Crossover Dreams:
Consumer Responses to Ethnic-Oriented Products

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The authors develop and evaluate a framework for investigating and understanding ethnic product crossover: when a product intended for one ethnic minority group gains significant penetration among consumers outside that referent ethnic group. In three studies, the authors investigate how a product’s characteristics, the promotion and distribution decisions made for it and consumers’ propensity for diversity influence the product’s likelihood of crossing over from the intended ethnic target market to mainstream White consumers. Product characteristics interact with both other marketing decisions and consumers’ diversity-seeking tendencies to influence whether consumers will be interested in ethnic products as well as the social context in which they are willing to consume them. The authors discuss the implications of the findings for theory and practice and provide directions for further research that includes consideration of the product’s ethnic embeddedness, the context in which the product will be consumed, and consumers’ diversity-seeking tendencies.
Marketers of ethnic-oriented niche products frequently strategize to create crossover of their products into larger markets for economies of scale and commercial viability. However, when such products are closely identified with the specialized target market they serve, successful crossover to a mainstream market can be a challenge. Some formerly ethnic-oriented niche products do successfully cross over to the mainstream market. For example, 60% of hip-hop and rap, traditionally Black music, is purchased primarily by White youths (Hughes 2002). Salsa surpassed ketchup as the top-selling condiment in the United States in 1998 (Mellgren 2001). Ninety percent of sushi chef students at a Los Angeles academy are not Japanese, and more than 1,000 U.S. grocery stores have sushi counters (Walkup 2003). In contrast, however, some ethnic-oriented niche products do not cross over despite the marketers’ intention for them to do so. For example, annual lists of top ten television programs for Black and White consumers demonstrate strongly segregated audiences: Blacks watch shows targeted to a Black audience, and Whites watch shows intended for a White or mainstream audience (Gibbs 1999). Despite script and cast changes in response to marketing research, producers could not induce significant crossover among Anglo moviegoers for *Price of Glory*, a *Rocky*-like movie about a Hispanic fighter (Bannon 2000). Why do some ethnic-oriented products cross over but others do not?

We examine the crossover of ethnic-oriented products into the larger mainstream market. Specifically, we address three key research questions.

1. How do an ethnic-oriented product’s characteristics influence its appeal among consumers of the referent ethnic minority and the mainstream ethnic majority?
2. How do other marketing activities influence the appeal of and intended behaviors toward ethnic-oriented products among mainstream ethnic majority consumers?

3. How do consumers differ in their willingness to purchase and consume ethnic-oriented products?

We address these questions by first developing a framework for understanding ethnic-oriented product crossover. Then, in three studies, we examine several aspects of this framework, including how ethnic congruence, familiarity, diversity orientation, and social context influence consumers’ attitudes and purchase intentions toward ethnic-oriented products. We discuss the implications of our findings in relation to our framework and describe how our results inform our practical understanding of when crossover is and is not likely to occur. We also discuss how the framework may be applied to understanding crossover potential across product categories, consumption situations, and other social identity factors (e.g., age, gender).

A FRAMEWORK FOR ETHNIC CROSSOVER

Crossover occurs when a product designed for one target segment meets with attraction and acceptance in another segment (Garafalo 1993; Gibbs 1999). Crossover has traditionally been defined as the movement of a product from margin to mainstream, but not vice versa (Garafalo 1994). We focus on ethnic crossover, whereby a product reflecting the cultural experience of an ethnic minority group (an ethnic-oriented product) gains significant penetration among consumers outside the referent ethnic group. Many marketers, though not all (cf. Clunis 2004), would like to develop authentically ethnic-oriented products that reflect well their referent culture (i.e., that don’t “sell out”) but that
also appeal to an audience sizable enough to ensure profitability (Andruss 2004; Guess 2004). However, the product attributes and other marketing decisions that give products their ethnic character may signal to mainstream and other-ethnic consumers that the products are not intended for them (Grier and Brumbaugh 1999). Alternatively, the product itself may be viewed favorably, but attitudes toward its consumption may be unfavorable. The purchase and consumption contexts surrounding an ethnic-oriented product will likely affect whether it will cross over, and individual differences in preferences and beliefs regarding the referent ethnic group will influence consumers’ inclinations toward or away from ethnic-oriented products.

Our conceptual framework (see Figure 1) proposes that consumer characteristics and consumption context are important moderating effects on how ethnic-oriented product characteristics (including the impact of other marketing-mix decisions on inferred product characteristics) will be interpreted and embraced (or rejected) by mainstream or other-ethnic consumers. Important mediating processes influence how these product characteristics will be used to form attitudes, which influence subsequent behavioral intent and, ultimately, actual behavior.

This framework is based on attitude-intention-behavior models frequently used to understand consumption intentions and behaviors across a variety of domains (Kozup et al. 2003; Martin and Stewart 2001; Sheppard et al. 1988). Four additional key constructs, which we discuss in this section, are relevant for understanding crossover behaviors within this framework: characteristics that convey a product’s ethnic orientation,
consumer characteristics that influence how the product cues are interpreted, mediating processes that consumers use to form attitudes and behavioral intentions from product cues, and features of the context in which the product will be purchased and consumed.

**Product Characteristics: Ethnic Congruence and Embeddedness**

Some target market-specific product attributes preclude outright the product’s intended use by non-target market members (e.g., feminine hygiene products’ use by men). Similarly, some ethnic-oriented products function well only for members of the referent ethnic group (e.g., hair care products for Blacks, Mandarin-language media for Chinese Americans, etc.). As a consequence, crossover is not feasible for such products.

However, most ethnic-oriented products are not so constrained, and limits to crossover result from consumers’ beliefs that the products are not intended or appropriate for them. Prior research shows that consumers respond less favorably to spokespeople of another ethnic group than to spokespeople of their own ethnic groups (e.g., Green 1999; Whittler 1991; Whittler and DiMeo 1991; Williams et al. 1995) and suggests that people prefer products associated with their own ethnic group over products associated with other ethnic groups (cf. Whittler 1989).

Cues like the ethnicity of a spokesperson or of the characters pictured on a package convey the ethnic orientation of a product. However, ethnic orientation is about not only the ethnic group associated with the product but also the degree to which the product is associated with that group, or its “ethnic embeddedness” (Williams 1995). Advertisements that combine ethnic characters with ethnic-consistent cues such as depictions of ancestral heritage; culture-specific assimilation experiences; and other cultural-bound traditions, practices, and symbols are highly ethnically embedded
(Williams 1995). Such advertisements tap into the ethnic experience of ethnic-congruent consumers and engender favorable responses among target market members (Appiah 2001b; Brumbaugh 2002). In contrast, advertisements low in ethnic embeddedness include ethnic models combined with elements (i.e., background, language, themes) of mainstream American culture.

Products themselves may also contain ethnic-specific cues that influence the degree to which they are perceived as ethnically embedded. In addition, other marketing strategies such as distribution in ethnic-frequented channels and promotion in ethnic-targeted media may further signal to mainstream and other-ethnic consumers that an ethnic-oriented product is not intended for them and may reduce its potential for crossover. For example, a package of tortillas, a product traditionally associated with Mexican ethnic culture, that are produced by machine, packaged with English-language labels by a well-known American company, and distributed through national grocery store chains is far less ethnically embedded than a package of tortillas rolled by hand by a small Mexican company, packaged with Spanish-language labels, and sold only in bodegas in the Southwestern United States. Although the product category is associated with a specific ethnic group, other cues about its production, brand, country of origin, and distribution enhance (as in the latter example) or lessen (as in the former) its ethnic embeddedness.

**Consumer Characteristics: Distinctiveness and Diversity Seeking**

Characteristics of consumers themselves will influence how they interpret and respond to ethnic cues. Ethnic distinctiveness is one source of difference. Research on distinctiveness demonstrates that members of distinctive ethnic groups (groups that are a
numeric minority and for whom ethnic group membership is salient and self-defining) respond more favorably to targeted appeals than do members of ethnically nondistinctive groups (groups that are a numeric majority and for whom ethnic group membership is neither salient nor self-defining) because of heightened levels of felt similarity that arise from ethnic congruence between product and consumer (Aaker et al. 2000; Grier and Deshpandé 2001; McGuire et al. 1978). For members of ethnically nondistinctive groups, ethnicity simply does not provide a basis for or information about attitudes toward targeted advertisements or products (Aaker et al. 2000).

A second characteristic relevant for ethnic crossover is consumers’ propensity to seek out cultural or ethnic-related diversity in people, products, and services, a characteristic we call “diversity seeking.” Related to but distinct from the brand-focused variety seeking (“the tendency of individuals to seek diversity in their choices of services or goods,” p. 139, Kahn 1995), diversity seeking captures consumers’ predilection for consumption experiences that are related to cultures other than their own, including those defined by ethnicity. Consumers who are not members of a particular ethnic group may be attracted to ethnic-oriented products because they seek variety outside the usual mainstream fare (Kahn 1993), because they have an interest in the specific culture (Appiah 2004), or because they are interested in different ethnic cultures generally (Halter 2000).

For example, Hallmark markets a collection of greeting cards called “Common Threads” whose messages reflect a variety of world cultures, emphasizing global community and diverse cultural expression (Halter 2000). Hallmark research found that “Common Threads” buyers were overwhelmingly White consumers who also tended to
purchase multicultural or ethnic-oriented clothing, jewelry, and decorative home items. This segment is likely similar to the “Cultural Creatives” identified by Ray and Anderson (2000), which consists of 26% of adult Americans concerned with self-actualization, spirituality, and self-expression, and who like things that are foreign and exotic.

A small but growing body of academic research has begun to explore inclinations toward cultural diversity. Miville and colleagues (Fuertes et al. 2000; Miville et al. 1999) have developed a scale that measures people’s tolerance of people different from themselves. Douthitt and colleagues (1999) have developed a scale assessing people’s receptivity to dissimilar others. However, no academic research has empirically examined a diversity-seeking trait whereby some people are highly interested in and proactively seek out people, places, products, and experiences that are culturally different from their own.

**Consumption Context**

Prior research shows that the contexts in which products are purchased and consumed have a profound impact on consumption beliefs and behaviors. For example, contextual factors dictate whether a product will be consumed at all (Cote et al. 1985) and, if so, what product attributes will be weighted more heavily in choice (Quester and Smart 1998). Social beliefs and norms influence consumption more for products that are consumed in public than for those that are consumed in private (Bearden and Etzel 1982), and perceived visibility of a product increases these social influences (Fisher and Price 1992).

The ethnic orientation of the context in which a product will be purchased or used has also been shown to influence its consumption. People are more likely to consume
ethnic-consistent products when the consumption context is ethnically relevant than when it is associated with the mainstream or another ethnic group (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989). The presence of others of the same ethnicity increases the likelihood of ethnicity-consistent product consumption (Xu et al. 2004). Situations that heighten a person’s ethnic-group salience lead to greater ethnicity-consistent consumption than situations that do not (Forehand and Deshpande 2001).

It is highly likely, then, that the specific context in which an ethnic-oriented product is used will influence the likelihood of crossover. Public consumption may increase the social risks of ethnic-oriented products for mainstream or other-ethnic consumers (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Fisher and Price 1992). When given a choice, mainstream or other-ethnic consumers may be more likely to use ethnic-oriented products in private consumption contexts (e.g., alone at home) than in public consumption contexts (e.g., with others at a public retail space). Similarly, they may be more likely to use ethnic-oriented private goods than ethnic-oriented public goods (cf., Ratner and Kahn 2002; Richins 1994).

The nature of the other people with whom one might consume ethnic-oriented products may further facilitate (e.g., if the others are of the referent ethnic group or are known for their tolerance of it) or inhibit (e.g., if others are not of the referent ethnic group or are known for their intolerance of it) such products’ consumption (Wakefield and Inman 2003; Xu et al. 2004). For example, the idea of an African aerobics class may appeal to some non-Black fitness enthusiasts. However, the thought of attending the class as a minority member or engaging in unfamiliar movements may undermine otherwise favorable product-based attitudes (toward the class itself), causing behavior-based
attitudes and intentions (toward enrolling in and attending the class) to be far less favorable. Attending the class with a friend who is a member of the referent ethnic group may mitigate this effect.

**Mediating Processes: Familiarity**

Familiarity with the target product is one process that may mediate the impact of ad and product characteristics on attitudes and thus enhance the crossover of ethnic-oriented products. For example, familiarity gained from sampling Asian cuisine in restaurants is credited for increasing sales of Asian ingredients for use at home (Anonymous 2000). Acceptance of ethnic desserts, such as Indian *kulfi* and Spanish *churros*, is greater when consumers are already familiar with similar offerings, such as ice cream and donuts (Strong 2002).

Thus, consumers’ enjoyment of ethnic-oriented products likely depends on the ethnic-specific knowledge they have for such products. For example, whereas little ethnic-specific knowledge is required to understand mainstream-themed products, significant ethnic-specific knowledge is required to decode, interpret, and understand products whose meanings are culture-bound with a specific ethnic group (Brumbaugh 2002; Grier and Brumbaugh 1999). If relevant ethnic knowledge is more difficult to access, as when a consumer is not a member of the referent ethnic group, the resulting lack of familiarity with the product may lower appeal for the product.

**Studies Exploring the Framework**

In summary, our studies focus on four key constructs that influence whether and to what degree an ethnic-oriented product will cross over: product characteristics (including marketing-mix factors that consumers use to make inferences about the
product), consumer characteristics such as diversity seeking, mediating processes such as consumer familiarity with product cues, and situational factors that make a consumption context more or less conducive for consuming ethnic-oriented products. We explore various aspects of our framework in three studies that examine the crossover of ethnic-oriented popular films into the larger mainstream market. Film represents a vivid, influential, and economically significant social institution (Wolf 1999) in which ethnic-oriented products must cross over for economic viability (ABFF 1997; Alexander 2001; Bannon 2000). In all three quasi-experiments (participant ethnicity is measured, not manipulated), we provide study participants with descriptions of movies that vary in their ethnic congruence with the participant and their level of ethnic embeddedness. In Study 1, we explore how diversity seeking and ethnic distinctiveness (consumer characteristics) moderate subjects’ attitudinal responses to ethnic-congruent and incongruent movies (product characteristics). In Study 2, we investigate the role of familiarity (a mediating process) on the influence of the product’s ethnic congruence on attitudinal responses. In Study 3, we examine behavioral intentions among high- and low-diversity-seeking mainstream White participants (consumer characteristics) for different levels and types of ethnic embeddedness and situations (consumption context) associated with ethnic-oriented movies. We find support for our framework across all three studies, which we detail in the sections that follow.

**STUDY 1**

In this study, we explore the moderating impact of two consumer characteristics, ethnic distinctiveness and diversity seeking, on the main effect of congruence between
consumer ethnicity and a product’s ethnic orientation on its appeal. Prior research shows that people who perceive themselves to be similar to ad spokespeople hold more favorable attitudes toward the ad than people who perceive themselves to be dissimilar (Whittler 1991). However, research on target marketing shows that this holds only for ethnically distinctive (versus nondistinctive) people (Aaker et al. 2000). We expect to find a similar outcome for ethnic-oriented products (cf., Whittler 1989). Specifically, we hypothesize the following:

**H1:** Ethnic congruence between a product and consumer will favorably influence attitudes toward the product only for members of a distinctive ethnic group.

Furthermore, we propose that people who are high in diversity seeking should be more interested in ethnic-incongruent products and find them more appealing than people low in this characteristic. We predict that diversity seeking will have a compensating effect on product preferences, enhancing attitudes toward a product only when participant ethnicity and product ethnic orientation are different.

**H2:** People high in diversity seeking will have more favorable attitudes toward ethnically incongruent products than will people low in diversity seeking.

**Method**

*Stimuli development and pretesting.* We created three movie descriptions representing three movie genres as replicates for our ad stimuli. (See Appendix A for the stimuli for all studies.) We pretested each (N = 47) for consistency with the intended genre compared with the other two movies. The focal manipulation was movie ethnic orientation as conveyed through movie cues in each movie description. In addition, we
pretested each manipulation for consistency with the intended ethnic group compared with other ethnic groups on seven-point scales. We manipulated movie ethnic orientation in *My Turn Again* (action genre) through the music of the main protagonist, with “rock” being more associated with White ethnicity ($M = 5.54$) than “R&B” ($M = 3.39$, $F(1, 46) = 31.56, p < .01$) and “R&B” being more associated with Black ethnicity ($M = 4.65$) than “rock” ($M = 2.17$, $F(1, 46) = 39.55, p < .01$). We manipulated movie ethnic orientation in *Thin Blood* (drama genre) through the name of the main protagonist, with “Nathaniel Wellington” being more associated with White ethnicity ($M = 5.17$) than “Tyrone Washington” ($M = 2.58$, $F(1, 46) = 56.18, p < .01$) and “Tyrone Washington” being more associated with Black ethnicity ($M = 5.71$) than “Nathaniel Wellington” ($M = 3.13$, $F(1, 46) = 65.57, p < .01$). Finally, we manipulated movie ethnic orientation in *The One* (romance genre) through the city and ethnicity of the main protagonists, with “women in Seattle” being more associated with White ethnicity ($M = 4.92$) than “African American women in Detroit” ($M = 1.17$, $F(1, 46) = 189.17, p < .01$) and “African American women in Detroit” being more associated with Black ethnicity ($M = 6.83$) than “women in Seattle” ($M = 3.38$, $F(1.46) = 153.79, p < .01$).

**Design, procedure, and participants.** Half the participants saw the Black version of *My Turn Again*, the White version of *Thin Blood*, and the Black version of *The One*; the other half saw the other versions of the movies. Thus, the basic design of this study was a 2 (movie ethnic orientation: Black or White) X 2 (participant ethnicity: Black or White) X 2 (diversity seeking: high or low) mixed-factorial design in which movie ethnic orientation is a within-subjects factor and participant ethnicity and diversity seeking are between-subjects factors. Preference for genre and movie replicate factors are included as
covariates.

Participants were 67 Black and 62 White Americans recruited from public areas in two ethnically diverse cities on the West Coast. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 60 years; 59% were female. They were given a study packet containing all stimuli and measures and were asked to read each movie description and complete items assessing attitude toward the movie. After completing these measures for all three movies, participants completed items on their preference for different movie genres, their preference for movies about people different from themselves, and their demographic characteristics, including ethnicity.

Measures. Six movie attitude items were selected on the basis of a review of prior industry marketing research that assessed the appeal of major movies among ethnically diverse Americans (“I would be interested in seeing this movie,” “This movie would be entertaining,” “This is my kind of movie,” “This movie would be interesting,” “The storyline attracts me to the movie,” and “The characters attract me to the movie”). The six items were assessed on seven-point Likert scales and were averaged to yield a single dependent measure of attitude toward the movie ($\alpha = .95$). A single Likert scale item (“I like movies about people different from me”) was used to create a diversity-seeking dummy variable containing zero or one to reflect the median split on this item. See Appendix B for additional detail regarding this item.

Results

Unless otherwise indicated, degrees of freedom are (1, 386). The genre covariate was significant and positive. The movie covariate was significant such that *The One* was preferred over *Thin Blood*, which was preferred over *My Turn Again*. The model was
significant \((F(10, 386) = 8.99, p < .01)\). Both movie ethnic orientation \((F = 6.90, p < .01)\) and participant ethnicity \((F = 8.13, p < .01)\) were significant but were subsumed by a significant interaction between the two \((F(2, 386) = 13.64, p < .01)\), as expected. The main effect of diversity seeking was significant \((F = 4.32, p < .04)\), and the anticipated three-way interaction among movie ethnicity, participant ethnicity, and diversity seeking was significant \((F(2, 386) = 5.76, p < .02)\). Hypotheses are tested through a priori contrasts evaluated with one-tailed tests at \(p < .05\).

\(H_1\) proposed that movies for which movie ethnic orientation and participant ethnicity were congruent would be more appealing than movies for which ethnicity was incongruent, but only for members of distinctive ethnic groups. The results show that distinctive Black participants preferred Black-oriented movies \((M = 4.44)\) over White-oriented movies \((M = 3.55, F = 20.68, p < .01)\) and that nondistinctive White participants had no preference for White-oriented movies \((M = 3.59)\) compared with Black-oriented movies \((M = 3.45, p > .20)\), as hypothesized.

We predicted in \(H_2\) that people high in diversity seeking would like ethnically incongruent movies more than people low in this characteristic. This held true for both White and Black participants. Specifically, White participants liked Black-oriented movies more when they were high in diversity seeking \((M = 3.77)\) than when they were low \((M = 3.05, F = 4.56, p < .03)\); diversity seeking had no impact for ethnic-congruent White-oriented movies (preference high \(M = 3.75\) versus low \(M = 3.48, p > .20\)). Black participants liked White-oriented movies more when they were high in diversity seeking \((M = 3.91)\) than when they were low \((M = 3.05, F = 5.64 < .02)\); diversity seeking had no impact for ethnic-congruent Black-oriented movies (preference high \(M = 4.46\) versus low
Discussion

Both $H_1$ and $H_2$ were supported. As anticipated, a match in ethnicity between potential viewers and movie actors enhanced attitude toward the movie only for distinctive Black participants. Diversity seeking worked as hypothesized among all participants, enhancing attitude toward the movie only when movie and participant ethnicity were incongruent. The results are consistent with advertising research that shows that White consumers have no preference for White versus Black sources featured in ads. However, these results are inconsistent with industry research that shows that White consumers tend to prefer mainstream or White-oriented movies over Black-oriented movies (Easton 1991). To explore further what might be driving this discrepancy between our attitude results and observed phenomena, we evaluate the role of perceived familiarity as a mediating evaluation process between interpretations of ethnic-specific product cues and a product’s appeal in Study 2.

STUDY 2

People differ in their ability to make sense of ethnic-specific information when forming attitudes about ethnic-oriented products. Some may interpret a product’s ethnic-specific cues in ways that make the product seem familiar to them, and others may not. Similarly, viewers’ enjoyment of ethnic-oriented movies likely depends on the ethnic-specific knowledge they bring to bear on interpreting such movies. For members of the referent ethnic group of an ethnic-oriented movie, ethnic-relevant information is readily available and accessible. The more accessible and easily retrieved this information, the
more familiar the viewer should be with the story depicted in the movie (Tversky and Kahnemann 1974) and the more the viewer should like the movie (Hoyer and Brown 1990; Laroche et al. 1996; Loken and Ward 1990). However, such ethnic-specific knowledge may be either unavailable or more difficult to access for mainstream or other-ethnic individuals and, as a consequence, the content of ethnic-oriented movies may be more difficult to understand and less familiar. This lack of familiarity with the meaning of the movie’s message or storyline will likely result in lower appeal for such a movie. Therefore, we investigate the following hypotheses regarding the mediating influence that familiarity with an ethnic-oriented product has on attitudes toward that product:

\[ H_{3a} \]: Ethnic congruence between a product and consumer will make the product seem more familiar to the consumer.

\[ H_{3b} \]: Familiarity with a product will enhance attitudes toward that product.

**Method**

*Stimuli development and pretesting.* We created a single movie description for a comedy titled *Coming Home*. Movie ethnic orientation was conveyed through the ethnic group of the main protagonists (see Appendix A). Pretesting (\(N = 33\)) identical to that for the first study showed that the cue “Irish-American” was more associated with White ethnicity (\(M = 5.36\)) than “African-American” (\(M = 3.71, F(1, 32) = 8.54, p < .01\)) and that “African-American” was more associated with Black ethnicity (\(M = 4.13\)) than “Irish-American” (\(M = 1.97, F(1, 32) = 17.81, p < .01\)).

*Design, procedure, and participants.* This study had a 2 (movie ethnicity: Black or White) X 2 (participant ethnicity: Black or White) fully crossed between-subjects design that included genre preference as a covariate. Participants were 67 Black and 49
White American adults recruited from the participant pools at two universities, one on the West Coast and one in the Southeast. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 45 years; 62% were female. Participants were randomly assigned to either the Black- or White-oriented movie condition. They first read a description of a movie and then responded to questions about their attitude toward the movie, familiarity with the movie, genre preference, and demographics.

Measures. After reading the movie description, participants completed the same six movie attitude items used in Study 1 ($\alpha = .95$). In addition, they answered three seven-point Likert items assessing their familiarity with the movie theme (“The movie would involve situations familiar to me,” “The movie would be relevant to issues in my life,” “The movie would address topics I have experienced”) that were averaged to yield a single familiarity measure ($\alpha = .86$). A single item identical to that used in Study 1 assessed participants’ preferences for the comedy movie genre.

Results

Unless otherwise indicated, degrees of freedom are (1, 115). The ANOVA model was significant for attitude toward the movie ($F(4, 115) = 2.74, p < .03$) and approached significance for familiarity ($F(4, 115) = 1.92, p < .11$). Genre preference was significant and positive in both models. The interaction between movie ethnic orientation and participant ethnicity was significant for familiarity ($F = 6.10, p < .02$). Hypotheses are tested at $p < .05$ through a priori contrasts evaluated with one-tailed tests.

Black participants preferred the Black-oriented movie ($M = 3.86$) over the White-oriented movie ($M = 3.35, F = 2.49, p < .06$), but White participants did not prefer the White-oriented movie ($M = 3.50$) over the Black-oriented movie ($M = 3.55, p > .20$).
Thus, initial results of this study support $H_1$ and are consistent with those of Study 1. In $H_{3a}$ we posited that ethnic congruence between the viewer and movie ethnic orientation would enhance familiarity of the movie for the viewer. As expected, Black participants felt more familiar with the Black-oriented movie ($M = 3.83$) than the White-oriented movie ($M = 2.96$, $F = 4.74$, $p < .02$), and White participants felt marginally more familiar with the White-oriented movie ($M = 3.77$) than the Black-oriented movie ($M = 3.12$, $F = 1.93$, $p < .08$). Also, $H_{3b}$ is supported by a univariate regression, which shows that familiarity had a favorable impact on attitude toward the movie ($\beta = .47$, $p < .01$). This effect was moderated neither by participant nor movie ethnicity, nor by their interaction ($ps > .20$), as anticipated.

Because ethnic congruence had a direct impact on attitudes for Black participants per our reassessment of $H_1$, it is possible to evaluate whether familiarity mediates the impact of ethnic congruence on attitude toward the movie for Black participants. To do so, we followed the three-step procedure outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). The results for $H_1$ and $H_{3a}$ show that ethnic congruence favorably influenced both attitude toward the movie and familiarity, the first step of their mediation test. Consistent with $H_{3b}$, familiarity positively influenced attitude toward the movie, step two of the test. If mediation occurs, the previously significant effect of ethnic congruence on movie attitude will be weakened when familiarity is included in the original ANOVA model, step three. Indeed, Black participants’ preference for the Black-oriented movie over the White-oriented movie became nonsignificant when familiarity was included in the original model ($F = .17$, $p = .68$). Therefore, familiarity is a mediator of the impact of ethnic congruence on attitude toward the movie for Black participants.
Discussion

Again, the results for Black participants are consistent with expectations and previous research. Black participants felt more familiar with Black-oriented movie cues and held more favorable attitudes toward the Black-oriented movie than the White-oriented movie. Mediation analysis shows that familiarity mediated the impact of an ethnic match on attitude toward the movie among Black participants. The results of the movie manipulation for White participants were unremarkable, with familiarity being marginally affected by ethnic congruence. A movie’s ethnic orientation as manipulated by actor ethnicity, ethnicity associated with the city in which the movie takes place, and ethnicity associated with the music genre related to the plot has little impact on White participants’ attitude toward the movies to which they have been exposed in the previous studies.

This result suggests that White consumers’ attitudes toward ethnic-oriented movies would equally favorably dispose them toward seeing White- and Black-oriented movies. Again, movie industry data contradict this interpretation: White consumers simply do not view Black-oriented movies with the frequency that our attitude measures would imply (Easton 1991; Masters 1996). We offer two explanations for this observation. First, explicit attitude measures may be inappropriate because of social desirability and other biases. People may be unwilling to share their true feelings about other-ethnic movies (Devine 1989) or may adjust (consciously or subconsciously) their initial reactions toward more socially acceptable and less biased responses (Martin et al. 1990; Monteith 1993). Second, consistency between a person’s overall attitude toward a movie and the actual behavior of seeing that movie at a particular theater with specific
others may be particularly low (see Kraus 1995 for a review). Temporal distance between measuring attitude toward a movie and actual attendance is likely to weaken the relationship between attitude and behavior (Davidson and Jaccard 1979). The movie itself as attitude object may be unrelated to the behavior of attending the movie, attenuating the relationship between the two (Ajzen and Fishbein 1977).

To address these issues, we ask a series of behavioral intention items in our final study to evaluate how our experimental factors influence intended behaviors in addition to attitude toward the movie. We also evaluate hypotheses that propose that some marketing-mix factors may enhance or detract from an ethnic-oriented movie’s attraction among White consumers depending on their level of diversity seeking.

**STUDY 3**

Most research shows that movies with a high level of ethnic embeddedness fare poorly with mainstream audiences, attract smaller audiences (Carter 2001), and make lower revenues (Alexander 2001) than movies with mainstream themes. Movies high in ethnic embeddedness are frequently produced by smaller, independent filmmakers with fewer resources to devote to hiring big-name stars, gaining access to distribution channels, and promoting their films (ABFF 1997; Alexander 2000; BLFJ 2003). In addition to the overall ethnic-oriented theme of such movies, these other marketing-mix decisions likely reinforce or lessen the product’s perceived ethnic embeddedness.

Unknown actors do not have the draw that famous actors do (De Vany and Walls 1997), reducing possibilities for crossover. Smaller promotional budgets used selectively in ethnic-consistent media will likely either fail to reach potential mainstream viewers or, if
these viewers are exposed to promotions for the film, imply that the movie is not intended for them. Limited distribution in ethnic-oriented venues may limit consumption among mainstream consumers who are unaccustomed to being a numeric minority.

Therefore, in this final study, we evaluate two hypotheses about how marketing decisions influence mainstream consumers’ behavioral intentions toward ethnic-oriented movies. Product factors that enhance a movie’s ethnic embeddedness (e.g., actor ethnicity, actor fame, and ethnic-oriented plot) may contribute to perceptions that a movie represents well the referent culture. Those interested in authentic representations of other cultures (e.g., those high in diversity seeking) may be more likely to see films high in ethnic embeddedness than those who are not. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

$$H_4:$$ Factors that contribute to an ethnic-oriented product’s ethnic embeddedness will enhance behavioral intent for that product among mainstream consumers, particular those high in diversity seeking.

However, the same marketing-mix factors that enhance the ethnic embeddedness of a movie may also limit whether mainstream viewers are willing to see it. Specifically, lower marketing budgets, especially if used in targeted media, and limited distribution in ethnic-oriented venues not frequented by mainstream customers may reduce the likelihood that mainstream consumers will see the film, particularly if they were not otherwise favorably disposed toward the ethnic orientation of the movie (e.g., those low in diversity seeking). Therefore, we hypothesize that

$$H_5:$$ Factors that contribute to an ethnic-oriented consumption context will reduce behavioral intent for ethnic-oriented products among mainstream consumers, particularly those low in diversity seeking.
Method

Stimuli development and pretesting. We created two detailed movie descriptions, Killer Mind and The Story, which included the plot, a review (same across conditions), and additional manipulated information regarding promotion and distribution of the film (see Appendix A). In one set of the movie descriptions, we include names of Black actors and systematically manipulate four two-level factors of interest: marketing budget (large or small), location where the movie was being shown (associated with Black or mainstream audiences), ethnic embeddedness of the plot (high: associated with Black culture or low: associated with mainstream culture), and actor fame (famous or unknown). We pretested \((N = 57)\) the actors’ names to ensure that they were either recognized as or inferred to be Black actors and to make sure that they were either famous or unknown. Indeed, the two famous actors used in the study were recognized as such \((M = 6.27)\) compared with the two fictitious actors used \((M = 3.14, F(1, 227) = 360.24, p < .01)\). In a recognition task, 90.4\% of participants recognized the names of the famous actors and 95.6\% did not recognize the names of the unknown actors \((\chi^2(1) = 169.00, p < .01)\). These four Black actors were also identified as Black \((M = 6.09)\) compared with White \((M = 1.82)\) and Hispanic \((M = 1.52)\) actors included as foils in the pretest \((F(2, 683) = 852.95, p < .01)\).

Marketing budget was either $27 million in the large condition (just over 2003’s $25 million average; Friedman et al. 2003) or $1.3 million (approximately 5\% of the large budget; Alexander 2001) in the small condition. The text of the budget manipulation also includes the implications of a large or small marketing budget on advertising reach to make this manipulation more salient and meaningful. The location of
the movie was stated as either where Black viewers would be likely to see it (Black condition) or where a majority of viewers would likely see it (mainstream condition). To effect the plot manipulation, we included a subplot in the movie description that either stated that Black ethnicity was of focal interest to the storyline (high ethnic embeddedness) or that another facet of the subplot was of focal interest to the storyline (low ethnic embeddedness).

In a second set of the movie descriptions, we created one mainstream control version for each movie in which there was no mention of actor name, race, or fame. The movie budget was large, the location was mainstream, and the ethnic embeddedness of the plot was low.

*Design, procedure, participants, and measures.* In this design, the movie descriptions comprising the four manipulated factors are nested under the Black condition of a two-level actor ethnicity factor, and the mainstream control descriptions are nested under the mainstream condition of this factor. We used the SAS Design procedure to generate an incomplete factorial design with the four between-subjects factors plus the movie replicate for the two movies that enabled us to assess all main effects and two-way interactions among design factors. This design yielded 16 different conditions nested under Black actor. Therefore, the design of this study was an incomplete 2 (actor fame: famous or unknown) X 2 (budget: large or small) X 2 (location: Black or mainstream) X 2 (ethnic embeddedness of plot: high or low) plus control ANOVA model.

Participants were 97 White American MBA students recruited from a participant pool at a Southeastern university who participated in this study as one of a number of
studies in a group testing session. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 33; 37% were female. Of the 97, 86 were randomly assigned to read one of the 16 Black-oriented movie descriptions and 11 were randomly assigned to read both of the mainstream movie descriptions. All participants first read a description of the movie to which they had been assigned and then responded to the same questions about their attitude toward the movie ($\alpha = .96$) used in Studies 1 and 2. Then, they completed eight additional seven-point items that assessed the likelihood that they would see the movie in a theater or rent the video or DVD, and whether they would do so alone, with a friend, with their spouse or partner, or with a work colleague. These questions comprise two additional fully crossed within-subject factors, venue (see in theater or rent on video or DVD) and social context (alone, with friend, with spouse or partner, or with work colleague). Participants in the mainstream condition repeated this procedure for the second movie. Finally, participants provided measures of genre preference, diversity seeking, and demographic data, as in the previous studies.

**Results**

Attitude toward the movie was initially analyzed with the aforementioned ANOVA model that included all main effects and two-way interactions among design factors nested under actor ethnicity (Black versus mainstream control) as well as the main effect of and interactions with diversity seeking. Although the model was significant ($F(16, 96) = 3.00, p < .01$), this significance was driven only by the covariates; no experimental design effects were significant ($ps > .17$). Again, movie attitudes for White consumers were unaffected by our experimental manipulations.

For behavioral intentions, the ANOVA model was additionally crossed with
venue and social context factors. No four- or five-way interactions among design factors and diversity seeking, venue, and social context achieved significance, so they were dropped from the final analyses. Attitude toward the movie is included as a covariate and, unless otherwise stated, degrees of freedom are (1, 775). Hypotheses are tested at $p < .05$ through a priori contrasts evaluated with one-tailed tests. Relevant cell means are shown in Table 1. This model was significant ($F(117, 775) = 5.05, p < .01$), and actor ethnicity had a main effect such that participants were more likely to see the mainstream control movies ($M = 3.75$) than the Black-oriented movies ($M = 3.22, F = 10.80, p < .01$), consistent with industry data.

We hypothesized two effects on intended behaviors. First, in $H_4$, we predicted that characteristics of an ethnic-oriented movie that added to its ethnic embeddedness would increase the chances that White customers would see the movie compared with ethnic-oriented movies low in ethnic embeddedness, particularly for high diversity seekers. Indeed, plot and actor fame interacted ($F = 5.71, p < .02$) such that all participants were more likely to see a movie with a highly ethnically embedded plot and unknown actors ($M = 3.67$) versus a less ethnically embedded plot and/or famous actors (remaining three cells $M = 3.07, F = 3.25, p < .04$). Furthermore, the significant three-way interaction among plot, budget, and diversity seeking was significant ($F = 4.95, p < .02$) such that low-diversity-seeking participants were less willing to see movies with highly ethnically embedded plots and large budgets ($M = 2.48$) compared with other movies (mean for remaining three cells $M = 3.32, F = 5.70, p < .01$), consistent with $H_4$. High-diversity-
seeking participants were equally willing to see movies irrespective of plot and budget conditions.

Second, in H5, we predicted that other marketing factors (particularly distribution decisions) that increased the ethnic orientation of the consumption context would decrease the chances that White consumers would see an ethnic-oriented movie, particularly among low-diversity-seeking consumers. The significant interaction between budget and venue ($F = 3.99, p < .05$) shows that participants were less likely to see a large-budget movie in a theater ($M = 2.92, F = 9.51, p < .01$) than to rent it ($M = 3.47$); there was no difference in whether they would rent ($M = 3.26$) or see in a theater ($M = 3.22$) small-budget movies ($p > .20$). The three-way interaction among location, budget, and diversity seeking was significant ($F = 11.49, p < .01$) such that low-diversity-seeking consumers were less likely to see a small-budget film at an ethnic location ($M = 2.48$) compared with a mainstream location ($M = 3.91, F = 15.75, p < .01$) and compared with a large-budget film (mean of two cells $M = 3.11, F = 12.74, p < .01$).

Actor fame interacted with venue and diversity seeking (three-way interaction $F = 3.23, p < .07$) such that low-diversity-seeking participants were equally willing to rent or see movies whether the actors were famous or not ($ps > .20$). High-diversity-seeking participants were more willing to rent a movie with unknown Black actors ($M = 3.83$) than they were to see a movie with Black characters in the theater or rent a movie with famous Black actors (mean of three cells $M = 3.10, F = 8.46, p < .01$).

Finally, the person with whom participants would see a movie affected the types of movies they were willing to see. In the control condition, people were equally willing to see a movie with any other person, whether a friend ($M = 4.27$), a partner or spouse ($M = 4.28$),
= 4.23), or a work colleague (M = 3.98), but they were less willing to see a movie alone (M = 2.52) than with these others (three-cell mean M = 4.16, F = 44.30, p < .01). This was not true for high- and low-diversity-seeking participants seeing Black-oriented movies with famous or unknown actors in different social contexts (three-way interaction F(3,775) = 2.55, p < .05). Low-diversity-seeking participants were more willing to see a movie with a friend if it had famous actors (M = 3.82) than unknown actors (M = 3.28, F = 2.07, p < .08); this difference was not significant for high-diversity-seeking participants (p > .20). High-diversity-seeking participants were more willing to see a movie with a partner or spouse if it had famous (M = 3.72) versus unknown actors (M = 3.21, F = 7.08, p < .01); this difference was not significant for low-diversity-seeking participants (p > .20). High-diversity-seeking participants were more willing to see a movie alone if it had unknown actors (M = 2.81) than if it had famous actors (M = 1.93, F = 2.67, p < .05).

Discussion

The results provide support for H4 and H5 as well as insight regarding how high- and low-diversity-seeking White consumers interpret different cues and marketing tactics regarding ethnic-oriented products. As predicted in H4, all participants were more likely to see a Black-oriented movie that had a highly ethnically embedded plot and a low promotional budget compared with other types of Black-oriented movies. We interpret this result to suggest that something about the authenticity of the movie as conveyed through the plot and lack of commercial push was more appealing for White viewers than Black-oriented films of the more mainstream comedic or “gangsta” genres. High-diversity-seeking participants also seemed to interpret the use of unknown actors positively, particularly for home rental, and were more likely to see Black-oriented
movies with unknown actors alone or with a friend than low-diversity-seeking participants were. In summary, White participants, especially those high in diversity seeking, were favorably disposed toward seeing Black-oriented movies that contained several cues (versus only one or few) that reinforced their ethnic orientation.

Social norms seemed to have a different effect on low- and high-diversity-seeking participants. Notably, high-diversity-seeking participants were less likely to go with a partner or spouse to see a Black-oriented movie that had unknown actors than one with famous actors, but low-diversity-seeking participants were less likely to go with a friend to see a Black-oriented movie that had unknown actors than one with famous actors. Examination of these means in Table 1 suggests that the social risk associated with seeing a Black-oriented film with unknown actors was higher with more casual acquaintances than with a partner or spouse for low-diversity-seeking participants. In contrast, high-diversity-seeking participants either were not bothered by such risk or had friends who were similarly favorably disposed toward Black-oriented movies with unknown actors. Instead, high-diversity-seeking participants were less likely to see that movie with a partner or spouse who, perhaps, had little inclination toward such films.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

The findings of our studies are consistent with prior research with regard to Black participants. The results across the first two studies show that Black participants preferred Black movies over White movies, echoing work on advertising response. The diversity-seeking characteristic enhanced attitudes toward White movies among Black participants, compensating for the absence of a match in ethnicity. Furthermore, we demonstrated that
though familiarity positively enhanced attitudes for all participants, familiarity mediated the impact of ethnic congruence on attitudes only for Black participants. These results enable us to understand more clearly why mainstream movies attract ethnic minority viewers: familiarity with their dominant cultural themes enhances attitudes for potential ethnic minority viewers, and ethnic minority viewers high in diversity seeking were more favorably disposed toward other-ethnic mainstream movies.

Results among White participants also demonstrated that the diversity-seeking characteristic moderated Whites’ attitudes such that White participants higher in diversity seeking had more positive attitudes toward Black movies than did White participants lower in diversity seeking. Although the main effect of the ethnic orientation of the movie did not directly influence attitudes among White participants, it did affect behavioral intentions: The presence of Black actors decreased the likelihood that White participants would see the movie compared with mainstream control conditions. The results showed that marketing-mix factors interacted with the social context of product consumption to influence the behavioral intentions of Whites toward Black movies.

Implications for Practice

The crossover of ethnic-oriented products from niche segments into larger consumer segments may have positive social as well as economic consequences. Ethnic-oriented products like movies serve as socialization vehicles, exposing people to a variety of images, cultures, and lifestyles not otherwise learned through personal experience (Gerbner et al. 1994; Tharp 2001). However, many ethnic-oriented products, particularly those reflecting U.S. ethnic minorities, are targeted solely toward the referent ethnic group because of concerns that other ethnic groups will be uninterested (Bright Lights 31
Our results identify strategies that marketers of ethnic-oriented films and other ethnic-oriented products may use to generate crossover appeal along with social and economic benefits.

First, our results show that ethnic congruence enhances familiarity and that familiarity enhances attitudes among all consumers. Changing product characteristics to enhance appeal among target viewers is a standard movie industry practice (Diamond 1989; Pampel et al. 1994) that may be used fruitfully to increase crossover appeal of ethnic-oriented products among mainstream consumers. However, it may be more difficult (or undesirable) to change the characteristics of highly ethnically embedded movies whose storylines are inextricably bound to ethnic experiences simply to elicit feelings of familiarity among White audiences. Alternatively, marketers might induce feelings of familiarity through promotional changes (versus product changes) that focus on aspects of the movie or product that either transcend ethnic boundaries or that hold unique appeal among relevant subsegments. Our results suggest that more concerted attention toward creating strategic crossover with multiple targeted promotional messages placed in carefully selected media outlets may prove successful.

The findings also demonstrate that there is a subset of White viewers who may seek out cultural diversity in some of the products they choose. Marketers of ethnic-oriented films and other ethnic-oriented products may find success in inducing crossover in regions where high-diversity-seeking White consumers are located. Geodemographic research shows that there exist distinct neighborhoods that are increasing rapidly in ethnic composition while retaining diversity across a range of ethnic groups, including Whites. Places like Orange County, California (Yi and Herndon 2001), and Queens, New York
(Campos-Flores 2001), have favorable socioeconomic characteristics as well as critical masses of ethnic-group consumers. Whites who choose to live in these areas may well be those who seek out and value diversity. Such geographic concentration is ideal for distribution-based strategies to increase crossover potential of ethnic-oriented products such as films. For example, by placing highly embedded ethnic-oriented movies in such neighborhoods, marketers may efficiently and effectively target Whites who are predisposed toward attending them.

The results also demonstrate that the relationship between the degree of the ethnic embeddedness of a product and Whites’ behavioral intentions toward that product is not straightforward. Marketers of ethnic-oriented products sometimes attempt to water down their offerings to make them more palatable for mainstream or other-ethnic audiences. However, our findings suggest that this strategy may be unsuccessful for two reasons. First, low-diversity-seeking White consumers may be uninterested in an ethnic-oriented product irrespective of its degree of ethnic embeddedness simply because its ethnic orientation alone signals to these consumers that the product is not for them and reduces its appeal. Second, weakening the ethnic embeddedness of the product may eliminate the very characteristic that appealed to high-diversity-seeking White and referent ethnic consumers in the first place: its genuine representation of the referent ethnic group. This counterintuitive (and even ironic) nature of the degree of ethnic orientation was evident in White participants’ behavioral intention ratings. Highly ethnically embedded films tend to have unknown actors, lower budgets, and sparser distribution, whereas less ethnically embedded films (mainstream ethnic films) tend to be supported with well-known actors, larger budgets, and more widespread distribution. As the typical ethnic
fare, the mainstream ethnic films appeared to hold less appeal to Whites in our sample, perhaps because such movies are perceived as no different from other mainstream movies and thus evoke no special interest. Ironically, these are most likely the ethnic movies Whites are made aware of through greater promotion and distribution efforts. Given that highly ethnically embedded films generally evoke greater appeal, especially among high-diversity-seeking whites, marketers may want to create different marketing strategies depending on how deeply the product-related cues are embedded in the referent ethnic culture and how these cues resonate with referent ethnic consumers as well as low- and high-diversity-seeking mainstream consumers.

Our findings similarly demonstrate that the strength of association of a particular ethnic group with a consumption context may also facilitate (or hinder) the consumption of ethnic-oriented products. Thus, the results highlight the importance of considering not only how widely a product is distributed but also where the product is distributed and the ethnic meanings associated with the distribution context. Although changing the ethnic composition at or beliefs about an ethnic-specific venue or retail location may be challenging, creative promotional strategies can be used to overcome contextual barriers to consumption. For example, special events at the consumption venue that appeal to mainstream or other-ethnic audiences, sales promotions that encourage consumption among mainstream or other-ethnic audiences, and communications that signal that mainstream and other-ethnic consumers are especially invited to partake of ethnic-oriented offerings might ameliorate distribution-specific causes of crossover failure. In general, the results emphasize the significance that the ethnic composition of consumption contexts, the role of a person’s companion in facilitating or inhibiting other-
ethnic product consumption, and the ethnic embeddedness of the product all have in attracting non-target market consumers.

Theoretical Contributions

Our framework identifies key constructs relevant to the crossover of ethnic-oriented products and examines the relationships among these factors that affect an ethnic-oriented product’s ability to garner interest in and gain sales among mainstream and other-ethnic consumer segments. The framework generalizes beyond our application to White viewers’ predilection for Black-oriented movies to other product categories, other referent ethnic groups, and other nontarget customer segments. Because services possess a high degree of social embeddedness (i.e., services are delivered by people and frequently produced and consumed in the presence of other people), they may provide a particularly rich context in which to extend this framework. For example, the framework would help explain whether or not a White mother would take her biracial daughter with “frizzy” hair to an African-American oriented salon located in an African-American neighborhood. The framework also provides a mechanism for understanding how the social, cultural, and historical beliefs regarding other referent ethnic groups (e.g., Asian and Hispanic) will likely influence the crossover of products associated with these groups into mainstream and other-ethnic segments. Extending the framework further, it similarly provides an approach for understanding how to market a product that has become strongly associated with a particular consumer segment on the basis of characteristics other than ethnicity (such as age, gender, sexual orientation, or region) to a broader group of consumers.

Our results also contribute to the theoretical understanding of the processes by
which non-target market consumers form inferences about products that are associated with specific consumer segments. One clear outcome of this research regarding such processes is the inadequacy of attitudes in predicting Whites’ behavioral intentions toward ethnic-oriented products. It is generally accepted in consumer contexts that attitude toward a product is somewhat indicative of purchase intent (Kraus 1995). However, research on the attitude-behavior link shows that this link may be attenuated by the social characteristics of potential consumption contexts (Zalesny and Ford 1990). We believe that social context explains our findings similarly. Although Whites’ attitudes were seemingly unaffected by the ethnic orientation of a movie, it was not because ethnicity does not matter to these White consumers. Rather, our attitude measures were decontextualized and did not reflect or include the appreciable influence of ethnic-oriented context on movie consumption behavior. Movie-going is fundamentally a social activity (Austin 1989), and our results show that the ethnic orientation of the social context in which a person anticipates seeing a given movie has a profound impact on the decision to see that movie. Further research exploring a range of dependent measures tapping into purchase intention and behaviors, perhaps implicitly to avoid social desirability biases, might show greater variability among and insights regarding White consumers and ethnic-oriented products.

In addition, our findings extend burgeoning research on ethnic embeddedness (Appiah 2004; Brumbaugh 2002; Williams 1995) that has examined the degree to which advertisements contain ethnic cues. Our studies examine not only the ethnic embeddedness of the product itself but also its consumption context. Our results are consistent with those of Appiah (2001a), who finds that some products associated
through advertising with Black culture may be desired by mainstream consumers more than products associated with mainstream culture. The associations related to culture alter the nature of the products themselves, giving them different meaning that causes them to resonate with certain, possibly unexpected, segments. Ethnic-oriented films that are high in ethnic embeddedness and that possess qualities authentic to the ethnic group culture seem to be endowed with a similar ability to resonate with high-diversity-seeking consumers. Thus, our work extends the limited research on ethnic embeddedness in the advertising domain into products and consumption contexts.

**Limitations and Directions for Further Research**

As in all research, we made some concessions that create limitations in this research and opportunities for future study. Across all three studies, we assessed consumers’ responses to descriptions of movies rather than to filmed movie trailers. Though certainly not as rich as multimedia clips or advertisements, such descriptions are common in newspapers and television guides and serve an advertising function in and of themselves. Research shows that people do use such descriptions to make movie-going decisions (Cooper-Martin 1991), and industry research prior to final production relies on similar stimuli (Austin 1989). Nonetheless, additional investigations with movie advertisements and trailers can further increase the generalizability of our results.

One potential problem with our operationalization of movie venue location in Study 3 is its implied distance from our White participants’ homes. Specifically, our White participants may have inferred that they not only would be in the minority at the Black movie venue but also would need to travel farther to reach that venue compared with the mainstream locations. Although follow-up analyses preclude this explanation,⁶
we readily concede that this is a limitation of Study 3 and encourage future researchers to test these contextual effects on crossover potential.

Our findings reveal subtle but important interactions among marketing-mix factors that influence Whites’ willingness to see ethnic-oriented movies. However, because of the complexity of the design and the number of factors we explored in Study 3, we were unable to investigate all combinations of marketing and movie characteristics that might increase White consumers’ likelihood of seeing ethnic-oriented movies in theaters. For example, simply increasing the marketing budget to make high-diversity-seeking consumers aware that a highly ethnically embedded movie was showing in their area might increase their attendance. This effect is captured by a five-way interaction that we were unable to evaluate. Additional research could explore these interactions and relationships.

Our results suggest that diversity seeking may be a fruitful segmentation variable, especially given the increase in ethnic-oriented products and the changing ethnic composition of the marketplace. In Studies 1 and 3, we used a context-specific, single-item measure that we asked after presenting our movie stimuli. Both the use of a single item and the timing of its administration in our studies are weaknesses that could be remedied in further research. Although we provide support for this single item (see Appendix B) and believe it to be an adequate indicator of diversity-seeking consumption behavior in this movie-going context (Drolet and Morrison 2001), additional studies might use existing related scales (Douthitt et al. 1999; Miville et al. 1999) to evaluate the extent to which this characteristic influences consumption of ethnic-oriented products. Alternatively, further research might build on our steps toward the development of a
context-neutral measure of diversity seeking related to consumption activities to identify consumers who are predisposed toward products associated with other ethnic groups. These initial explorations indicate that this characteristic may have multiple dimensions that influence distinct consumption behaviors in different ways. Our single context-specific item scratches the surface of what may be a rich area for future exploration.

We conjectured in the discussion of our final study that consumers might use product cues to assess the authenticity of an ethnic-oriented movie. We suggested that highly ethnically embedded plots with lesser-known actors and lower marketing budgets might be interpreted as more representative of the ethnic cultures portrayed and that this authenticity makes such movies more attractive to high-diversity-seeking consumers. Authenticity is indeed an inference marketers attempt to create in their target markets for ethnic products (e.g., Watts and Orbe 2002). Further research should address whether consumers make such assessments of authenticity and if such assessments mediate (as our discussions imply they might) the impact of marketing tactics on behavioral intentions (cf., Grayson and Martinec 2004).

Finally, our research examined the traditional notion of crossover from a niche market into the mainstream market. However, one key to increasing the economic viability of ethnic-oriented products may be consumption by members other ethnic minorities, who may identify with the referent ethnic minority’s experiences and may be predisposed toward products associated with the referent ethnic minority group. Research that includes multiple ethnic groups will provide additional theoretical and practical insights into crossover among a variety of consumer segments.

Our framework provides a robust structure in which to study diverse consumer
segments’ consumption of an equally diverse portfolio of goods and services (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). In applying this framework to movies, we have begun to understand how ethnic-oriented products are perceived by mainstream White consumers. Additional studies that apply this framework to the crossover of other product categories, among different consumer segments, with other social characteristics and individual difference factors, and across a variety of consumption contexts will help marketers understand, predict, and enable crossover consumption in a multicultural marketplace.
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FIGURE 1
Framework for Studying Ethnic-Oriented Product Crossover

Notes: Boldface indicates general constructs inherent in the generic framework. Bullet points indicate operationalizations evaluated in Studies 1, 2, and 3. Specific hypotheses investigated are noted as H₁-H₅.
APPENDIX A

Movie Descriptions

Study 1

My Turn Again – Action Genre

In this action-packed film, Tony Larkins, a rock/R&B music singer declining in popularity, marries a shy country girl and helps her become a famous actress. Her fame not only eclipses his, but he gradually realizes that he was used, and plots his revenge.

Thin Blood – Drama Genre

In a modern-day romance, Nathaniel Wellington/Tyrone Washington, a devoted son must choose between caring for his cantankerous but well-meaning father and moving across the country to marry the woman he loves. While his mother wants him to stay near home, his sister, who fell out of her father’s favor, argues that he should do what he wants. Nathaniel is torn, and his uncertainty, although comic at times, just might lead to tragedy.

The One – Romance Genre

This comedy finds two single professional women in Seattle/African-American women in Detroit searching for The One in all the wrong places! Susan is a Lawyer, and Jackie is a Business School Professor. Their time-consuming jobs mean they must make their search as “efficient” as possible. So they decide to place a “highly creative” singles ad in the local paper. Their creativity is surpassed only by that of the variety of men who respond to their ads.

Study 2

Coming Home

This light comedy finds three Irish-American/African-American brothers suddenly living under the same roof for the first time since childhood. Their different experiences have
changed each of them in ways unimaginable to the others. Each day brings new discoveries and excitement for the brothers, as they each pursue careers, women, and a good time on the town!

**Study 3**

*The Story*

The main character in the film is a career-focused, up-and-coming newscaster at a local morning news show who believes she has everything going for her. When studio execs at a competing show take a possible interest in hiring her, her boss decides to get her out on the streets to start covering stories herself to see if she has what it takes to be a serious journalist for the station. She is none too happy, however, when she is assigned to the best cameraman in the crew – the two have never gotten along, and sparks fly the minute they start working together. As it turns out, it is the first time a Black/this newscaster and cameraman have been paired together, and the comedic racial-oriented/--- subtext between them is a storyline all its own.

Even worse, unbeknownst to the driven newscaster, her cameraman is really an undercover agent for the FBI working to break up a complicated money laundering ring. As the newscaster covers her not-so-serious “lifestyle” stories, the hapless cameraman risks life and limb in outrageously comedic chase and fight scenes. As he pays less and less attention to the newscaster, she finds herself increasingly attracted to him. The romantic tension between the two of them is charming, and the contrast between the cameraman’s boring film job and his secret FBI life is hysterical. The plot twists and turns make for a movie that is both hilarious and endearing.

- This movie has received excellent reviews from major, credible film critics, generally on the order of 3.5 out of 4 stars. As a combination romance/comedy, critics believe it will have wide appeal to both men and women.
• The film will open February 1, 2004. Though distributed nationally, this movie will be shown primarily where the **Black/---** population is most concentrated and in theaters where **Black/---** moviegoers are most likely to attend.

• **Large budget in control condition:** This movie is supported by a very **large/small** promotional budget of $27/$1.3 million. Ad placements in **national television and print outlets** will dominate/will focus on **local cable and outdoor outlets** – potential viewers will be made will aware of this movie’s release/may not be aware of this movie before it is released.

• **Omitted in control condition:** Veteran actors **Angela Basset and Will Smith** turn in **outstanding performances** in this film as the newscaster and her cameraman/Previously unknown actors **Laquisha Brown and Tyrone Jefferson** make their successful film **debuts** in this movie as the newscaster and her cameraman.

**Killer Mind**

The movie begins with a clever twist, as a forensic investigator examines and dissects a grisly crime scene. It seems that people are being killed by a serial killer, and clues are few and far between. The local police team, led by a new detective and his veteran partner, avoid saying the killings were done by a serial killer until it becomes obvious and they absolutely have to – concern about public outcry weighs heavily on their minds, but they want to keep the details secret to avoid “copy cat” killings. When the new detective’s boss wants to take him off of the case because he’s new to the department, he successfully fights for his right to be the first **Black/---** in his department to work a serial murder. Issues of **race/officer loyalty** form a subtle backdrop against which the story unfolds, and the detectives are surprised to find out who their true friends are.

Eventually, a world-renowned psychiatrist who lectures on serial killers is brought in on
the case. An academic recluse, she reluctantly joins the detectives in their search for the murderer. As she examines the forensic evidence collected in the opening scene and subsequent crime scenes, she realizes that the killer is her cousin. It turns out the killer is playing games with the psychiatrist, making his capture one of the scariest and most exciting scenes in the movie.

- Thought to be a “sleeper” in 2004, this action/suspense movie has garnered uniformly outstanding reviews from all critics and it is believed that it will be in contention for several major awards. Though there are some graphic scenes, critics believe the combination of intrigue, mental gamesmanship, and clever dialog will draw both men and women into its sinister plot.

- The film will open January 30, 2004. Though distributed nationally, this movie will be shown primarily where the Black/--- population is most concentrated and in theaters where Black/--- moviegoers are most likely to attend.

- Large budget in control condition: This movie is supported by a very large/small promotional budget of $27/$1.3 million. Ad placements in national television and print outlets will dominate/will focus on local cable and outdoor outlets – potential viewers will be made will aware of this movie’s release/may not be aware of this movie before it is released.

- Omitted in control condition: Veteran actors Will Smith and Angela Basset turn in outstanding performances in this film as the new detective and his partner/Previously unknown actors Tyrone Jefferson and Laquisha Brown make their successful film debuts in this movie as the new detective and his partner.
There does not exist, to our knowledge, a diversity-seeking scale. Although the Miville-Guzman Universality Diversity Orientation (Miville et al. 1999) and Receptivity to Dissimilar Others (Douthitt et al. 1999) scales are close, we believe they reflect passive tolerance or acceptance of diversity rather than the proactive seeking out of diversity that we believe drives crossover consumption behaviors. Therefore, we created our single-item measure, “I like seeing movies about other kinds of people,” to capture this individual difference trait in a movie-viewing context. Although a multi-item scale would generally be preferred, research suggests that a multi-item measure is neither always desirable nor necessary (Drolet and Morrison 2001). Indeed, additional analyses suggest that our single item is more than adequate in its application in Studies 1 and 3 because it is related to other measures of diversity seeking.

Specifically, additional testing (n = 95) regarding the preliminary development of a diversity-seeking scale shows that this single item is correlated with a 12-item measure (α = .85) of diversity seeking (r = .27, p < .01). Initial data analyses pertaining to the development of the diversity-seeking scale show that this scale comprises four subfactors (CFA $X^2 = 53.23$, $p = .28$, AGFI = .87). Our single-item measure was significantly correlated with three of the four subscales listed in Table A1 (learning $r = .27$, $p < .01$; hiring $r = .20$, $p < .06$; eating ns; living $r = .25$, $p < .01$), suggesting that different facets of general diversity-seeking tendencies have different influences on domain-specific consumption behaviors. In addition, this item was correlated with the number of diversity-related behaviors (e.g., “I have been to a same-sex wedding” and “I have spent the night in the home of someone of another ethnic group”) out of 18 in which subjects said they had engaged ($r = .23$, $p < .02$). Therefore, we are confident that this measure serves as an adequate representation of the diversity-seeking orientation that we believe
moderates the impact of product ethnic orientation on attitudes and behavioral intentions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Hiring</th>
<th>Eating</th>
<th>Living</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning about other cultures is something I enjoy.</td>
<td>0.8275</td>
<td>0.0835</td>
<td>0.2670</td>
<td>0.3672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I view travel as an opportunity to learn about different cultures.</td>
<td>0.7608</td>
<td>0.0142</td>
<td>0.2265</td>
<td>0.0796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When choosing where to go on vacation, I favor places with people of different</td>
<td>0.5017</td>
<td>0.2958</td>
<td>0.3614</td>
<td>0.2065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I think too much emphasis is placed on diversity in hiring decisions. [R]</td>
<td>0.1040</td>
<td>0.7768</td>
<td>0.0890</td>
<td>0.2220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I were hiring, I would try to seek out candidates who are different from the</td>
<td>0.0458</td>
<td>0.6673</td>
<td>-0.1134</td>
<td>0.3442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current work force in terms of ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it is important to create a workplace that represents the local population</td>
<td>0.0548</td>
<td>0.5892</td>
<td>0.1926</td>
<td>0.1687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in terms of ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy trying different types of food from foreign countries.</td>
<td>0.3211</td>
<td>0.0475</td>
<td>0.6945</td>
<td>0.0384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I avoid going to restaurants with foods from novel places (e.g., Ethiopian or</td>
<td>0.1202</td>
<td>0.1004</td>
<td>0.6582</td>
<td>0.2363</td>
</tr>
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<td>Peruvian). [R]</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than Chinese or Mexican food, I don’t really seek out “ethnic” foods. [R]</td>
<td>0.3188</td>
<td>0.0545</td>
<td>0.6381</td>
<td>0.1183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would welcome a member of another cultural, ethnic, or racial group into my</td>
<td>0.1409</td>
<td>0.2137</td>
<td>0.0746</td>
<td>0.6879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is very important to me to live in a neighborhood with people from different</td>
<td>0.2459</td>
<td>0.4024</td>
<td>0.2011</td>
<td>0.5808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic groups.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I would consider living in an area where there lived many people who were not from</td>
<td>0.1784</td>
<td>0.2578</td>
<td>0.2125</td>
<td>0.5783</td>
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<tr>
<td>my ethnic group.</td>
<td></td>
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REFERENCES


*Journal of Consumer Psychology, 9* (3), 127-140.


Several definitions are in order. We use the term “ethnicity,” though in some cases the term “race” may be more accurate (our participants self-identified based on racial categories of Black or White). We are aware that the two terms have distinct meanings (i.e., ethnic group membership includes race but is not limited to this factor). Nonetheless, since some of our stimuli operationalizations are based on ethnic categories (African American), we use this term. In addition, the term “ethnicity” is conceptually consistent with prior research. The term “mainstream” refers to the numeric and social majority within a society, and the term “other-ethnic” refers to an ethnic minority group other than the referent ethnic group for the product in question. Throughout our studies, which take place in the United States, the referent ethnic minority group is Black, the mainstream group is Whites, and other-ethnic groups include Hispanics and Asian Americans.

We recognize that this manipulation is not strictly parallel in that we do not specify “White” in the White manipulation (“women in Detroit”). Our decision not to highlight ethnicity for this condition was driven by the fact that in the U.S., White is the cultural and ethnic default in contrast to ethnic minorities (Brumbaugh 2002) and is rarely (if ever) used to describe the mainstream (Billig 1997).

Results were very similar whether the genre and diversity preference measures were included as continuous variables or as the median split dummies discussed here. We decided to use the dummy variables to facilitate the interpretation and description of the results.

Puzzled by the lack of effects on White viewers so crucial for crossover, we conducted another study that built on the first two by manipulating the presence or absence of a targeting cue (“These movie concepts have been designed to appeal to people like you as the target market”) included with a movie description with the intent of enhancing felt targetedness, which has been
found to influence attitudes among Whites in previous research (Aaker et al. 2000). Movie ethnic orientation was again manipulated as Black or White through the “R&B” or “rock” music cue and participants again included Black and White adults and students from university participant pools. As expected, Black participants had more favorable attitudes for ethnic-incongruent movies when the descriptions were accompanied by the targeting cue than when they were not. However, the targeting cue had no impact on targetedness or attitudes for Whites’ responses to the Black-oriented movie, as was the case with our previous studies.

Power analysis suggests that we would require more than 500 participants to evaluate the fully crossed design. Given that we had no prior hypotheses regarding three- and four-way interactions, we elected to study a more parsimonious and practical model that enabled us to evaluate main effects and two-way interactions but that required only approximately 100 participants.

It has been noted that the Black/mainstream location factor may be confounded with perceived distance such that subjects are less likely to see a movie at a Black location than a mainstream location because they perceive the former to be farther away than the latter. Additional analyses suggest that this is not the likely cause. We analyzed all of our behavioral items (whether subjects would see the movie in a theater under different conditions) with our covariates and location as our sole factor. MANOVA results show no difference in means across dependent measures between Black and mainstream locations ($p > .20$). Univariate results show that only the difference between whether one would see the movie with a friend at a Black versus mainstream location approached significance ($p < .06$). Therefore, we conclude that subjects in this study are unlikely to be associating the ethnic orientation of the location with distance.