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Authenticity and Credibility: Effects on Counter-Stereotypical Ads

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Authenticity and Credibility: Effects on Counter-Stereotypical Ads

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Introduction

To **increase involvement of underrepresented groups** in stereotyped domains (e.g., women in STEM), marketers frequently utilize campaigns that include **counter-stereotypical stimuli** (e.g., a university STEM program advertisement featuring women).

Existing literature on counter-stereotypical advertising suggests that **contingency cues** (i.e., third-party stereotypes that **positively link** the group to the domain) may **strengthen** the advertising campaign.

Additionally, existing research has shown that **authenticity and credibility** influence the effectiveness of such campaigns. However, it may be **more difficult** to convince **members of a subculture** (e.g., urban youth with street experience) that an advertisement containing subcultural symbolism is authentic and credible, unless the marketer has a **nuanced understanding of the subculture.**

Conversely, for non-subculture members, what is perceived to be authentic is often rooted in **cultural stereotypes.**
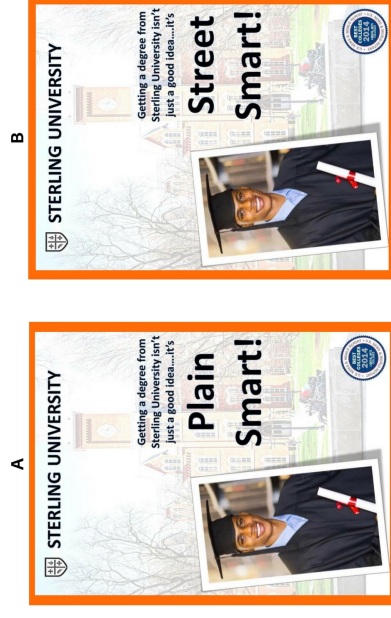
Contingency Cue Diagrams
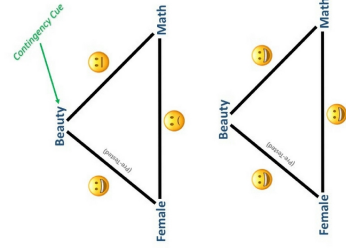
Methods

One hundred and thirty-five participants from the United States were recruited via Amazon MTurk (41.5% Female, 39.6 mean age).
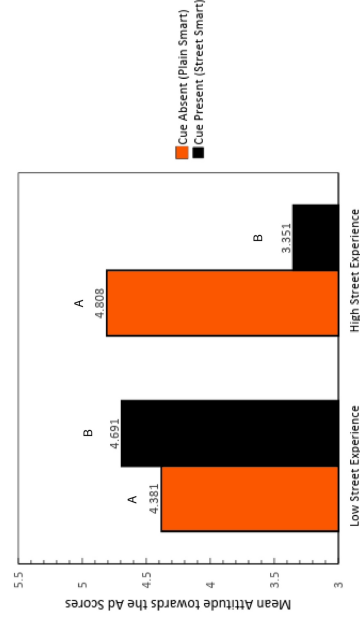
All participants viewed a **counter-stereotypical ad:** an image of a Black male as the spokesperson for an unfamiliar university. The **contingency cue** tested was **"Street Smart."** Participants were **randomly assigned** one of two conditions: version A with the contingency cue absent ("Plain Smart"), or version B with the cue present ("Street Smart").

Participants' attitude toward the ad was measured by three 7-point likert scales with the prompt **"My overall opinion of this ad is:"** anchored by Very Bad/Very Good, Dislike Extremely/Like Extremely, and Very Unfavorable/Very Favorable.

Participants also completed a **measure of street experience** that asks participants whether they have been poor and whether they have lived in neighborhoods that were **dangerous and violent.**

A

B

Conclusions and Implications

The results of this study suggest that members of subcultural groups will **respond negatively** to counter-stereotypical advertisements that do not exhibit an **understanding of the nuances of the subculture,** or if the contingency cue is not perceived as **authentic** and **credible** by the targeted subcultural group.

In this case, the "Street Smart" contingency cue did not exhibit a level of nuanced understanding of the subculture, which is evident because **only those with high street experience responded negatively** to the ad with the contingency cue. This suggests that the contingency cue did not read as authentic or credible to those with street experience.

In order for the counter-stereotypical advertisement to work on its intended audience, marketers should use contingency cues that are rooted in a **deep understanding** of the targeted subcultural group to appear authentic and credible, **not based solely on cultural stereotypes.** It may work on outsiders to the subculture, but that undermines the desired effect of the counter-stereotypical advertisement.

Results: Attitude Toward the Ad

Low Street Experience   High Street Experience

B 4.691   A 4.381   A 4.808   B 3.351

Cue Absent (Plain Smart)
Cue Present (Street Smart)

The attitude of the **targeted subculture** (those with **high street experience,** the group to the right) **dramatically decreased** when they viewed the advertisement with the contingency cue "Street Smart."

On the other hand, the attitude of participants with **low street experience slightly increased** with the contingency cue "Street Smart."