The Impact of the Civil Rights Movement on the Advertising Industry

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The University of Southern Mississippi

The Impact of the Civil Rights Movement on the Advertising Industry

by

Alexandra Bosarge

A Thesis
Submitted to the Honors College of
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in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
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in the Department of History

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Racism has a history in the United States of America that is also manifested in popular culture. Advertising is included in this idea of popular culture. This thesis focused on the advertising industry and the attempt of that industry to use African Americans to sell products to people. The aim of this study was to determine whether or not the Civil Rights Movement affected the way the advertising industry used images of African Americans for marketing purposes. A sample of advertisements was obtained from a newspaper and magazines in order to further analyze the hypothesis. This study contributes to the field of history, as well as the field of media communication by revealing certain aspects of the advertising industry.

Key Words: African Americans, racism, racial, advertisements, advertising industry
Dedication

Gregory Warren Bosarge and Collier Jaclynn Bosarge:

Thank you for putting up with all of the missed movie nights.

I love you both to the moon and back.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Douglas Bristol, for his efforts in making sure that this thesis was a success. This thesis would not have been possible had it not been for him. So, thank you for everything.

Additionally, I would like to thank my family. I missed a lot of family time, but you all were always supportive in making sure I got the best education possible. I love you all and thank you.
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Chapter One: Introduction

A question arises with products and product brands that incorporate racial stereotypes, such as Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben. If the Civil Rights Movement made an impact on the advertising industry, why are some of these products being portrayed by racial stereotypes? If these products are still on the shelf being sold to consumers, then is the underlying focus on race and using race to sell a product or a product brand? Could the advertising industry be called racist through its portrayal of race as a “selling point” for products?

To understand the problem, there must be a full understanding of terms used in the paper. Racism is a term for explaining the belief that one race is of a superior or inferior caliber to another race.¹ According to the United States Census Bureau, race is often acknowledged as a visual identifier or social identifier with little cultural or biological basis.² After all, humans, in their genetic makeup, are 99.9 percent identical.³ Therefore, race is used as a “divider,” a way to separate people.

Racism has a history in the United States of America that also manifested in popular culture. The term “popular culture” is a somewhat difficult one to narrowly define. Firstly, one must consider the definition of the latter of the two words. The term “culture” can accurately be defined as a shared set of beliefs or a shared set of customs

that is believed or practiced by a certain group of people or in a certain time or certain place.⁴ Popular culture can then be assumed as being a set of beliefs or a set of customs that is believed or practiced by the public in a certain time or a certain place.

Advertising is included in this idea of popular culture. Advertising can be defined as the act of formally calling a product or a viewpoint to the public’s attention through various media sources.⁵ The advertising industry uses popular media and icons to represent the products it sells. Media uses advertisements to draw attention to particular products. This study will examine whether the Civil Rights Movement had an impact on the advertising industry. The Civil Rights Movement was a series of actions in hopes to gain political and social freedom for African American people. The Movement occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. The Civil Rights Movement was an effort toward equality for African Americans and desegregation of the public.⁶

This thesis will study the advertising industry and the attempt of that industry to use African Americans to sell products to people. The specific research question that this thesis will attempt to answer is whether or not the Civil Rights Movement affected the way the advertising industry used images of African Americans typically to white clientele for marketing purposes. The hypothesis is that the Civil Rights Movement does not appear to have changed the way advertising industry use African American subjects.

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The hypothesis is assumed, because it appears that advertising industries use the same images of such subjects before and after the Civil Rights Movement. If the hypothesis remains intact at the conclusion of the paper, then that could, in turn, question the impact of the Civil Rights Movement as a whole by calling to question the motives of these advertisers.

This thesis will also examine the implications of its findings. Was the motive of advertisers just to sell products? Was their motive to endorse white supremacy? The answer to these questions may determine whether or not popular culture ultimately changed after the Civil Rights Movement. The contribution of this paper will ultimately be to shed light on the advertising industry from the 1930s through the 1960s and today in order to look at the advertising industry and its attempt to use African Americans to sell products to white people.

While the subject has been looked upon by numerous researchers on a national level, this thesis hopes to provide answers not only at the national level, but also at the regional level of the South. This study will be focusing on the newspaper, *The Clarion Ledger*, a company out of Jackson, Mississippi to look at advertising directed toward whites. It was one of the few newspapers in the nation to circulate its newspapers statewide. The study will also be looking at *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines to look at advertising directed toward African Americans. This thesis is important, because the

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research will attempt to answer a question as to whether or not racial prejudice shapes the American advertising industry, today. If advertisers are still using racial stereotypes in America, then this is racism. Our country cannot fully hope to be a truly free or equal nation if this is still going on. Equality cannot live in the same nation as prejudice.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Four pieces of scholarship on the racial history of advertising will inform this thesis. The first work is *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* by Grace Elizabeth Hale. The second work is *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* by Robert E. Weems, Jr.. The third work is *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* by Maurice M. Manring. The final work is *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* by Marilyn Kern-Foxworth. Each of these scholars discusses African Americans and the advertising industry. While each researcher has a definite focus on the advertising industry both regionally and nationally, this thesis will attempt to look at the advertising industry specifically in the southern region. This literature review will determine to what extent that the topic has been examined and what exactly each author found in their research.

Grace Elizabeth focuses on race as not only a social identifier, but also a cultural one. Hale offers an explanation of how and why being “white” was so important in the Jim Crow South. After slavery was abolished in post-Civil War America, white people in the South thought that they had the right to reconstruct their supremacy over the African American people. White supremacy was carried out through discrimination and
segregation, as well as through advertising. Racist advertising was a selling point to Southern consumers due to the idea of “whiteness” in the South. The idea of "whiteness" was the feeling that white people had that they felt determined their superiority over African Americans.

Advertising eventually turned to a more national level. When local merchants and local merchandise were displaced by national markets and national goods, there was need for mass marketing tactics in the form of advertisements. Some of these advertisements began displaying the image of African American people remaining submissive. The advertisements were made in order to sell these products to white people. Technology advances, such as the invention of the photocopy machine by Chester Carlson in 1937, helped advertisers. They made it easy to print negative, offensive images of African American people. 

The thesis will look at another piece of literature. The second piece of work is Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century by Robert E. Weems, Jr.. Weems explains in his book that slavery and capitalism are the two economic passageways that have ultimately shaped the United States of America. The book depicts a lack of attention brought to the consumerism of African Americans in post-slavery times. Historically, African Americans have played a very little role as consumers due to racial prejudice and poverty. However, African Americans played a larger role as the images used in advertisements in order to attempt to sell products to white consumers. He argues that African Americans, themselves, have occasionally

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perpetuated racial stereotypes through advertising in order to sell products to white and black consumers as well.

Weems goes on to argue that African American consumerism was continually a source of backlash. The example of “Blaxploitation” was given, which was a genre of films that exploited stereotypes of African American people, such as Superfly. The example was followed by criticism from Weems, who argued that although these films may have extended African American consumerism in some ways, that these films actually became a detriment to the African American society. The detriment was due to poor wages for African American actors and a poor image portrayal of African Americans as a group of people by the mostly white producers of these films. His final thoughts revolve around the fact that when African Americans did have an increased opportunity to become consumers, more African Americans chose to support white-owned businesses, such as these film studios.¹⁰

The research at hand will be assisted with another piece of literature. Maurice M. Manring wrote Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima. Manring focuses on the advertising industry and its use of African American images of people to sell products to white people. The book primarily focuses on Aunt Jemima and her impact on the South. The idea of a “mammy” was once prevalent in Old Southern Society. This “mammy” was a distinct signifier of class among a white society, appealing due to the prestige that came along with it. The “mammy” complex, the desire to be catered to and

placed on a pedestal, was addressed in Aunt Jemima pancakes. The company decided to use the “mammy” image as a spokesperson for their product.

Aunt Jemima, along with other product images such as Uncle Ben, became an advocate, not for African Americans, but an advocate for white people. Aunt Jemima became a “slave in a box.” The pancake mix, or the idea behind the pancake mix, became a way for white Southerners who could not afford the “luxury” of having an African American servant to feel dominant. The box invented an idea that there was a certain social hierarchy that one gained by just buying the box with Aunt Jemima’s face on the front of it. The box became the next best thing for middle-class American women in regards to an African American servant. The author argues that while the image of Aunt Jemima may have begun with racism, the image is still used due to the large brand equity and the fact that she is largely recognizable in the consumer market.\textsuperscript{11} Rather than focusing on racism, Manring and Foxworth seem to give advertisers a pass due to the recognition of the brand nationally implying that there is not always a negative connotation in terms of racial advertising.

The fourth piece of work is by Marilyn Kern-Foxworth and is entitled \textit{Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow}. The book focuses on African American stereotypes in advertising before and after the Civil Rights Movement. The author explains that slavery began the belittling and condescending stereotypes in advertising. The author states that over time, African

Americans all became the Aunt Jemimas, Uncle Bens, and Rastuses of the country through advertising.

The Civil Rights Movement brought forth an outcry in regard to the way African Americans were being portrayed in the advertising industry. Organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People began to argue that the portrayal of African Americans was demeaning and had a negative psychological impact on the country. The author discusses the view of consumers after the Civil Rights Movement, as well as the role of African Americans in the advertising industry. Foxworth explains that products such as Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben kept their place in advertising due to racism in part, but also because they were nationally recognized. Foxworth also seems to give advertisers a pass due to the recognition of the brand nationally.

The four historians looked at the general picture of advertising as a regional and national problem. All four historians make some really valid arguments and bring up some good facts. It is known that there was a culture of “whiteness” in the Jim Crow South. It is known that, at times, African Americans have played a role in perpetuating their own racial advertisings in order to sell products. It is known that many white consumers who could not afford a servant looked to brands such as Aunt Jemima in order to feel more privileged. It is known that the Civil Rights Movement made certain people question whether or not advertisements were demeaning or not. There are questions, however, that are left unanswered. What impact did the Civil Rights Movement

ultimately have on advertising in the deeply Southern states, such as Mississippi? What impact did the Civil Rights Movement have on advertisers? How were African American advertisers using racial stereotypes in order to better sell products? All of the information brought forth by the authors will be considered when reaching a conclusion for this thesis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The paper will be looking at the advertising industry and the attempt of that industry to use race to sell products. The goal of this paper, ultimately, is to answer certain research questions that arise out of my subject matter. Is race still being used in the advertising industry as a “selling point?” If race is being used in today’s advertising industry, is there always a negative connotation? Did the Civil Rights Movement affect the way the advertising industry portrays African Americans? If the Civil Rights Movement did affect the way the advertising industry does business, why is there still racially directed advertising. Is the advertising industry targeting specific racial groups?

I will attempt to reach a conclusion by reading Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, Robert E. Weems Jr., Maurice M. Manring, and Grace Elizabeth Hale. I will also be going through archival records at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg,

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Mississippi. These records will be in the form of newspapers and magazine advertisements from before the Civil Rights Movement through today.

The newspaper that this study will be focusing on is *The Jackson Daily Clarion Ledger*. The magazines will include *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines. The sampling method will involve examining advertisements for the month of December between 1930 and 1969. With that, I will attempt to form a conclusion based on the facts within the core literature of the paper, the scholarly articles found on the paper’s topic, and the advertisements from newspapers and magazines that I will find. With that, I will also have to look at the full picture of racial stereotyping and how to deem something “offensive” or not. In doing all of this, I believe that I will find that while the Civil Rights Movement may have had a positive impact in some ways on the advertising industry, the Movement did not make a full impact due to racial portrayals in the industry today.

In order to effectively organize and categorize advertisements, those that were found to be racially significant in general were divided into three separate categories: racial, racist, and exclusionary. The easiest advertisements to pinpoint were those categorized as racist ones due to the obvious nature of the content. These were advertisements that used blatant and intentional language, visuals, and/or ideals aimed to demean or insult a specific group of people. The racial advertisements were harder to find because the words that could classify the advertisement as racial were mostly small, less clear and overall less discernible. These were advertisements that subtly or indirectly referenced a certain group of people. These references may have been seen as racially insensitive and/or hateful depending on the subject matter that may pertain to one’s race. The exclusionary advertisements were the most “normal” looking advertisements, and
they would have been extremely easy to pass over had a person not known what was being looked for in regards to this research. These were those advertisements that completely omitted or rejected a group of people. In regard to the exclusionary advertisements, the most important idea to understand is that just because the advertisement does not look like Sambo does not mean that it is not racist.

Chapter Four: Results

The hypothesis from the start of this research was that, while the Civil Rights Movement may have positively affected the advertising industry and the advertisements that were published during this time, they did not impact, influence or change the minds of the advertisers and respective companies and businesses. After the research was complete, the hypothesis of the research was found to be correct. Although the offensive and racially insensitive subject matter decreased in advertisements between 1930 and 1969, the advertising industry continued to exclude African Americans and other minorities from their advertisements in a deliberate manner. When they did use minorities, the image or subject matter could have been viewed as offensive or otherwise racially insensitive.

The Civil Rights Movement aimed to secure equal rights and inclusion in society for the African American community. So, to say that the Civil Rights Movement changed the advertising industry even though the advertising industry continued to post exclusionary advertisements using the words “everybody” or “all,” then posting pictures of only white people, is completely inaccurate. The exclusionary advertisements can be taken just as, if not more offensive than other types of blatantly racial and racist
advertisements found in that they aim to conceal or veil their true intentions and/or purpose.

In looking specifically at The Clarion Ledger, known before 1941 as The Daily Ledger, in the month of December between 1930 and 1969, a conclusion has been reached in regard to this completed research. It is widely known that racially biased advertisements were created and utilized in a myriad of businesses and personal advertisements; this was evidenced by the literature review chapter, as well as through the independent research completed on this matter. This research attempted, through investigation into a Mississippi newspaper, to discover whether or not the Civil Rights Movement made an impact, positive or negative, on the issue of racially biased advertising in the South.

Throughout the breadth of this research, the goal was to discover any racially motivated and/or derogatory advertisements. In other words, this research aimed to find those advertisements that, in some form, could be construed as insensitive toward, offensive to, or completely exclusionary of African Americans or other minority groups. Beginning this research in the 1930s, it was apparent that the rampant use of African American images and/or the use of slave diction was, in fact, a selling point for many advertisers. However, beyond the noticeably overt racially derogatory images or language, there were also advertisements that utilized racially insensitive verbiage or images as well as advertisements that excluded African Americans altogether. During this time period, The Daily Clarion Ledger published everything from an advertisement previewing a future article about “[Not Being] a ‘Slave To Your Appetite,” to an advertisement for coal featuring “Goggle Eyes,” an African American male servant.
These examples are only a few of the many that were found during the research process, all of which fit directly into one of the three categories: racial, racist, or exclusionary. In the 1930s, all three of these categories were seen repeatedly in the advertisements. In the 1940s and 1950s, all three of these categories were present, but the racist advertisements were significantly less than they had been in the beginning decades. During the 1960s, all three categories were, again, present, however, both the racist and the racial advertisements were few and far between. The exclusionary advertisements dominated all three of the divisions of advertisements in the final years of the conducted research.

The City Coal and Material Company, in order to endorse and/or encourage the sale of Sipsey Coal, purchased the aforementioned advertisement featuring “Goggle Eyes.” The advertisement bared the cartoon image of an African American male with noticeably exaggerated features and the following text, “Boss, gimme another basket of dat Sipsey Coal…dat stuff was red hot and burnt to nothing! Goggle Eyes is right….” This advertisement, published on December 23, 1930, was pretty obviously racist in that it referenced a well-known racial stereotype of an African American laborer (See Figure 1). 17 More illustrations of advertisements that were found to be racist include advertisements published by a local grocery store named Kernaghan Grocery Company. They had a number of repetitive advertisements featuring a sort of dialect that may be considered akin to slave diction. The very first advertisement that was seen was one by Kernaghan Grocery Company. Published on December 1, 1930, the advertisement for

the store featured the catch phrase “Wellum, Yes Mam.” (See Figure 4) On December 27, 1930, the store published an advertisement with the headline “Mama! Mama! Look at Sam, Done eat up de turkey, and soppin out de pan.” (See Figure 5) The blatant use of this particular word choice can be considered to be “slave” diction in that it uses language of the time stereotypically thought to be used by servants. This use of verbiage would classify this advertisement, and others similar to it, as racist.

Not all of the advertisements, however, were quite so blatantly inappropriate. The above-mentioned advertisement teasing the upcoming article, published on December 15, 1930, on not becoming a “slave to your appetite” can be viewed as racial, but, compared to the other advertisements, remains a great deal more subtle than that of the previous advertisement, because it is not directly offensive (See Figure 2). More instances of racial advertisements were found during the research process, as well. More specifically, on December 9, 1930, General Electric for their product, the all-steel refrigerator, published an advertisement to attract the holiday shopper. The advertisement endorsed the refrigerator as a “gift that will make this Christmas last forever.” Along with that, they guaranteed that they “offer[ed] this magic servant for a limited time for only $10 down.” (See Figure 6) The fact that they used the word “servant” in this advertisement was not an accident; it was a premeditated attempt to sell this product

competitively using an element that can be considered to be racial, specifically the word “servant.”

As far as the exclusionary advertisements, there were a large number of those. One example, published on December 10, 1933, was an advertisement endorsing J.C. Penney’s. The heading reads, “Everybody wants the gifts you see at Penney’s.” Immediately underneath the heading is a row of different hands, both young and old looking hands. However, all of the hands that are pictured are white hands (See Figure 7).\(^{22}\) Another example, on December 27, 1966, was an advertisement published for the Schwobilt Clothes Store. At the very top of the advertisement, there is a caption that mentions “everybody’s rushing to Schwobilt’s fabulous After-Christmas clearance sale.” To the left of the caption is a large group of people that seem to be in a hurry; however, the group only consisted of white men and women (See Figure 8).\(^{23}\) Another case from 1930, an advertisement published specifically on December 19, 1930, provides an example of the exclusionary division of the advertisements. This advertisement endorsing the S.P. McRae Company provides the caption “Gifts of all kinds for all kinds of men.” The image at the top of the advertisement was a large group of “all kinds of men.” It shows men with facial hair and men without. It shows men with large noses and men with small noses. It shows men with different facial features, body styles, and mannerisms. However, there are a few things that these men have in common with one

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another. Every single one of them is wearing a coat, every single one of them is wearing a hat, and most importantly, every single one of them is a white man (See Figure 3).²⁴

Looking specifically at the main subject of some of the literature in the paper’s literature review, the researcher examined numerous advertisements featuring Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben. One example of Aunt Jemima’s advertisement was published on December 19, 1947 and promised the consumer that they could get to “Meet Aunt Jemima in Person.” Above the caption is a large image of Aunt Jemima (See Figure 9).²⁵ Uncle Ben was seen in numerous grocery advertisements as well. One example was an advertisement published in the FairWay Food Stores Advertisement on December 10, 1959 (See Figure 10).²⁶

The advertisements seemed to tone themselves down as the Civil Rights Movement continued during the 1950s and the 1960s, but it was still not a victory for African Americans in the case of advertising. The advertising seemed to, for the most part, change as time progressed. However, it was clear that not all advertisers, personal or otherwise, were ready to change and evolve with the Civil Rights Movement. In fact, as recently in the research as December 9, 1968, one advertiser was still posting a job that was dedicated for a “white woman” only, which violated the 1964 Civil Rights Act (See

In 1969, this research found no evidence of any racist or racial advertising, but there were still evident signs of exclusion on the part of the advertisers.

To be more specific about the numbers of the different divisions of advertisements in 1930, the research found nine cases of advertising that contained racist elements, three cases of advertising that contained somehow racial advertisements, and one advertisement that was considered to be exclusionary. In 1931, the research found five racist advertisements. In 1932, research found only one advertisement that could be included in the exclusionary division of advertisements. In 1933, the research found one instance of racist advertising and three cases of exclusionary advertisements. In 1934, research found one example of an exclusionary advertisement and three cases of racist advertisements. The 1930s saw all three divisions of advertising that have been discussed previously with those advertisements falling into the racist category greatly outnumbered the other two categories combined.

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In 1945, research found one instance of racist advertising and three instances of exclusionary advertisements.\textsuperscript{33} For 1946, there was one example of racist advertising and one example of exclusionary advertising.\textsuperscript{34} In 1947, the research presented one occurrence of racial advertising, four instances of exclusionary advertising, and five instances of advertising that could be considered to be racist.\textsuperscript{35} In 1948, the research discovered three racist advertisements and two advertisements that can be defined as exclusionary.\textsuperscript{36} In 1949, the research obtained evidence of one instance of racial advertising, three instances of racist advertising, and three instances of exclusionary advertising.\textsuperscript{37} The 1940s showed examples of all three divisions, similar to the research results that were collected from the 1930s, however, there were fewer advertisements that could have been directly classified as racist. While there were fewer advertisements categorized as racist than the sample from the previous decade, this category was still the most prevalent of the three categories during this decade sample.

In 1954, research discovered two cases of racist advertising and three instances of advertising that were considered exclusionary.\textsuperscript{38} In 1955, the research uncovered six instances of racist advertising, one case of racial advertising, and two cases of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} \textit{The Daily Clarion Ledger}, December 2, 1945, p. 10, December 2, 1945, p. 12, December 9, 1945, p. 5, December 18, 1945, p. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{34} \textit{The Daily Clarion Ledger}, December 6, 1946, p. 9, December 29, 1946, p. 3.
\end{itemize}
exclusionary advertising. In 1956, there were four occasions of racist advertisements and six instances of exclusionary advertisements. In 1957, the research showed only one situation where the advertisement was most obviously racist and four instances of advertisements that were categorized as exclusionary. In 1958, the research found only one example of racist advertising. In 1959, research found three examples of racist advertising and three cases of exclusionary advertising. In the 1950s, the research proved that, while there were examples of all three divisions of advertising in the Clarion Ledger, racist advertising was not quite as prevalent as what was seen earlier in the 1930s.

The entire 1960s were also researched during this process. In 1960, the research found only one case where the advertisement was classified as being racist. In 1961, the research found three instances of racist advertising, one example of racial advertising, and one case of exclusionary advertising. In 1962, research concluded that there were


42 The Daily Clarion Ledger, December 7, 1958, p. 3.


nine occasions of exclusionary advertisements.\textsuperscript{46} In 1963, the research established that there were six cases of exclusionary advertisements.\textsuperscript{47} In 1964, the research proved there to be five racist advertisements, although it is worthy to note that all five of these advertisements depicted Native Americans in an offensive manner.\textsuperscript{48} The 1964 issue also had one instance of racial advertisement.\textsuperscript{49} In 1965, the research showed that there were three cases of exclusionary advertisements.\textsuperscript{50} In 1966, there was research that established that there were three instances of advertisements that proved to be exclusionary.\textsuperscript{51} In 1967, the research recognized four examples of exclusionary advertising.\textsuperscript{52} In 1968, the research showed that there were four occurrences of racist advertising, two cases of advertising that can be classified as racial, and four examples of advertisements that were exclusionary.\textsuperscript{53} In 1969, there were no advertisements found that could be classified as directly racist, racial, or exclusionary. The 1960s proved to be a mixture of the three divided categories, just like the previous decades were; however, there was not as many


\textsuperscript{49} The Daily Clarion Ledger, December 18, 1964, p. 11.


directly racist advertisements and even fewer advertisements that portrayed an offensive bias towards African Americans.

To extrapolate from the sampling by using a formula to predict the possible outcome, yearly statistics may be hypothesized in order to consider how pervasive these racial advertisements were. In order to calculate these probable numbers, this thesis will use the years that contained racially significant advertising in each decade and multiply the number by twelve. In 1930, there were thirteen instances of racially significant advertising. Predicting the yearly outcome for 1930 would mean that there would be approximately one hundred fifty-six instances of racially significant advertisements if every month had as many of those advertisements as the month of December. In 1947, 1956, and 1968, there were ten cases of racially significant advertising. Using the formula, the yearly outcome for each year would come out to one hundred twenty instances of racially significant advertisements. Comparing decades, after the peak in 1930, these racially significant advertisements were steady; they did not decrease over time.

Chapter Five: Discussion

During the research process, it was progressively easier to understand just what exactly was happening to the use of race in advertising throughout the years of the research. The findings included not only advertisements, but also included racially significant articles pertaining directly to or somehow related to the Civil Rights Movement. The local research paralleled the events of the nationwide history of the Civil Rights Movement as evidenced by several articles found.
When the Supreme Court overruled their original 1896 decision to keep schools segregated in Plessy versus Ferguson in 1954, Brown versus the Board of Education prevailed. It was this case that effectively ended segregation in the public school system.\(^54\) This landmark case was the main headline of many newspaper articles for the next several years. The beginning of this debate really took hold of the headlines in 1956. One example is from the December 1, 1956 edition of *The Daily Clarion Ledger*. The headline read “Negro Parents Seek Protection For Their Children.” (See Figure 12)\(^55\) The article was about the violence that African American students were facing at Clinton High School, a local Mississippi high school that was among the first high schools to integrate. Another example on December 11, 1956 is a headline that is entitled “Warn White Clinton Students Against Unauthorized Conduct.” (See Figure 13)\(^56\) This article, following the closure of the school due to the violence talked about in the first article, warned students that violence against any African American students would result in investigations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

These articles and dialogue surrounding these important moments and events in the Civil Rights Movement’s history, such as the debate on desegregation in Mississippi, are included in the discussion. They are included because they may prove to be useful in determining the pattern of advertisements that pertained to race. Race relations and the articles detailing these relations and the events that changed and shaped the Civil Rights

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Movement may be the key to understanding the advertisements this research is attempting to study.

In fact, in 1956, the research conducted in this study showed that there were eleven instances total between the three categories of advertisements that were being looked for. This year had the most total advertisements that were racially significant of any other year in the 1950s. Likewise, it was observed that most of articles from that time period examining the integration of schools in the South fell in the same year. Perhaps, the historical changes as they were related to school desegregation and the arguments being deliberated are directly correlated with this increase in racially substantial advertising during this time period. Those who wished to hold on to segregation and the racial implications that accompany it may have shown their resistance through their company and/or business advertisements.

When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his “I Have A Dream” speech on August 23, 1963 during the march on Washington, it made an impact on people’s lives all over the country.57 This speech is one of the most famous speeches in American history and probably the most notable and most referenced speech coming out of the Civil Rights Movement, of which there were many. Perhaps, like the issues surrounding the debate on desegregation and the advertisements of that particular time period, this moment made an impact on the advertisements during its’ time period. It may not be a simple coincidence that in 1963, the research discovered zero advertisements that could be deemed racist, as

well as zero advertisements that could be deemed racial. While there were six cases of exclusionary advertisements in the year 1963, there was none that were obviously racist and/ or racial.

Beyond just looking at significant Civil Rights Movement moments in history, it would be important to note that while the use of African American bodies as selling points for advertising, the idea of “whiteness” was also found to be a selling point. It was discovered fairly early in the research that emphasizing the color white and the purity and sharpness of that color was important to advertisers, as well. If one did not comprehend or trust the color white of their toilet paper, flour, or cleanser, advertisers were going to make sure that the people knew the product was white and pure and everything else that could be insinuated with the importance of a white quality.

The first example is the advertisement publishing White Sail Softerized Tissue on December 1, 1949. This toilet paper promised to be not only “double soft,” but also to be “snow white.” (See Figure 14) 58 Additionally, another example is the advertisement for Ballard’s Obelisk Flour that was published on December 5, 1947. The advertisement promised that this flour was “the flour [that] the south prefers, now even whiter.” (See Figure 15) 59 Another example was the advertisement for Dixie White Cleanser on

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December 7, 1945. The advertisement promised a white cleaner and portrayed a young Southern belle type woman on the front of the package (See Figure 16).

Products using the color “white” as a selling point were not limited to these items. There were a great number of products promising the “whiteness” of their products, including the previously listed items. However, they also included an advertisement published for a dry cleaning store that called itself “Snow White Cleaners.” (See Figure 17) They included an advertisement published for a salve referred to as “White Wonder” and promised that the product was “pure white.” (See Figure 18) They also included an advertisement endorsing the use of Moroline Petroleum Jelly, while the company promised their customers that their product was “snow white.” (See Figure 19)

This thesis draws heavily on the ideas found in *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* authored by Grace Elizabeth Hale. The discussion of “whiteness” can really evolve into a similar discussion about the portrayal of African Americans in the media. The “whiteness,” the portrayal of something as being snow white or pure white, can be seen as the opposite of the portrayal of African Americans, not only in the advertising that the research found, but also in items such as comics and sports’ advertisements. The discussion will include these topics due to the fact that the

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tone of an area of people may often be seen through such items as these advertisements. During the research, many elements were discovered that reflected a certain prejudicial tone towards African Americans.

The tone can be seen quite clearly in the comic section of the newspaper published on December 9, 1930. The comic featured an African American “mammy” type character. However, this character was drawn less human-like and looks like a heavyset ape-like creature (See Figure 20).  

This was seen in a number of cartoons in the comic section that featured African Americans characters. Another example was published on December 28, 1947. The cartoon showed a similar “mammy” type figure that looked less than human (See Figure 21). For the most part, the research discovered that they were not even drawn to look human.

An example of a specific tone of a sports’ advertisement featuring an African American can be seen in an advertisement for a boxing match published on December 9, 1930. The advertisement features an African American boxing contender by the name of Angel Cliville. However, the boxer is referred to in the advertisement as “the dark angel of the South.” Even the portrayal of an African American as an angel of sorts, an image usually reserved with the indication of light and soft colors, is muddied by the indication that there is something “dark” about this contender. The other boxer featured on the advertisement was a man by the name of Angel Brovelli, who was considered to be “Madigan’s Mighty Mastodon from Moraga.” The advertisement is captioned by a

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phrase stating, “They don’t look like angels to me.” (See Figure 22) The portrayals of these two boxers are distinctly different.

Continuing to look at advertisements relating specifically to the tone of the people during this time period, the completed research found many other discussable points. This study was conducted on the month of December of various years, meaning that the research was rooted in advertisements featuring Christmas as the main idea of a great number of the advertisements. Right around Christmas, usually on Christmas Day or Christmas Eve, companies would start to publish their Christmas advertisements endorsing “good will.” For example, the advertisement published by Batte Furniture on December 25, 1945 mirrors the many advertisements of the same nature that this research found. The advertisement promises, “good will toward men shall encompass every corner of the globe.” (See Figure 23) There were countless ads published by a number of companies featuring the Christmas promise of “good will toward men.” The interesting point to be taken from this is that while these companies and citizens are wanted this “good will” at Christmastime, they are not willing to let African Americans have the simple freedoms that many of them were so desperately fighting toward.

Another advertisement, this one published by Kernaghan Grocery on December 12, 1930, fashioned the headline “Tellin’ the World – 1930 Treated Us Real Dirty; Let Everyone Get Happy – We Will All Get a New Deal in 1931 – It Won’t Be Long Now!.”

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This headline, like the last is problematic for two reasons. The first reason is that 1930 was not the first year that most African Americans had it rough and it would not, unfortunately, be the last year either. The second reason is that African Americans would not be getting a “New Deal” to make their life easier; their lives would remain, for the most part, difficult.

During the research process, advertisements, articles, and other such items were pulled from The Daily Clarion Ledger. However, the research also called for the study of advertisements from two pieces of black press. JET and Ebony Magazine are two American magazines devoted primarily to African American readers. John H. Johnson established JET Magazine in 1951 in order to provide credible information to the African American community. While research found advertisements with questionable contents like products by Aunt Jemima such as the one published in Ebony Magazine in December of 1959 on page 21, it was discovered that these magazines used both white and African American images to advertise. White families, as well as African American families, were used to advertise the endorsed advertisements. While the research found many divisions of racially biased advertising in the Southern newspaper, the case for racial bias is found in JET and Ebony Magazine through advertisements for such brands as Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben, but definitely not as prominent as in The Daily Clarion Ledger.

It is not extremely difficult to understand the accuracy of my hypothesis as being correct if one looks at the advertisements today. Still, today, there are racial issues in

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advertising. For example, the Land O Lakes Butter still advertises with the use of a Native American woman and Lucky Charms Cereal still advertises with an Irishman portrayed as a leprechaun. These advertisements, along with others, can be portrayed as being racially insensitive in some way or another.

While the literature of Grace Elizabeth Hale seemed to mirror and assist heavily with the research process and the literature of Robert Weems supports the findings in Jet and Ebony magazines, the literature of Maurice Manring and Marilyn Kern-Foxworth did not help as much. While they do not endorse racism, they also do not focus on the implications that an exclusionary ad can have and the fact that these exclusionary ads can actually endorse racism.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The hypothesis at the beginning of this thesis stated that the Civil Rights Movement did not fully impact the way the advertising industry used African American images. This was theorized due to the fact that images appeared to not have changed after the Civil Rights Movement. It was determined that if the hypothesis remained intact, it could, in turn, question the Civil Rights movement and its’ impact as a whole. This paper contributed by delving into the concept of the use of African American images by the advertising industry in order to sell products. The research attempted to answer the question as to whether or not prejudicial bias in the advertising industry was still occurring today.

This thesis focused on the literature by Grace Elizabeth Hale, Robert E. Weems, Jr., Maurice M. Manring, and Marilyn Kern-Foxworth. However, the research also
involved studying archival records of the newspaper, *The Daily Clarion Ledger*, at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. These archival records also incorporated both *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines. This research focused on records from 1930 through 1969, specifically in the month of December. Conclusions were reached by placing advertisements into three categories: racist, racial, and exclusionary.

The hypothesis of this thesis was found to be true, ultimately suggesting that the Civil Rights Movement did not fully change the image of African Americans in the white mind. The research found numerous advertisements involving “slave” diction or an offensive view of an African American person; these advertisements were placed into the racist category. The research found numerous advertisements involving a more subtle reference to a certain group of people; these advertisements were placed into the racial category. The research also found a large number of advertisements excluded people of certain races; these advertisements were placed in the exclusionary category.

It was progressively easier to understand exactly what was happening throughout the years during the research. The research paralleled the historically significant moments of the Civil Rights Movement. The research also paralleled an idea of “whiteness” among Southern whites, proving that “black” was not the only color used to sell products to consumers. It was concluded as well that, today, there are still examples of racially insensitive advertisements. This thesis concludes, in full, that, according to this independent study, the Civil Rights Movement did not impact the advertising industry enough to make advertisers stop using minority groups in order to sell more products. In fact, it can be assumed that the Civil Rights Movement did not impact.
popular culture ideas as much as it should have, because there are still questionable ideas even today.

References


Appendices

Figure 1: Advertisement for Sipsey Coal

Figure 2: Advertisement for Royal S. Copeland, M.D.
Figure 3: Advertisement for S.P. McRae Company
Figure 4: Advertisement for Kernaghan Grocery

Figure 5: Advertisement for Kernaghan Grocery 2

Mama! Mama! Look at Sam,
Done eat up de turkey
and sopping out de pan.

Large Grapefruit, each .......... 5c
Large Pecans, pound ............. 10c
Walnuts, pound .................. 20c
Miss Cranberries, dozen .......... 25c
3 pounds Raisins for ............. 30c

Green Cabbage, Celery, Lettuce
and Fresh Vegetables of all kinds.

We Carry a Complete Line of
BORDEN’S CHEESE

Just Phone 186

Kernaghan Grocery Co.
317 E. Pearl Street

Figure 8: Advertisement for Schwobilt Clothes

Figure 9: Advertisement for Hemphill’s West End Grocery and Market

Figure 10: Advertisement for Fairway Food Stores

Figure 14: Advertisement for White Sail Toilet Tissue

Figure 15: Advertisement for Obelisk Flour

Figure 16: Advertisement for Dixie White Cleanser

Figure 17: Advertisement for Snow White Cleaners

Dry Cleaning, Snow White Cleaners. December 1, 1931. Advertisement. The Daily Clarion
Ledger, 5.
Figure 18: Advertisement for Runion’s White Wonder Salve

Rub Away Headache

For nervous headache
rub White Wonder salve on temples and forehead. Concentrated, soothing salve quickly penetrates to seat of pain. Harmless for even a baby. Your druggist guarantees White Wonder to satisfy or money back.

Runion’s WHITE WONDER SALVE

Figure 19: Advertisement for Moroline Petroleum Jelly

Figure 20: Comic Strip 1
Figure 21: Comic Strip 2

Figure 22: Advertisement for Boxing Match

Figure 23: Advertisement for Batte Furniture Company