (2013)* and *Gracie (2014)*, possesses roughly 6,500 comments. The comments from the original *Just Checking* commercial was disabled due to the nature of the comments. Therefore, the comments I found were the top comments in 2013, before the section was disabled. I was able to recover the comments that were made before the section became disabled to all viewers. The *Gracie* commercial included the top comments from 2014 until 2015. The sample being used to this study will be 100 comments from each section. YouTube has a filtering system for their video comments. There is a selection process where the comments can be filtered by popularity or chronologically. The chosen method was to filter the comments so the most popular comments can be displayed. The first 100 from each video were selected and placed in an excel sheet for evaluation. Choosing the top comments prove that those comments had the most impact among the community, whether the nature of the comments were positive or negative.



For our samples below, we filtered the top 100 and highlighted the most detailed and opinionated comments, both positive and negative. It is important to exhibit one extreme to the next to give the reader an idea of how diverse each comment posted is.


**Positive examples.** Below are positive comments from the 2013 *Just Checking* Commercial:

Figure 3: Positive Comments

 **Quincy Rowe** 1 month ago  
 Aren't stupid ass ignorant racists the worse? I mean besides the fact that we're ALL FUCKING HUMAN you have to be the dumbest of dumb, just a total fucking waste of human life to object to this commercial. News flash you fucking racists. .American isn't getting any whiter and if the threat of a multi colored society in America scares you off, I HIGHLY suggest you take your favorite weapon of choice and do is AI a favor and kill your fucking selfs...PLEASE!

 **Sarah Lennox** 2 months ago  
 Lol wow. I can't believe this is even an issue :s I literally was looking through my favourite news feed and saw this. I've seen that commercial a thousand times and never noticed that it was a biracial couple...lol. I like it. They're cute <3 and there ARE millions of families who are biracial, my brother has a biracial son. My cousin married a wonderful woman of colour. Most of my friends are married to a man of colour....lol. There's no problem, it's just love and it proves that love comes in all colours, shapes and sizes <3

Reply · 2  


 **Iain Meyer-Macaulay** 3 months ago ⌵  
 Excellent commercial. It shows cheerios is aware of the reality of our social climate, it also celebrates social equality. The people who are lashing out at this video are stuck in their own pitiful little bubbles, instead of celebrating the things which make us alike they choose to fear and belittle the things which make us different, unique and special. People

[Read more \(11 lines\)](#)


**Negative examples.**


Below are negative comments from the 2013 *Just Checking* Commercial:


Figure 4: Negative Comments


 **James Moran** 2 months ago  
 Race mixing = demographic genocide. SIMPLES!


Reply ·  

 **narcissisticforever** 3 months ago  
 commercial makes me sick, what is the message we send, u got a girl who asks a question, her retarded mom can give an answer just regretting some bullshit off a box and the stupid girl pours a 5 dollar box of cereal on her dad which u know it poured onto the floor, but ppl think its cute, i think its wasteful, whatever happened to not playing with out food. Ppl around the world are starving now cereal has to be poured out, no wonder coutures hate the USA

Reply ·  

 **Eddie Bennett** 1 month ago ⌵  
 Ban cheereo's or never put that sick commercial on again. Listen to the public people don't want to see that shit its bad enough to see that trashy shit in the public. You don't want to see that on Tv.

 **JonDiens** 3 months ago ⌵  
 Holy shit, she cheated on her husband!

Reply · 2  

These are among the thousands of comments about this interracial commercial. After downloading every comment, a coding schema will be adapted to find common themes within the two commercials of the same brand.

**Coding Method**

After the comments have been organized, the following coding scheme was adapted to the comments. The coding schema will begin with the following:

Table 1 *Initial Coding Schema*

<b>Gender</b>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Unidentified</i>
<b>Support</b>	<i>Pro-Ad</i>	<i>Anti-Ad</i>	<i>Neutral</i>
<b>Nature</b>	<i>Positive Comment</i>	<i>Negative Comment</i>	<i>Unknown</i>

Following the initial coding schema, the coder will then do a more in-depth analysis on each comment. The second part of the coding schema involves themes for the comments, which we adapted from Dr. Arthur Santana’s Dissertation on Civility, Anonymity and the Breakdown of the Public Sphere. Below is Dr. Santana’s categorical themes he used in his research.

Table 2

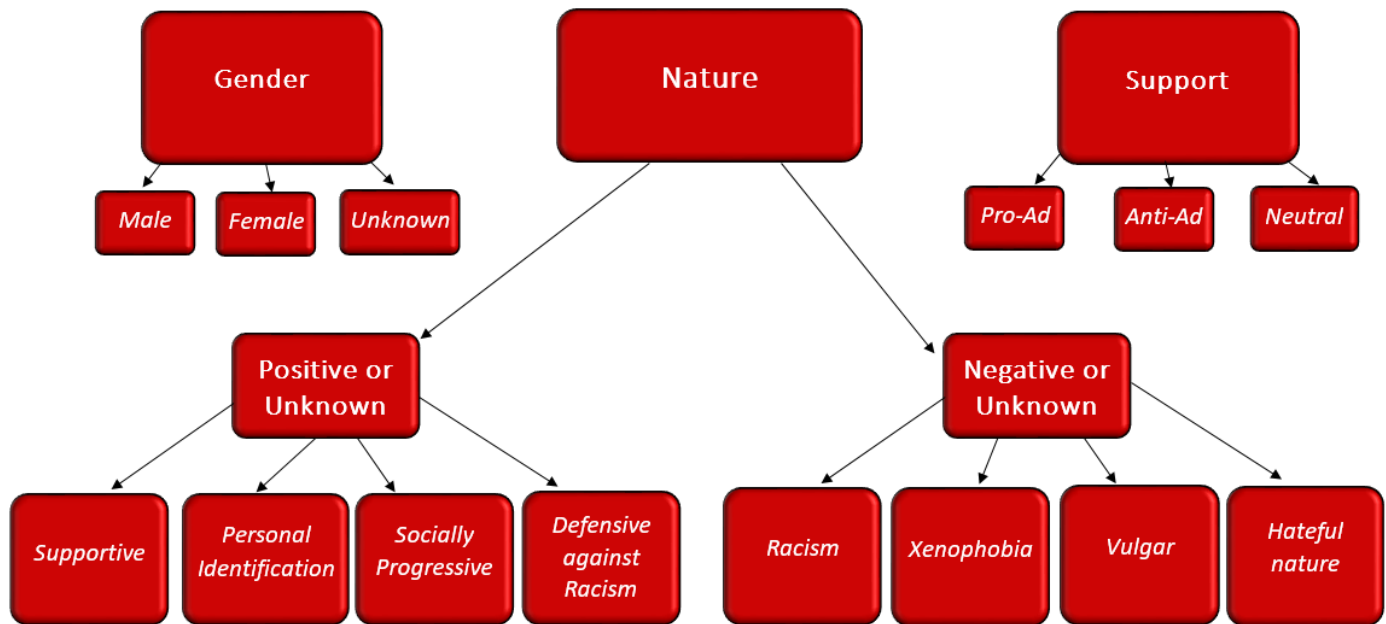
*Dr. Arthur Santana’s Coding from Dissertation on Civility, Anonymity and the Breakdown of the Public Sphere*

Category	Frequency	Percent
Disparaging on the basis of race/ethnicity	155	16.1
Xenophobia	149	15.4
Name calling	143	14.8
Racist or bigoted sentiments	140	14.5
Use of stereotypes	134	13.9
Abusive or foul language	85	8.8
Threats	63	6.5
Hateful language, epithets, slurs	50	5.2
Vulgarities	46	4.8
Total	965	100

The above scale has been reduced to four themes to be used to code the comments: *racism, xenophobia, vulgar, and hateful nature*. Due to the fact that there were positive and negative comments, a positive scale was conducted as well using the following terms: *supportive, personal identification, socially progressive, and defensive against racism*. The final schema is presented below.

Table 3

*Final Coding Schema*



After the pilot test and before initial conducting of this study, an intercoder reliability test was completed. This test was done to establish agreement among coders with a sample before the actual coding occurs. I sent the sample to the outside coders and all three of us used the coding scheme. I coded my own research first, then brought in two outside coders to examine the comments, categorize them, and identify which themes were most relevant with the comment being analyzed. To preserve the anonymity of the coders, names were



changed to Juliette and Steve. Juliette, 21, is a 3<sup>rd</sup> year liberal arts student in St. Catherine's, ON. Steve, 27, is a school counselor who has his bachelor's in psychology and his masters in mental health counseling. Choosing one male and one female with different educational backgrounds and age, allowed us to have an unbiased group of coders assisting with the research. After conducting the study with all three coders, the results were almost identical. This proves that this study can be repeated and will hopefully generate similar results. The following results will prove how the method of comparative content analysis among a range of coders will deliver extremely valuable and reliable results.

### **Results**

After thorough analysis of Juliette, Steve, and my findings, our coding was extremely similar. Looking at the results from the *2013 Just Checking* commercial data, 75% of the comments were rated as positive, while 25% were rated as negative. Out of the positive comments, an average of 47% of the comments were male, 23% were female and 30% were unidentified. The negative comments had an average of 59% male, 12% female and 25% unidentified. In the *2014 Game Day* commercial, 77% of the comments were positive and 23% were negative. Out of the positive comments, 29% of the comments were male, 32% of the comments were female and 39% were unidentified. The negative comments had an average of 43% male, 0% female and 57% unidentified. All results from both commercials can be found in the appendix for future analysis.

The most common and most overlapped theme represented in the positive comments for *2013 Just Checking* were Supportive, Social and Defensive. These three themes show up the most in the coders' evaluations of the comments. In the negative

comments, the two most common themes were Racism and Hate. These two themes were also most prevalent in the coders' evaluations. For example, the comment

The most common and most overlapped theme represented in the positive comments for *2014 Game Day* were Supportive and Defensive. These two themes show up the most in the coders' evaluations of the comments. In the negative comments, the two most common themes were Racism and Hate. These two themes were also most prevalent in the coders' evaluations.

### **Limitations**

Although the data collected in the study was helpful and fascinating, as researchers, there is never enough. The limitations of this study start with the very beginning; comments. The initial beginning of this study came at a standstill because General Mills had disabled the comments section of the commercial being analyzed. After jumping through many hoops and obstacles, some of the comments, but not all, were released. Not having access to all of the initial comments could have changed the results in either a positive or negative way. According to the mainstream media and news outlets, most of the initial comments fueled themes of hate and genocide. The access to the comments that were available consisted of 6,700 comments. Having such an enormous sample set can be exhausting on the researcher. Deciding to limit the samples to 100 comments from each commercial helped with the evaluation process.

Another limitation is time. There is never enough time to learn and gather everything that you would ever want. There is always more and as a society, the need and craving for more is very strong. With how fast social media is, every day is changing and

new topic becomes more relevant and interesting than the last. There is never enough time to truly say to yourself “I’ve done all I can do” because in essence, we always want more.

The final limitation is the brand itself. Limiting the study to just the Cheerios will suffice. However, if an alternative study was conducted based on the information gathered, this study could be used as a model for other brands dealing with similar issues. Swiffer, Target, Burlington Coat Factory, and Macy’s are among a few of the brands who have also exhibited interracial or non-traditional families in their advertisements. However, it was the Cheerios’ commercials that ignited a spark in the community and decided to showcase the family. Cheerios is a universal brand that everyone will enjoy, so inferring that the main reason it became a national controversy is because of the ubiquity of the brand, isn’t a far-fetched idea.

### **Discussion**

The intention of this study was to scrutinize the presence of interracial couples in two Cheerios commercials and categorize the positive and negative comments of these two commercials. Alternative studies have been done in relation to interracial couples in the media. However, few have studied two distinct commercials that became a controversy nationally in regard to the presence of an interracial couple or family representing a brand. Viewers have their opinion on how a couple or family should be represented in the media.

The history of interracial couples sets up a good outline for those interested in understanding how progressive this country is becoming. Interracial couples have become more common throughout the United States. The demographic increase in interracial relationships (IRRs) and bi- and multiracial people has generated a great deal of interest (Washington, 2012). Although interracial relationships are no longer prohibited by law,

there still remains some social disapproval (Wong, 2012). The media has been used as a site for studying social trends and attitudes, specifically related to issues of race, gender, and class in America (Stewart, 2013). With that said, studying to understand why such an outrage at the casting decision for the Cheerios commercials allows the reader to have a better understanding at the different viewpoints of the commentators.

The method of comparative content analysis focused on the reactions to the commercial with the brand of Cheerios and how the consumers identified positively or negatively to the commercial. How does the brand reflect the ideals and values of the consumer? This study has the potential to discover common values and ideologies we as human beings possess and have continued to inhibit. By analyzing the Cheerios commercial and looking at the response received from an “average” placement of a family, it can be determined what is considered “average” as opposed to “taboo” or “questionable. By comparing both comment sections that showcase positive and negative reactions to the commercial, it will show how the different consumers used the symbols presented and how they reacted to those symbols. Looking at the results, it is astounding how many of the commentators became more anonymous in the second commercial rather than the first. Also, it seems like more men had an issue with the commercial the first time around and also had more opinions about it. It is believed we live in a post-racial society where everyone is free to be happy and live his or her lives judgment free. The overall anticipated outcome of this study is to discover truths in how SIT relates to interracial advertising and do the consumers agree or disagree, based on the comments. SIT provides reasoning and interpretation for how interracial advertisements including couples and families may resonate with the consumer, therefore influencing the consumer’s choice of purchase due

how they associate with that message being portrayed. SIT could impact editors and directors as they consider the image they are trying to portray and have the consumers associate with. Looking at the research questions, it is evident our curiosities have been answered as best they could.

1. *What percent of negative comments include themes of racism, xenophobia, vulgar, threatening and hateful nature between the two videos?*
  - a. Comparing the two videos, 25% of the comments from the 2013 video were deemed as negative and included some, if not all of the themes listed. 23% of the comments were negative in the 2014 video.
2. *What percent of positive comments include themes that are supportive, personal identification, socially progressive and defensive against racism?*
  - a. Comparing the two videos, 75% of the comments from the 2013 video were deemed as positive and included some, if not all of the themes listed. 77% of the comments were positive in the 2014 video.
3. *How do the two commercials differ in the common themes presented in each of the comments' sections of both videos?*
  - a. Both videos concluded that Supportive and Defensive were the most commonly selected themes among the positive comments. Social was more prevalent in the 2013 video.
  - b. Both videos concluded that Racism and Hate were the two most commonly selected themes among the negative comments.
4. *Does one commercial have more negative comments than positive due to the national attention the first commercial had?*

- a. It is not surprising that the first commercial in 2013 has a slightly higher percentage (25%) than the second commercial in 2014 (23%) due to the controversy it initially began.
5. *When a “non-traditional” view of a family is expressed nationally, will the brand be affected negatively due to the reaction from online commentators and consumers?*
    - a. Our research does not show if the brand’s sales have been affected negatively because of this controversy. However, if it did, a follow-up research could be an option to understand how marketing the idea of a non-traditional family can affect the sales of the brand being represented.

The results of this study can be answered as well as any other burning questions presented pertaining to image of interracial relationships, the utility of interracial couples in advertisements and how the visualization of a family is portrayed using SIT methods. CRT proved to be an important method used in the study because it explores the unconscious and more pervasive forms of racism in society, such as online forums. It was evident the many of the comments stemmed from a defensive racial background, therefore being the backbone of many of the comments analyzed. The use of SIT in discovering the different symbols viewers associate with a media and interpret how they feel about that is important in this research due to the unique and personal nature of the data collected in this study.

### **Conclusion**

Interracial couples are becoming more of a mainstream in today’s society. It is not uncommon to see an interracial couple walking down the street. We see them in magazines,

TV and movies. However, when the media gets a hold of any situation, chaos can sometimes evolve. Starting with *Loving v. Virginia* and ending with the uproar of the Cheerios commercial, is evident that society has a long way to go before an interracial couple is seen as anything but uncommon or “taboo.” After conducting the study, the results show how much race is still an issue. Among the positive comments, the main themes selected were supportive and defensive. The viewers who were in favor of this ad felt the need to include a defensive nature to their comments due to the fact this commercial caused such an uproar. Among the negative comments, racism and hate were the two most common themes. The viewers who were against the ad stemmed their opinion from a hateful and racist standpoint. Comparing both videos, there was a 2% increase in positive comments from the 2013 ad to the 2014 ad. Although this ad was highlighted due to the nature of the negative comments, it was impressive to conclude that positivity outweighed negativity in this instance. However, a simple Cheerios commercial is not going to fix the race issue society is still facing.

With race being such a hot topic in the media, the identity of society is somehow targeted and people challenged to choose a position. Seeing the results now helps us understand how theories like SIT and CRT have an impact on our everyday lives. After analyzing the results, we can conjoin these theories into the visual symbolic race theory. Through this lens, we are able to understand the why people say what they say about topics such as race. Why does a visual public commercial affect our lives so dearly when race is involved? Or better yet, is any “unordinary” family is showcased, why is there an issue. This is how it can be explained. They grew up in different times, areas and with

different people. Certain symbols I see in magazines and TV may resonate positively with me but negatively to someone else. Not a single person on this earth is the same.

We are all different and think differently. With that said, seeing the way the online community reacted to these commercials were fascinating. Starlet Marie "Star" Jones, an American lawyer, journalist, writer, television personality, fashion designer, and women's and diversity advocate, says she is not surprised at how this commercial was received:

Social media is the new KKK, white hood, online. It allows you to be anonymous and to say the kinds of things that you wouldn't say to someone face to face. A lot of this is generational. My generation is still giving the side-eye to an interracial couple. Younger people have gotten used to seeing interracial couples and I don't think it will be an issue in the years to come. (Today, 2013)

There is no doubt that the media has a great deal of effect on society. Everything that is seen on television, in print, on social media and even walking down the street, affects us in one way or another.

Looking back at the results from the study, it is evident that race is still an issue. The percentage of negative comments went down for the 2014 ad. Everyone who commented are from all over the world and very unique and diverse group, yet there were two blatant views on the commercial: positive or negative. Everyone had an opinion on a simple and harmless advertisements displaying the love of a family. Some felt offended and conveyed their views and others felt offended from the offensive comment and expressed their views.

This research goes beyond Cheerios. There is a larger problem society is still dealing with: race. Although many would say we live in a post-racial society, there are still a large population with a 1950s and old school way of thinking. Interracial couples were



considered taboo. Although they are legal now does not necessarily mean they are accepted among all. The media is a unique platform to showcase whatever you want. However, having that public platform allows for an open door for criticism. No matter what – no one is happy. Someone will always have something to say. The media is everywhere. In our car, on billboards, on the radio, the brand of clothing we wear, the type of food we eat. Everything. No matter what, we are constantly being put in a category based on the media choices we make. *Cheerios* made a bold and modern move to portray an interracial family in their advertisements. Were they expecting this large of an outrage? Absolutely not, however they were not that surprised at the negativity. It's a never-ending circle. Someone will always have something to say about anything. In this world, one cannot please everyone and when that happens, the consequences will be dealt with.

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Appendix  
Collection of comparative content analysis & intercoder reliability results

*Just Checking (2013) & Gracie (2014) Results – Positive and Negative comments*

**2013 Just Checking Commercial – 77 positive comments**

	<b>Me, 25, Master’s in Communication</b>	<b>Juliette, 21, Liberal Arts Student</b>	<b>Steve, 27, School Counselor</b>
<b>Gender</b>	36 male, 18 female, 23 unidentified	35 male, 21 female, 21 unidentified	37 male, 19 female, 21 unidentified
<b>Support</b>	73 Pro-Ad, 0 Anti-Ad, 4 Neutral	74 Pro-Ad, 0 anti-ad, 3 Neutral	74 Pro-Ad, 0 anti-ad, 3 Neutral
<b>Nature</b>	73 Positive, 0 Negative, 4 Unknown	73 Positive, 0 negative, 4 Unknown	73 Positive, 0 negative, 4 Unknown
<b>77 total positive comments - Common Themes – many comments have more than theme, so there will be overlap</b>			
<b>Supportive</b>	70 (64 overlap)	71 (65 overlap)	70 (62 overlap)
<b>Identity</b>	16 (15 overlap)	18 (18 overlap)	17 (16 overlap)
<b>Social</b>	50 (47 overlap)	47 (46 overlap)	51 (50 overlap)
<b>Defensive</b>	50 (50 overlap)	50 (50 overlap)	47 (47 overlap)

**2013 Just Checking Commercial – 25 negative comments**

	<b>Me, 25, Master’s in Communication</b>	<b>Juliette, 21, Liberal Arts Student</b>	<b>Steve, 27, School Counselor</b>
<b>Gender</b>	15 male, 3 female, 7 unidentified	18 male, 3 female, 4 unidentified	17 male, 3 female, 5 unidentified
<b>Support</b>	23 Anti-Ad, 1 Pro-ad, 1 neutral	23 anti-ad, 1 Pro-ad, 1 neutral	23 anti-ad, 1 Pro-ad, 1 neutral
<b>Nature</b>	23 Negative, 1 Positive, 1 Unknown	22 Negative, 1 Positive, 2 Unknown	21 Negative, 1 Positive, 3 Unknown
<b>25 total negative comments - Common Themes – many comments have more than theme, so there will be overlap</b>			
<b>Racism</b>	17 (16 overlap)	17 (16 overlap)	16 (15 overlap)
<b>Xenophobia</b>	12 (10 overlap)	11 (11 overlap)	12 (12 overlap)
<b>Vulgar</b>	12 (11 overlap)	14 (10 overlap)	15 (11 overlap)
<b>Hate</b>	20 (20 overlap)	18 (17 overlap)	17 (16 overlap)

**2014 Game Day Commercial – 79 positive comments**

	<b>Me, 25, Master’s in Communication</b>	<b>Juliette, 21, Liberal Arts Student</b>	<b>Steve, 27, School Counselor</b>
<b>Gender</b>	23 male, 25 female, 31 unidentified	24 male, 27 female, 28 unidentified	24 male, 27 female, 28 unidentified
<b>Support</b>	79 Pro-Ad, 0 Anti-Ad, 0 Neutral	79 Pro-Ad, 0 anti-ad, 0 Neutral	79 Pro-Ad, 0 anti-ad, 0 Neutral
<b>Nature</b>	73 Positive, 0 Negative, 6 Unknown	75 Positive, 0 negative, 4 Unknown	74 Positive, 0 negative, 5 Unknown
<b>79 total positive comments - Common Themes – many comments have more than theme, so there will be overlap</b>			
<b>Supportive</b>	74 (63 overlap)	74 (61 overlap)	76 (66 overlap)
<b>Identity</b>	31 (31 overlap)	31 (31 overlap)	26 (26 overlap)
<b>Social</b>	45 (43 overlap)	44 (42 overlap)	43 (42 overlap)
<b>Defensive</b>	54 (54 overlap)	53 (53 overlap)	59 (59 overlap)

**2014 Game Day Commercial – 23 negative comments**

	<b>Me, 25, Master’s in Communication</b>	<b>Juliette, 21, Liberal Arts Student</b>	<b>Steve, 27, School Counselor</b>
<b>Gender</b>	10 male, 0 female, 13 unidentified	10 male, 0 female, 13 unidentified	10 male, 0 female, 13 unidentified
<b>Support</b>	22 Anti-Ad, 0 Pro-ad, 1 neutral	22 anti-ad, 0 Pro-ad, 1 neutral	22 anti-ad, 0 Pro-ad, 1 neutral
<b>Nature</b>	21 Negative, 0 Positive, 2 Unknown	22 Negative, 0 Positive, 1 Unknown	22 Negative, 0 Positive, 1 Unknown
<b>23 total negative comments - Common Themes – many comments have more than theme, so there will be overlap</b>			
<b>Racism</b>	14 (12 overlap)	14 (12 overlap)	14 (13 overlap)
<b>Xenophobia</b>	6 (6 overlap)	6 (6 overlap)	8 (8 overlap)
<b>Vulgar</b>	7 (7 overlap)	7 (7 overlap)	5 (5 overlap)
<b>Hate</b>	21 (15 overlap)	21 (14 overlap)	21 (12 overlap)