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**“WHITE MEN DOMINATE ADVERTISING AGENCIES’ CREATIVE
DIRECTOR POSITIONS
As Exemplified by Ads Aired During the Super Bowl”**

By Richard Lapchick

**with Devan J. Dignan, Austin Moss II, Naomi Robinson, Brian Hoff and Jamile M. Kitnurse
at The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport**

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(NAACP) and Mehri & Skalet, PLLC**

Executive Summary

The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport ([TIDES](#)) at the University of Central Florida (UCF) has conducted a new study on the racial and gender make-up of creative directors responsible for the advertising spots aired during the 2010 Super Bowl at the request of the [Madison Avenue Project](#), a partnership between the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ([NAACP](#)) and [Mehri & Skalet](#), PLLC.

The pinnacle of the advertising world is to exploit the Super Bowl to launch new advertisements and new ad campaigns. One editorial explained that the “The Super Bowl, despite its cost, provides the rarest of opportunities for marketers – an environment where the ads are also programming.” (“Bowl Marketers: You Need to Go Big or Go Home,” *Advertising Age*, February 15, 2010). Indeed, as the players on the field fight hard for yards, corporate America used commercials to battle for consumer dollars. According to Nielsen ratings, the Super Bowl game between the New Orleans Saints and the Indianapolis

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~MAKING WAVES OF CHANGE~

Colts was the single most watched program in television history with approximately 106.5 million viewers. Watching Super Bowl ads for the content has become increasingly an American pastime and Super Bowl ads sell at premium price (\$2.7 million on average per 30 seconds according to CBS News).

This report seeks to explain the current disparity in hiring practices that exists in the advertising industry regarding race and gender. The data, both quantitative and qualitative, yielded startling outcomes. Racial and gender data was available for 58 of the 67 advertisements aired during the Super Bowl. Fifty-two of the advertisements were produced by major advertising agencies while the other 15 were either produced in-house by the companies themselves or by creative directors who were not professionals and some were contest winners. Of those 52 advertisements produced by agencies, not one featured a person of color as the lead creative director: 100 percent were white. Furthermore, 94 percent of the creative directors were white males, as only six percent were female. The content of the ads was also quite revealing. In addition to the gratuitous sexual content, this year's crop of advertisements managed to depict some women in an antagonistic manner featuring a number of ads portraying men attempting to appease their overbearing girlfriends. There was also an astonishing lack of minorities featured as main characters in the advertisements. Of the 67 ads, only four featured a person of color in the lead role, and all were male (Beyoncé's role in the Vizio commercial was not considered a leading role because she was on screen for less than 10 percent of the advertisement time). According to Nielsen demographic data, there were 11.2 million African-American viewers of Super Bowl XLV of which 48 percent were women.

The primary author of this study is Dr. Richard Lapchick, the Director of The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport and of the DeVos Sport Business Management Graduate Program at the University of Central Florida (UCF). The study was co-authored by Devan J. Dignan, Brian Hoff, Jamile M. Kitnurse, Austin Moss II, and Naomi Robinson.

Justification for Super Bowl Commercial Use

Richard Lapchick began analyzing the role of race and gender in sports with the first [Racial and Gender Report Card](#) in the late 1980s. The 2009 Racial and Gender Report Card was the 20th annual publication. The Reports studied all the major sports leagues including an annual study of the diversity of the National Football League (NFL). They show that the NFL has worked very hard to break-down racial and gender barriers. The launch of the Rooney Rule in 2003, a provision that requires NFL teams to interview minority candidates for head coaching and senior management positions, has been an

overwhelming success. Six of the last eight Super Bowl teams have had minority Head Coaches or General Managers. Positional segregation, such as that for the quarterback appears to have ended, as evident by the many minority starting quarterbacks in the League. The NFL recently received its highest overall grade ever, a “B” in [“The 2009 Racial and Gender Report Card”](#) while also achieving its first ever “A” for racial hiring practices in the 2009 Report Card. Sixty-seven percent of the players in the NFL were African-American and 31 percent were white. In the 2010 Super Bowl, which is considered to be one of the most popular events in the world, approximately 63 percent of the players were African-American. Moreover, for the fourth consecutive year we have seen minorities doing more than just making plays on the field. In 2010, Indianapolis Colts first year head coach, Jim Caldwell, led his team to the Super

“The Institute’s Report sheds further light on Madison Avenue’s woeful employment record. For those on Madison Avenue still in a state of denial, open your eyes. For those denied fair opportunities, have hope, we will not stop until a New Day is created on Madison Avenue.”

- **Cyrus Mehri**

Bowl. In 2009, Coach Mike Tomlin of the Pittsburgh Steelers hoisted his first Lombardi Trophy and in 2007 two African-American coaches faced each other for the first time in Super Bowl history with Tony Dungy taking the prize with his Colts team. In addition, Jerry Reese became the first African-American General Manager to win a Super Bowl in 2008 with the New York Giants and Rod Graves was General Manager of the 2009 Super Bowl runner-up, the Arizona Cardinals.

Thus, the racial demographics of NFL football have drastically changed since it reintegrated in 1946, and the NFL is making strides in improving the disparity in race both on and off the field.

The record of Madison Avenue agencies stands in stark contrast to that of the NFL. This report is meant to provide a baseline for the advertising agencies just as the first Racial and Gender Report Card did for professional and collegiate sport in the 1980s. The NFL is diversified, the Super

Bowl is diversified, and the audience viewing the Super Bowl is diversified. However, the commercials that air during this event and the creative minds behind these commercials are not diversified. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Mehri & Skalet, PLLC, and TIDES takes the position that the key figures of the Madison Avenue advertising agencies should mirror these same advances. While the game and those who play it on the field are increasingly diverse, the product

being placed before consumers in between plays is not. These agencies seem to have missed what most of corporate America understands: diversity is a business imperative and is good for business.

The lack of minority employees who work in executive or creative positions for advertising agencies has been an unresolved issue in the advertising industry since it was first brought to light in 1963 by the NAACP and the Urban League of Greater New York. This results in an exclusion from exposure to cultural viewpoints and presents higher probabilities of showing biases on racial and gender issues. These issues were prevalent in the commercials that aired during the 2010 Super Bowl, which led to the call to conduct an analysis of the race and gender of the creative directors of contracted agencies that produced the 2010 Super Bowl commercials. TIDES believes that the Super Bowl commercials for Super Bowl XLIV were an adequate and appropriate sample of the advertising industry's overall body of work.

Advertising Industry Hiring Practices

As stated above, of the 67 total commercials aired during the world's most watched event, 52 were produced by advertising agencies and 15 were produced in-house.

Of the 67, we were able to find the race and gender of creative directors for 58 commercials. According to our research, there were a total of 76 creative/co-creative directors that produced these commercials and there was only one minority. Seventy creative directors were white males (92 percent), and there were five women creative directors who were also all white (seven percent).

The lone minority creative director was contest winner, Joelle De Jesus, a Latino male who was one of four contestants to participate in the Doritos "Crash the Super Bowl" contest. Ironically, his ad,

“The NAACP and others have tried in past years to address the exclusion of African-Americans and other racial minorities in upper management, and especially the creative departments, of the advertising industry. This study demonstrates that nothing has changed. This 'old boy' network continues to exclude the creative talents of African Americans, women and other ethnic groups while perpetuating negative racial and gender stereotypes. We are determined to bring this industry out of the past and into the 21st Century.”

- Judge Laura Blackburne

Doritos “House Rules” was considered by many to be a “top five” commercial in terms of popularity. This commercial was one of the few that had non-celebrity minorities in a lead role. The lack of diversity that exists in executive and creative director positions on Madison Avenue has obviously transcended to the commercial content that is being advertised to people of all demographics. Despite claims that we now live in a post-racial society, race and gender continue to be pervasive issues in the United States.

Over the past 50 years, employment discrimination has decreased in the vast majority of American industries. However, the advertising industry appears to still have a number of barriers to entry for women and minorities who hope to find employment in this \$30 billion a year industry. According to [“Research Perspectives on Race and Employment in the Advertising Industry,”](#) a 2009 study by Dr. Marc Bendick, Jr. and Dr. Mary Lou Egan, black managers and professionals in the advertising industry are 38 percent worse off when compared to black managers and professionals in the other 28

“I have been authoring report cards on race and gender hiring practices for more than two decades. In all those years, we have never reported on an industry group that is less diverse. Madison Avenue ad agencies are led by almost all white men. We hope this baseline data will provide a mirror for self-reflection so Madison Avenue can embrace change and move ahead.”

- Richard Lapchick

“Communications and Persuasion” Industries. Factors used for comparison included, but were not limited to current African-American representation among managers and professionals, progress in employing African-American managers and professionals, and average earning gaps between blacks and whites with equal qualifications. For example, the percentage of African-American managers and professionals in the advertising industry is 5.2 percent while the percentage of African-American managers and professionals in the comparison industries is 7.1 percent, which means that comparable industries employ 36.5 percent more African-American managers and professionals than the advertising industry. According to this same study, “The divergence between racial equality in this industry and the rest of the labor market is more than twice as large today as 30 years ago,” and African-Americans are only “62 percent as likely as their white counterparts to work in advertising agencies’ powerful ‘creative’ and ‘client-based’ positions and only 10 percent as likely to hold a position paying \$100,000 or more per year.”

For more than 40 years, the advertising industry has

been under scrutiny for a lack of diversity in hiring practices. For these reasons, a thorough analysis of those currently employed in this industry and a content analysis of the commercials produced specifically for Super Bowl XLIV (44) was necessary. The goal of this report is to be a first step in eliminating the current black-white employment gap, which according to Bendick and Egan, “would require tripling its black managers and professionals – which at the present rate, will not occur for another 71 years.” There is no doubt that there is a strong pipeline of talent within the African-American community who can serve at any position with the advertising agencies including creative director positions. That talent exists both within the agencies within the marketing departments of their clients and in other creative positions outside of the industry.

Commercial Content Analysis

The content analysis of the Super Bowl commercials was observed for recurring themes, the race and gender of the actors/actresses, and the roles they played. The ads that aired during the Super Bowl telecast are not atypical and the content is controlled by the advertising agencies and their clients. The ads are often popular and entertaining for the general audience which can be laughing at some images that are stereotypical and not really understand that they may be offensive to some people in the groups being stereotyped.

Race & Gender

According to Nielsen demographic data, significant gains in minority viewership were contributing factors to the Super Bowl's XLIV record audience of 106.5 million viewers. African-American household viewership was up four percent, as 11.2 million viewers (48 percent female) within black households tuned in to watch. Hispanic household ratings were up nine percent. About 8.3 million viewers (44 percent of them female) in U.S. Hispanic households saw the game.

While analyzing each commercial, we made note of the race and gender of all the actors and actresses. We also examined the roles and significance of their characters. The result was that minorities and women have a very small presence in these mainstream commercials.

Out of the 67 commercials, only four had a main character who was an African-American male, and out of those four, only two involved an actor who was not a well-known celebrity (Bud Light's "[Lighthouse](#)" and Doritos' "House Rules"). Other minorities, including minority women, did not have a leading role in any of the commercials (as stated earlier, Beyoncé's role in the Vizio commercial was not

considered a leading role because she was on screen for less than 10 percent of the advertisement time). Minority actors that were present in ads had a limited speaking role or received just a few seconds of camera time. The main problem with race is not only what is being aired but also what is not being aired – black middle class families. In commercials with professional/office settings, white males always had the dominant role except for the Telefora.com’s [“Rude Flowers”](#) ad where white females were the main characters. The only commercial in a professional/office setting that had diverse characters was the Intel’s [“Lunchroom”](#) ad, which included a number of Asian and Indian Intel employees.

The Bud Light commercials seemed to stand out from the pack by having the most diverse ads. Their commercials included African-American, Middle Eastern, Hispanic, and Asian actors and actresses with speaking roles and considerable camera time.

Sex & Gender

Madison Avenue has never shied away from using sex as a means to sell products. Super Bowl XLIV was no exception. Several commercials featured scantily clad women as nothing more than beautiful props in a male-focused advertisement. Monster.com’s [“Beavers”](#) stars a uniquely talented beaver and his beautiful blonde “groupie.” Continuing with the trend, Kia Sorento passed on using humans as main characters of its [“Joy Ride”](#) commercial and instead used stuffed animals, yet the popular theme of a bikini-clad woman in a hot tub was not missing. Actress Megan Fox’s celebrity and appearance were put to use in Motorola’s [spot](#), which featured Fox in a bubble bath.

Another popular theme in this year’s Super Bowl commercials line-up was of the apparent misery that women afflict on their men. This is easily noticed in commercials such as Dodge’s [“Man’s Last Stand,”](#) Bud Light’s [“Book Club,”](#) and Flo TV’s [“Injury Report.”](#) The latter was a desperate portrayal of a man whose “spine was removed by his girlfriend” as he shopped for lavender candles instead of watching the game. If he would simply purchase Flo TV’s personal television he could “change out of that skirt” as the narrator (Jim Nantz) passionately bemoans. While it is fairly obvious that football ads are geared towards male viewers, the lack of diverse female roles is dramatic. According to Nielsen.com, an estimated 48.5 million females watched the Super Bowl XLIV game, which is over 45 percent of the total viewership. Thus, the Super Bowl is different. It is not just any other game. It attracts a diverse viewing audience, including many who may not usually watch a football game on Sunday. Unfortunately, advertisers are not taking this into consideration when creating their spots for the Super Bowl. Instead,

a very unrealistic image of women as overbearing and boring or extremely sexualized characters in a fantasy world seemed to dominate this year's Super Bowl commercials. Advertising agencies have catered their Super Bowl ads toward white males for years, when clearly, the viewing audience for this event is much more diverse.

Top Five Offensive Ads

After analyzing all 67 Super Bowl commercials, we designated five as the most offensive ads. These were Doritos' "House Rules," Flo TV's "Injury Report," Go Daddy's "News" and "Spa," and Motorola's "Megan Fox." The Doritos' "[House Rules](#)" commercial, which despite its enormous popularity and accolades has received some criticism for what some commentators say is racial stereotyping. The commercial depicts a single black mother with a young child preparing to go on a date. This ad, arguably, reinforces the stereotypical image of African-American women as single mothers caring for their young children with no father figure present in the household. Flo TV's "[Injury Report](#)" also made the list because of its vivid portrayal of the lead character being chastised by the narrator (Jim Nantz) for not being a real "man." This ad like many others suggests that a male is less of a man if he spends time with his significant other instead of doing masculine activities like watching or playing sports.

The other three most offensive ads all consisted of the same theme: sex sells. Go Daddy's "[News](#)" even goes as far as saying, "Some say the commercial is too hot for TV" then Go Daddy Girl, Danica Patrick replies, "How hot is too hot?" This spot and Go Daddy's other Super Bowl ad, "[Spa](#)," both use attractive women talking in sexual innuendos as a way to promote their company.

Motorola's [spot](#) featuring model and actress Megan Fox followed the same theme. The ad depicts the entertainer undressed in a bath tub playing with her new phone when she suddenly imagines what would be the reactions if she took a picture of herself then made it public for all to see. One of the reactions even included two homosexual partners who femininely slapped each other across the face assuming the other one looked at the picture. Not only did this ad use a half naked woman as a focal point, but it also stereotyped homosexual men as being feminine.

Methodology

We analyzed all 67 commercials that were aired during or immediately following the Super Bowl. The information gathered about the creative directors was obtained from direct contact with advertising agencies (phone, e-mail, or fax), advertising database websites ([RICHARD E. LAPCHICK, DIRECTOR • KEITH HARRISON, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR • FITZ HILL, VISITING SCHOLAR
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online.com and <http://adsoftheworld.com>), or from general research. Our content analysis was internally generated after reviewing these commercials. The results of our research are depicted in the tables that follow. The commercials that are missing data on creative directors were produced by agencies that either declined to release information or did not respond to our request. Some companies with multiple commercials had the same creative directors, such as Coke which had two commercials both directed by Hal Curtis and Sheena Brady. Brady was counted twice, once for each commercial, in order to represent the number of commercials directed by a female director. There were actually only four female directors. This same system was used for males. Advertisements highlighted in yellow designate commercials where data was not made available. Those highlighted in red signify advertisements that were produced in-house or directed by contest winners.

Super Bowl Advertising Study					
	Company: Commercial Name	Advertising Agency	Creative Director		
			Name	Race	Gender
1	Anheuser Busch: Fences	DDB, Chicago	John Hayes	W	M
2	Audi: Green Police	Venables Bell & Partners, San Francisco	Paul Venables	W	M
3	Boost Mobile: Boost Mobile Shuffle	180, Los Angeles	Gavin Milner, Grant Holland	N/A	N/A
4	Bridgestone: A Whale of a Tale	The Richards Group	Glenn Dady	W	M
5	Bridgestone: Your Tires or Your Life	The Richards Group	Glenn Dady	W	M
6	Bud Light: Light House	Cannonball, St. Louis	Steve Hunt, Mike Binnette	W,W	M,M
7	Bud Light: Asteroid	Cannonball, St. Louis	Steve Hunt, Mike Binnette	W,W	M,M
8	Bud Light: Stranded	Cannonball, St. Louis	Steve Hunt, Mike Binnette	W,W	M,M
9	Bud Light: Book Club	Cannonball, St. Louis	Steve Hunt, Mike Binnette, Matt Collins	W,W,W	M,M,M
10	Bud Light: Voice Box	Cannonball, St. Louis	Steve Hunt, Mike Binnette	W,W	M,M
11	Budweiser: Body Bridge	DDB, Chicago	John Hayes	W	M
12	Careerbuilder: Casual Fridays	Contest winner	Matthew Gahan	W	M
13	Cars.com: Timothy Richman	DDB, Chicago	Bart Culberson, Brad Morgan	W,W	M,M
14	Census Bureau: Snapshot of America	Draftfcb	Keith Loell	W	M
15	Coke: Simpsons	Wieden+Kennedy, Portland	Hal Curtis, Sheena Brady	W, W	M, F
16	Coke: Sleep Walking	Wieden+Kennedy, Portland	Hal Curtis, Sheena Brady	W, W	M, F
17	Denny's: Birthday Breakfast	Goodby, Silverstein, & Partners	David Kolbusz	W	M
18	Denny's: Grand Slam	Goodby, Silverstein, & Partners	David Kolbusz	W	M
19	Denny's: Overworked Chickens	Goodby, Silverstein, & Partners	David Kolbusz	W	M
20	Diamond Foods: Nuts and Popcorn	Goodby, Silverstein, & Partners	Steve Simpson	W	M
21	Disney: Alice in Wonderland	Movie Trailer (In House)	Tim Burton	W	M
22	Disney: Prince of Persia	Movie Trailer (In House)	Mike Newell	W	M
23	Dockers: Wear No Pants	DraftFCB	Julie Scelzo, Desmond LaVelle	W, W	M, F
24	Dodge Charger: Mans Last Stand	Wieden+Kennedy, Portland	Aaron Allen, Joe Staples	W, W	M, M
25	Doritos: Underdog	5 Point Productions	Joshua Svoboda	W	M
26	Doritos: Casket	Goodby, Silverstein, & Partners	Kevin T. Willson	W	M
27	Doritos: House rules	Goodby, Silverstein, & Partners	Joelle De Jesus	L	M
28	Doritos: Snack Attack Samurai	Goodby, Silverstein, & Partners	Ben Krueger	W	M
29	Dove: Manthem	Ogilvy Advertising	Gerry Human	W	M
30	Dr. Pepper: Little Kiss	Deutsch, Los Angeles	Chris Ribeiro	N/A	N/A
31	E-Trade: Girlfriend	Grey, New York	John J. Budion	W	M
32	E-Trade: Tears	Grey, New York	Paul Behnen	W	M
33	EA Games: Dante's Inferno- Hell Awaits	Wieden + Kennedy, Portland	Jason Bagley, Eric Baldwin	W,W	M,M
34	Flo TV: Moments	Magner Sanborn	Scott Anderson	W	M
35	Flo TV: Injury Report	Magner Sanborn	Jason Pollock	W	M
36	Focus on the Family: Tim Tebow	Vidano Films	Stephen Vidano	W	M
37	GoDaddy: Spa	GoDaddy Productions	N/A	N/A	N/A
38	GoDaddy: News	GoDaddy Productions	N/A	N/A	N/A

Super Bowl Advertising Study					
	Company: Commercial Name	Advertising Agency	Creative Director		
			Name	Race	Gender
39	Google: Parisian Love	Google Creative Lab	Aaron Duffy	W	M
40	HomeAway	Publicis Groupe's Publicis in the West	Bryan Buckley	W	M
41	Honda Accord: Crosstour	RPA	Pat Mendelson	W	M
42	Hyundai: Brett Favre	Innocean Worldwide Americas	Doug James, Robert Prins	W,W	M,M
43	Hyundai: New Car	Innocean Worldwide Americas	Doug James, Robert Prins	W,W	M,M
44	Hyundai: New Sonata	Innocean Worldwide Americas	Doug James, Robert Prins	W,W	M,M
45	Intel: Lunchroom	Venables Bell & Partners, San Francisco	Paul Venables	W	M
46	KGB: Sumo Wrestling	The Brooklyn Brothers, New York	Guy Barnett	W	M
47	Kia Sorento: Joy Ride	David & Goliath, Los Angeles	David Angelo	W	M
48	Late Show: Leno, Oprah, & Letterman	CBS, In-House	David Letterman	W	M
49	Michelob Ultra: Lance Armstrong	Palm + Havas, Chicago	N/A	N/A	N/A
50	Monster.com: Beavers	BBDO/New York	Jerome Marucci, Steve McElligott	W,W	M,M
51	Motorola: Megan Fox	Anomaly	Mike Byrnes	W	M
52	NFL: Always Football	Grey, New York	Todd Tilford	W	M
53	NFL: Lift Off	Grey, New York	Todd Tilford	W	M
54	NFL: NFL Draft	Grey, New York	Todd Tilford	W	M
55	Papa John's: Better Pizza	Carat, New York	N/A	N/A	N/A
56	Paramount: Shutter Island	Movie Trailer (In House)	Martin Scorsese	W	M
57	Budweiser Select 55: Ice Bottle	Momentum, St. Louis	Jeff Stevens	W	M
58	Skechers: Shape Up	(Declined)	N/A	N/A	N/A
59	Snickers: Betty White	BBDO, New York	Gianfranco Arena, Peter Kain	W,W	M,M
60	Taco Bell Box	Interpublic Group's Draftfcb	Teddy Brown	W	M
61	Telefora.com: Rude Flowers	Fire Station (In-House)	Liz Loew	W	F
62	TruTV: Punxsutawney Polamalu	Grey, New York	Noel Cottrell	W	M
63	Universal Orlando: Wolfman	(In-House)	N/A	N/A	N/A
64	Universal Orlando: Harry Potter	(In-House)	N/A	N/A	N/A
65	Valentines Day at Wal Mart	The Martin Agency	Sissy Estes	W	F
66	Volkswagon Punchdub	Deutsch , Los Angeles	Josh Rose	W	M
67	Vizio: Forge	Venables Bell & Partners	Keith Scott, Paul Johnson	W,W	M,M

** Note: the yellow highlighted text signifies the nine commercials out of the total 67 for which we were unable to find the race and gender of their creative directors.*