

Racialized Newcomers' Reactions to Targeted Public Health Ads

Mohammed El Hazzouri^a, Leah Hamilton^a, and Kelley Main^b

^aMount Royal University, ^bUniversity of Manitoba



Introduction

We investigate how racialized newcomers react to public health advertisements that target their ethnic group.

Racialized Groups in Commercial Ads

- Historically, ethnic minorities have either been ignored by advertisers or featured in a negative manner (e.g., Bowen & Schmid, 1997).
- Recently, there has been an increase in advertising campaigns that feature ethnic minorities (Zmuda, 2014)
- Ethnic minority consumers respond positively to ads that feature their ethnic group (Green, 1999).
 - This is true for commercial products (e.g., Forehand et al., 2002)

Focus Groups

We conducted three focus groups with racialized newcomers

- Two groups with participants who identify as Black ($N=6$ & $N=4$)
- One group with participants who identify as South Asian ($N=11$)

Procedure:

Participants saw several real public health ads on mental health, diabetes, heart disease, HIV, etc.

The ads included models who:

- Are Black or South Asian
- Are White only
- Are of several different ethnicities

Participants commented on how they felt about each ad.

LIWC Analysis

Scripts from the focus groups were analyzed via LIWC (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count)

Word count results showed that participants engaged more with the ads featuring their ethnicity:

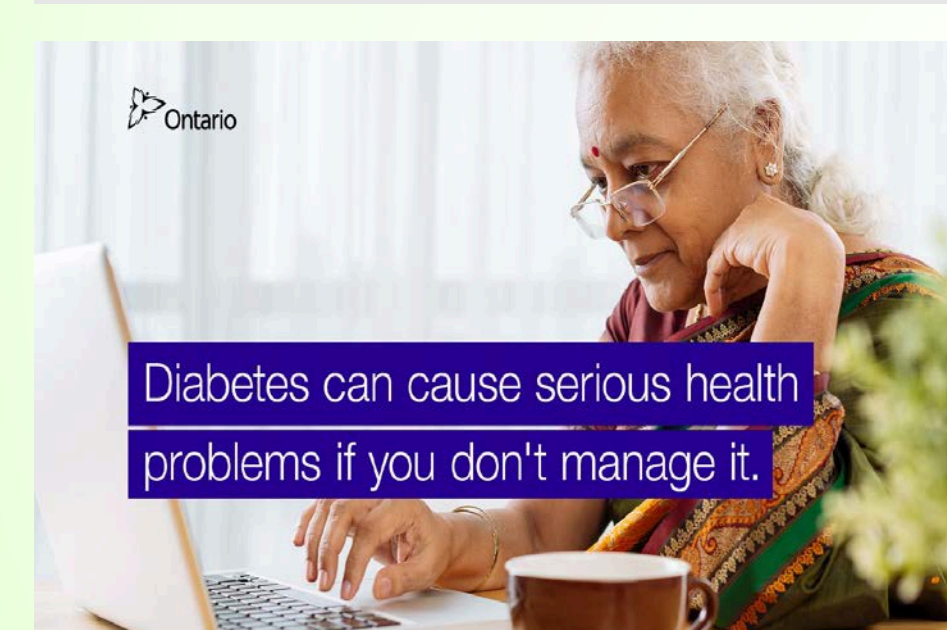
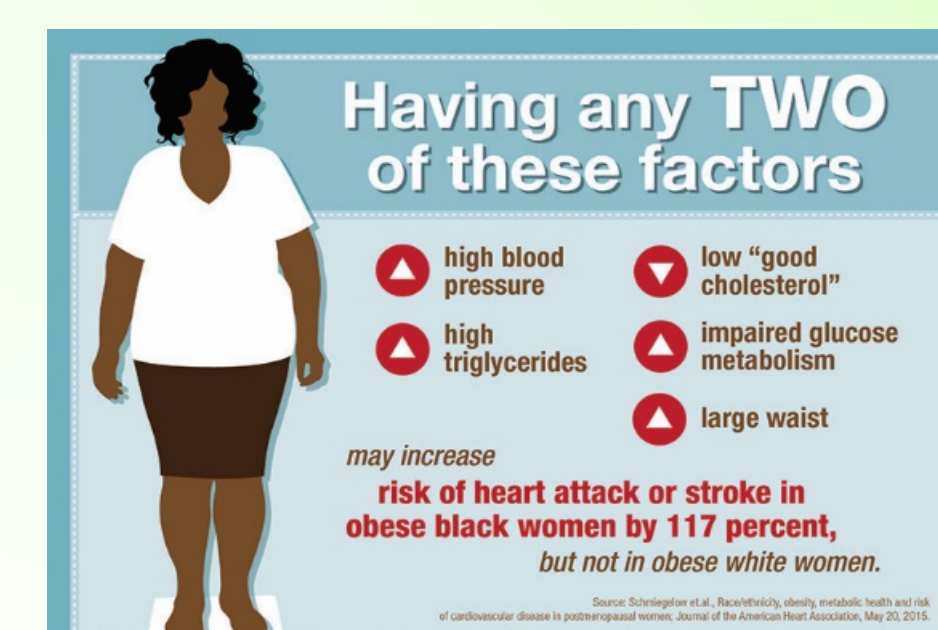
- Black participants: ($M_{\text{Black Models}}=688$; $M_{\text{Other}}=402$)
- South Asian participants: ($M_{\text{South Asian Models}}=851$; $M_{\text{Other}}=621$)

Results showed that participants used a less positive tone when discussing ads that featured their ethnicity

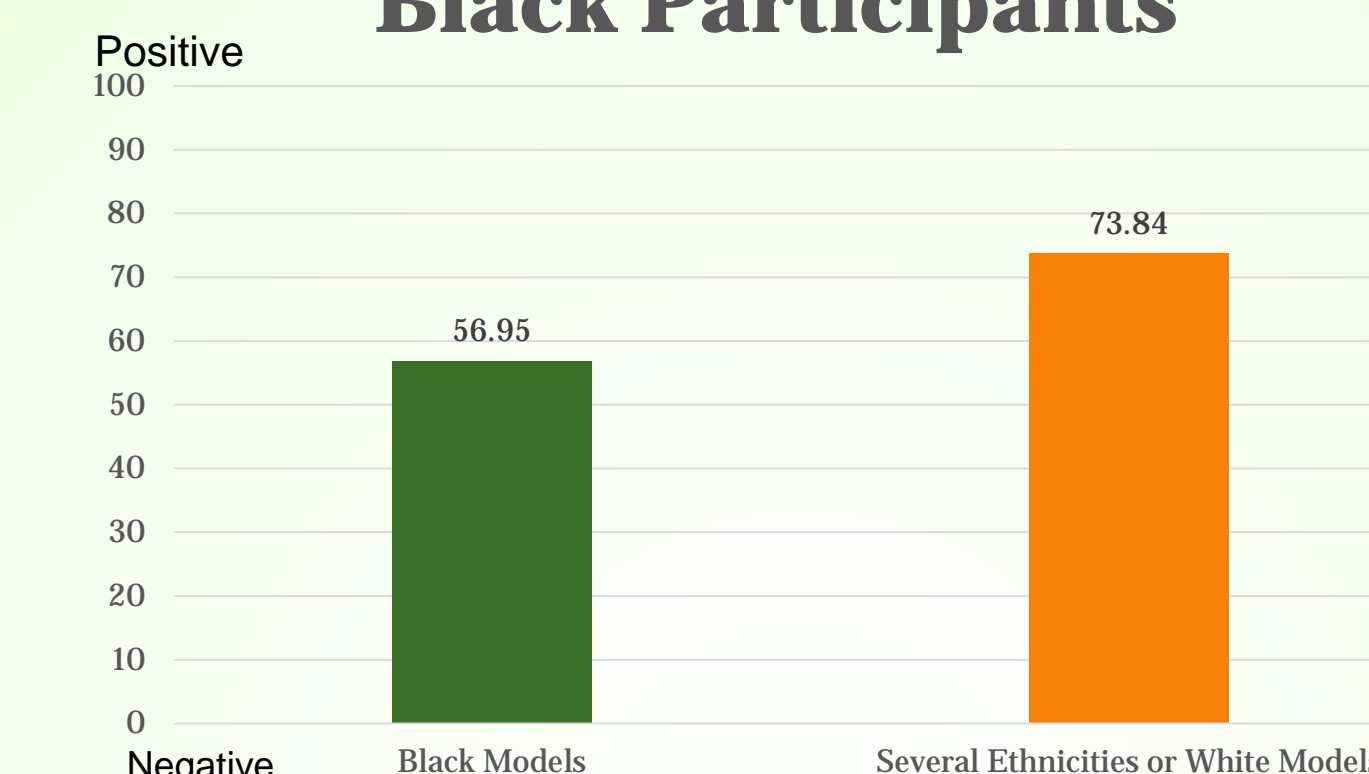
Racialized Groups in Public Health Ads

- Targeting racialized groups is common practice in health communications (Grier & Bryant, 2005)
- Ethnic minorities are targeted because they are deemed at risk (Des Jarlais et al., 1994)
- Targeting minorities in public health communications seems to be effective (Herek et al., 1998)
- Research on targeted public health ads is community-based (e.g., Fitzgibbon et al., 2005)
 - Participant recruitment and data collection took place within ethnic communities (e.g., Herek et al., 1998)
- However, in reality, these ads are being widely distributed (El Hazzouri & Hamilton, 2019) which can lead to a backlash effect (El Hazzouri & Hamilton, 2019)
 - Targeted minorities feel negatively stereotyped
 - Targeted minorities react more favorably to public health ads with White models

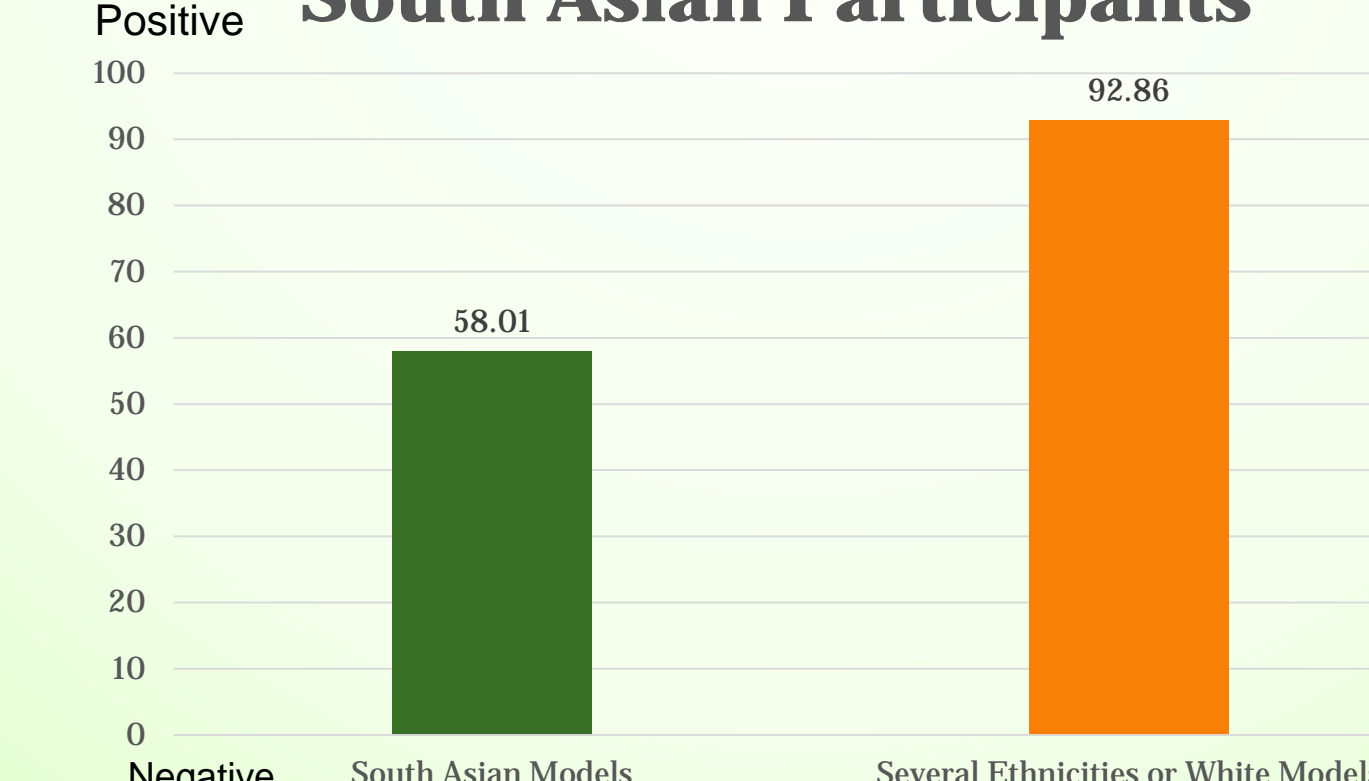
Sample Ads



Tone: Black Participants



Tone: South Asian Participants



Research Questions

- How do racialized newcomers react to public health advertisements that feature their ethnic group?
- What variables may influence their reactions to such ads?



General Findings

Black participants:

- Reacted negatively to advertisements that featured Black models
- Least favorite was an ad that presented factual information stating that Black individuals are more at risk than others
- Most favorite were ads that included more than one ethnicity:
 - Presenting the Black model as a doctor
 - Featuring a White and a Black model together

South Asian participants:

- Were indifferent regarding the ethnicity of the model
- They were more critical of design aspects of ads that featured South Asian models:
 - Least favorite was an HIV awareness ad featuring a South Asian model
 - There was no consensus on the most favorite ad

Discussion

Conclusions:

- Racialized newcomers react less favorably to public health ads that feature members of their ethnic groups
 - Black newcomers are explicit about their negative opinions
 - South Asian newcomers are implicit about their negative opinions, focusing on design features of the ad (e.g., layout)
- Several presentation elements affect how racialized newcomers react to public health ads featuring their ethnic group
 - The role of the featured minority model (e.g., doctor)
 - The information provided about the health risks to the targeted ethnicity
 - Whether models of other ethnicities are present

Future Research:

- Test experimentally the role of the factors identified here
- Include members of other racialized groups

Acknowledgments

