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A Cliff (Scholar) and Chris (Baller) Paul State Farm Ad Campaign Analysis

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Black Males and Intercollegiate Athletics: An Exploration of Problems and Solutions

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A CLIFF (SCHOLAR) AND CHRIS (BALLER) PAUL STATE FARM AD CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS

C. Keith Harrison, Scott J. Bukstein and Suzanne M. Lawrence

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze ethical issues and current trends of major college athletics in relationship to Black males in society. The focus of this chapter is on identity *and how higher education institutions can cultivate a more balanced student-athlete mindset through images and representations. In addition to a review of relevant literature, a content analysis of six State Farm Insurance Cliff and Chris Paul commercials was conducted so that new knowledge is applied to the constructs of academic and athletic identity. Commercial and advertisement content analysis was utilized to address student-athlete life skills issues in terms of transferable attributes from sport to life. College athletics programs need to develop systemic and culturally relevant strategies that enable Black males to transfer skill sets developed through participation in intercollegiate athletics to future occupational endeavors. The chapter*

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concludes with a recommendation section for education research, practice, and policy.

Keywords: Identity; academic identity; athletic identity; marketing; branding; scholar-baller

INTRODUCTION

On May 6th, 1985, identical twins were separated at birth. Despite their different upbringings, they shared one invaluable trait … they were both born to assist. Chris Paul was destined to become the ultimate team player. Cliff Paul was destined to lead the life of helping others.

– State Farm Commercial, Born to Assist

In 2013, State Farm Insurance launched an advertising campaign that focused on two distinct yet related identities and character traits involving Chris Paul and Cliff Paul. While Chris Paul is a nonfictional character and currently a star point guard for the Los Angeles Clippers professional basketball team, Cliff Paul is a fictional identity that works as a State Farm agent. The six primary State Farm commercials strategically position each of these two ostensibly interconnected yet conceptually distinct identity constructs (Chris as "baller" and Cliff as "scholar") as both mastering the "assist." This strategic branding initiative has received widespread praise from members of the media and the general public. For example, the Twitter account for the fictitious Cliff Paul had over 30,000 followers at the time this chapter was written. The commercials are clever and also successfully integrate several core State Farm brand messages. Other companies such as Jordan Brand have strategically leveraged these commercials to drive revenue via new product development. For example, Jordan Brand created a specific shoe based on the ad campaign.

However, there has been little to no scholarly analysis on the identity constructs and practical impact of the representations of Cliff Paul and Chris Paul in the commercials and print advertisements of this marketing campaign. One primary goal of this chapter is to analyze the content (i.e., text and visual representations) of the State Farm commercials and advertisements to better understand how these messages impact identity constructs of youth and young adults, in particular Black males.

This analysis is pertinent for two reasons. First, a major corporation (State Farm) has partnered with an agency (Translation) to create an ad campaign with a superstar National Basketball Association (NBA) player

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who is former high profile NCAA men's college player at Wake Forest University. Second, the marketing messages in these ads affirm that the concept that games are "just for play" must be analyzed beyond the surface because text has meaning (Hall, 1997). In the next section we synthesize the extant literature related to education, racial imagery, sport, and Black males.

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REPRESENTATIONS AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTS OF ATHLETES AND BLACK MALES

While education was seen as Plan B, the 20th Century was dominated by our role and image as athletes. It will be our minds not our bodies that will determine our image, place, and status in the arena of life over the 21st Century – and there will be no "Plan B."

– Dr. Harry Edwards in poster letter written to C. Keith Harrison (2010)

I would share the definition of ballin with you white folks – but, no, the game is to be sold not told.

– Str8 Ballin, 2PAC

A critical analysis of media representations related to identity constructs of professional athletes can inform the examination and assessment of the state of Black males participating in athletics at the collegiate level. In particular, football and men's basketball will be the cultural spaces this chapter will highlight along with the topics of academics, athletics, and the perception of Black men as cultural icons. Recent social and cultural movements in athletics on American higher education campuses indicate the disconnect between academics and athletics is still a major issue. HBO's Real Sports (March 2014) featured the topic of literacy and examined the alleged academic fraud related infractions at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. In January 2014, Ramogi Huma and the National College Players Association advised Northwestern University student-athletes on the football team to unionize in order to increase academic and economic support and other rights for student-athletes. In addition, in June 2014 federal court judge Claudia Wilken presided over the O'Bannon case, which centers on the broad issue of the integration of athletics and academics as well as the specific issue of whether football and men's basketball student-athletes should be permitted to receive revenue based on licensing deals associated with student-athlete name, image, and likeness rights. These social, political, and legal movements indicate ethical (mis)behavior is a

prime topic on the minds of various stakeholders in athletics. This includes Black males in sport and society.

During the end of Black History Month on February 27, 2014, President Obama announced a new initiative about men of color and in particular Black males in American society. What follows is a summary of the transcript from this National Public Radio (NPR) production on the new public policy strategy:

> Audie Cornish (Host): President Obama kicked off a new initiative this afternoon, aimed at improving the odds for young Black and Latino men. The White House calls the program My Brother's Keeper. The idea is to bring together business people, faith leaders, athletes and celebrities to confront the challenges facing young men of color. Major charities have pledged $200 million to the cause over the next five years.
>
> President Barack Obama: We need to change the statistics, not just for the sake of the young men and boys but for the sake of America's future.
>
> Cornish: Over the years, some African-American activists have sometimes criticized the president for not being more outspoken about these challenges. Is this a sign that the president is changing his tune?
>
> Scott Horsley (Byline): Obama has been very cautious about doing anything that might suggest he's too much the African-American president. Certainly, there are many people who want to see him in that light anyway. And in the past, he sometimes brushed aside complaints about, for example, high unemployment in the black community; saying, look, his economic agenda is designed to help all Americans.
>
> Obama: The plain fact is there are some Americans who in the aggregate, are consistently doing worse in our society, groups that have had the odds stacked against them in unique ways that require unique solutions.
>
> Horsley: And on measure after measure, Obama said the group facing some of the most severe challenges is young Black and Latino men … Obama was careful to say, look, this is not about creating some big new government program. It is, as you pointed out, mostly about enlisting businesses and community groups and celebrities and faith leaders, trying to create an environment where young black men feel as if they're more a part of society.
>
> Cornish: And then listening to the president today, was there a sense that there was a little bit of tough love from him as well?
>
> Horsley: Yes. He ended his remarks by talking directly to young black and Latino men, both the ones here at the White House and in the broader audience, and his message was, look, no excuses. We've got responsibilities as a society to give you the tools you need, but you've got responsibilities too. In essence, he was passing along the message that he says he heard from his mother, his grandparents, his teachers and others who were there when he was a young man. (National Public Radio, 2014)

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Clearly this is an important and timely context to analyze Black males in general and especially Black males in athletics. Black males are often highly visible in mainstream media as athletes and entertainers – but there are layers to this imagery and representation. What are some examples of these representations and the diversity encompassed by this imagery?

In January 2014, Richard Sherman, a defensive back with the Seattle Seahawks of the National Football League (NFL), was scrutinized for his post-game behavior while being interviewed by sideline reporter Erin Andrews. Sherman was very passionate and hyperintense after deflecting a pass thrown to San Francisco 49ers wide receiver Michael Crabtree, preserving the victory for Sherman's team and contributing to his team advancing to the Super Bowl. The discourse on social/interactive media included thousands of Twitter followers and the global world finding out Sherman was an "A" student both at Dominguez High School (California) and at Stanford University. In addition, his parents are still married and hold "respectable" jobs in the community of Compton, California. Compton is technically a suburb of Los Angeles but has many urban issues from poverty to violence. Mr. Sherman (garbage disposal industry) and Mrs. Sherman (inner-city youth with disabilities counselor) both give back to their community. In contrast to the "loudmouth" tag Sherman immediately received by the media and public opinion, his teammate Marshawn Lynch was scrutinized for *not* expressing his thoughts and feelings to the media. The NFL has a policy that requires the media access to players for interviews. Lynch typically avoids speaking to the media – until the Super Bowl where the fines are steep for not communicating with the press. However, during an interview with another former African American NFL player (Deion Sanders, media personality for Fox Sports), Lynch's response on why he chooses to focus on his craft was "Just bout that action boss." In terms of identity, imagery, and perception Sherman has long dreadlocks and Lynch has a "gold tooth grill" and is originally from urban Oakland, California. Both of these professional athletes provide timely and meaningful case studies as does the next example of a Black male identity at the collegiate level.

At the collegiate level Marcus Smart, then-current men's basketball student-athlete at Oklahoma State University, had a Texas Tech fan ignite a shove from Smart after the spectator apparently made a negative comment and possibly a racial slur toward Smart. This incident was the result of Smart flying into the stands after his momentum carried him out of the playing area as he attempted to block a shot. This situation raises an important question: how are Black males perceived in these various on the

playing field and on the court situations and is it ethical in terms of how they are represented and presented?

Welsing (1991) frames this situation between Black males and traditionally white institutions as "games" and states:

> Although there are commonly held views that games are merely a form of play and entertainment even when they are played professionally and that for most people the permanent fascination of games lies simply in the pure joy of playing them, the child psychiatrist realizes that for the young, games and play are the "work of children." It is one of the means by which, through the handling of toys and objects in a symbolic way, children master adult role expectations and attempt to resolve unconscious conflicts brought by the dynamics and interplay of factors in their surrounding environment. Play and games then become the child's unconscious attempt to master the environment, its conflicts and threats to the child's sense of security. (pp. 132–133)

Before examining more literature and theory, Cress Welsing's point indicates that Black males will typically be seen as different regardless of the visibility and status of their athleticism. The symbolism Welsing (1991) discusses can be applied to the object (basketball), the environment (education, race, and sport), and the role expectations (intelligent and/or only physically gifted).

LITERATURE AND THEORY

It is important to discuss the image and perception of Black males in terms of ethics and diversity. Historically, the construction and dehumanization of Black males during slavery, in D. W. Griffith's film "Birth of a Nation," and the discrimination policies of *Plessy v. Fergurson* (separate but equal) all position the Black male as deviant and inferior. Gates (1997) in *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man* analyzes an assortment of prominent Black men in a way that counters the assumptions of Black male identity on this historical continuum. Themes focus on how they live, think, and navigate race and racism in society. This is important because historically the perceptions and labels of Black men have been limited in scope – regardless of their individual and collective complexity. This framework by Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. has also been extended in the space of race and sport in relation to Black males. A selected brush of this literature includes Brooks and Althouse's *Racism in College Athletics* (2013); Leonard and King's (2011) *Commodified and Criminalized: New Racism and African Americans in Contemporary Sports*; Ogden and Rosen's (2008)

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Reconstructing Fame: Sport, Race, and Evolving Reputations; Ogden and Rosen's (2010) *Fame to Infamy: Race, Sport, and the Fall from Grace*; Baker and Boyd's (1997) *Out of Bounds: Sports, Media, and the Politics of Identity*; Boyd's (2003) *Young, Black, Rich, and Famous: The Rise of the NBA, the Hip Hop Invasion, and the Transformation of American Culture*; and finally Harrison and Valdez's (2004) *The Uneven View of African American Ballers* rounds out an excellent body of work for those interested in understanding the dynamics of race, sport, and identity on a deeper level.

Scholars have also identified that Black male student-athletes experience specific challenges based on their participation in revenue sports (e.g., football and men's basketball). Duderstadt (2000) in his book on intercollegiate athletics and the American university in terms of higher education puts a racial framework on certain aspects of male student-athlete experiences:

> One of the most sensitive issues in intercollegiate athletics concerns race. Basketball and football are dominated by talented black athletes, whose representations in these sports programs far exceeds their presence elsewhere in the university. To be sure, sports provide many minority students with opportunities to attend and benefit from a college education. Many minority athletes eat together, live together, study together, and have little interaction with the white student majority on most campuses. And all too frequently, big-time college sports provides a seductive path that lures talented minority athletes into programs with the elusive goal of a professional sports career rather than a college education. (p. 213)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of theory is to drive the analysis of data being interpreted. In the current section we expand on a specific theory related to our topic and chapter focus. Hall's (1997) cultural studies theory "the spectacle of the other" is an excellent lens and framework for analyzing the binary of Cliff/Chris Paul through a discourse research framework. The "spectacle of the other" is a cultural studies approach that looks in depth at various theories and concepts about the representational phenomenon of stereotyping. This theoretical approach and discussion is threaded through examples, and the current chapter builds on this approach by using Cliff/Chris Paul representations and (counter) stereotypes as its case example. As explained by Hall (1997), "The accumulation of meanings across different texts, where one image refers to another, or has its meaning altered by being 'read' in the context of other images, is called inter-textuality" (p. 232).

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Specifically, there is no right or wrong answer of how to read a given text. However, there is a preferred meaning in terms of the representation of racial and ethnic identities who are different from the majority population. A given image carries diverse meanings, with no priority given to one over the other. Images show an event (denotation) and hint at a message or meaning (connotation). In the methods section that follows below, we examine how the Cliff/Chris Paul content reveals themes that coincide with the aforementioned theoretical analysis (Table 2). Hence, the dualistic identity of an African American basketball player in the State Farm marketing campaign versus a holistic identity as a clear distinction and preferred meaning about athleticism and intelligence. While some in the audience might view Cliff and Chris Paul as "cool" identities that assist people for a living, there is the chance that "the super-male black athlete" may not be all he seems. The ambiguity is amplified when we compare this image with all the other images – the stereotypes we are accustomed to seeing – of black athletes in the press. Its meaning is inter-textual; that is, it requires to be read "against the grain" (Hall, 1997, p. 233).

Hall (1997) builds on this notion by explaining that "difference" is both positive and negative – and by "putting these two together suggests why 'difference' is both necessary and dangerous" (p. 234). The four accounts on difference are: (1) "difference" matters because it is essential to meaning; without it, meaning would not exist; (2) we need "difference" because we can only construct meaning through dialogue with the "other"; (3) culture depends on giving things meaning by assigning them to different positions within a classificatory system. The marking of "difference" is thus the basis of that symbolic order which we call culture; and (4) "other" is fundamental to the constitution of the self, to us as subjects, and to sexual identity. Hall (1997) poses the following core question for scholars and industry leaders: "Have the repertoires of representation around 'difference' and 'otherness' changed or do earlier traces remain intact in contemporary society"? (p. 225). As explained by Hall (1997), binary oppositions can be "reductionalist and over-simplified – swallowing up all distinctions in their rather rigid two-part structure" (p. 235).

Visual Representation

Visual representation is the practice of analyzing text and the multiple meanings of imagery, especially racial imagery in the context of American history and racism that Black males face in society. Specifically to

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academics and athletics, per the student and athlete identity – we want to contextualize the impact of representation from the Paul Robeson scholar-athlete era to Cliff/Chris Paul's image in the State Farm ads and commercials. Willis (1998) analyzes a photograph titled "Paul Robeson, Rutgers All-American (circa 1918)" and explains "Robeson is pictured in his prime as a football athlete. It is difficult to view this image without comparing it to the way in which photographs of African American athletes are currently used by universities, media, and advertisers to sell products and ideas. One could make the case that this is exactly what Rutgers College had in mind with its portraits of Robeson as football star. At the time this photograph was taken, Robeson was only the third African American to attend Rutgers College, and the first African American to be part of the football team. His extraordinary success as a football player, in spite of overt racism and violent hostility, is not necessarily evident in the photograph. Robeson was not the only African American male exceling as a scholar-athlete in the early 1900s (there were many Black male scholar-athletes)."

Another Black male who projected an image of academic and athletic success was William Henry Lewis. Bond (2006) captures the superior character and ethical leadership of this former center for Amherst and Harvard. Lewis was well ahead of his time as an All-American in the classroom and on the field with many achievements during and after college (includes earning his law degree). Bond (2006) explained how many Whites chose to strongly and publicly support "successful and gentlemanly African Americans" and supported a "biracial notion of citizenship" (p. 57). Bond (2006) concludes our literature review section with a great segway to our analysis in the next section of Black male representation and identity politics in the 21st century with a reflection eternal in terms of past history.

All of these constructs relate in part to the Cliff/Chris Paul commercial messages that served as the primary data in our textual and content analysis of the popular commercials.

METHODS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CLIFF/CHRIS PAUL (STATE FARM IDENTITY MESSAGE(S))

All six of the State Farm ad campaign commercials were analyzed using a content analysis approach in terms of the qualitative data from each commercial (see Table 1 for a summary and complete transcript of each of the

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Table 1. Transcripts from Six State Farm Commercials.

(1) State Farm Commercial – Born to Assist (*60 seconds*)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbRdDhYFGSw

On May 6th, 1985, identical twins were separated at birth.

Despite their different upbringings, they shared one invaluable trait … they were both born to assist.

Chris Paul was destined to become the ultimate team player.

Cliff Paul was destined to lead the life of helping others. And that led him to become a State Farm Agent.

When assisting is in your blood, you know it.

Find a State Farm agent born to get you to a better state.

(2) State Farm Commercial – The Power of an Assist (*60 seconds*)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vU7PIbyHgLk

Fate had reunited twins Chris and Cliff Paul and they quickly made up for lost time.

As brothers will do, they began trading tales of their greatest assists.

For every amazing feat Chris shared, Cliff matched it with something just as extraordinary. A story only someone born with a gift for assisting could possibly tell.

Even when Cliff seemed to outdo himself, he'd immediately describe yet another astonishing tale.

And before long the brothers realized that they'd not only discovered their equal, they also inspired a competition that had only just begun.

No matter whose side you choose, you can't deny the power of an assist.

Find an agent born to get you into a better state.

(3) State Farm Commercial – Worn to Assist (*30 seconds*)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1k58vpgm5U

Twin assistors Chris and Cliff Paul set out to unite their fans by creating something everyone could agree on.

Having lobbed such ideas as the CP3-legged shorts and a State Farm Clipper Ship, they finally landed on the perfect answer.

The Jordan CP3 ID in Cliff's favorite argyle.

Create your own pair. After all, when it's worn to assist, you know it.

(4) State Farm Commercial – Heritage of the Assist (*60 seconds*)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvih8mQ1H1Q

Twins Cliff and Chris Paul couldn't stop talking about the assist and yet a new question …"Daddy, where do assists come from?"… rendered them speechless.

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As the Pauls delved deep into their lineage they discovered something extraordinary. In 1922, local shopkeeper Clifford Paul Sr., Sr., Sr. inspired employees at State Farm, a thriving new insurance agency, to be there for customers … like a good neighbor.

While Christopher Paul Sr., Sr., Sr. revolutionized the game of basketball by suggesting players pass the ball to other players who can then score.

Delighted that their ancestors invented the assist, the twins could rest assured the gift of giving was in their genes … allegedly.

Nothing endures like the legacy of an assist.

(5) State Farm Commercial – Legacy of the Assist (*15 seconds*)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwVGrfEswak

From the moment Clifford Paul created the assist, his legacy lived on.

Both in his smile and in his style.

From one generation to the next, State Farm agents never cease to assist you. That's getting to a better state.

(6) State Farm Commercial – Future of the Assist (*60 seconds*)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4Pz8ErgM70

Assisting.

Twins Cliff and Chris Paul made it their pursuit to pass selflessness on to the next generation. And their children proved to be true prodigies.

On the court, Lil' Chris' signature alley-oop dee doop drew the attention of local scouts. While off the court, Lil' Cliff assisted neighborhood children by insuring their new tree house from his own State Farm branch.

Before long, the Paul's knew the future of the assist was in the right hands.

Because one thing every State Farm agent can tell you, is that a lil' assist goes a long way. No matter who it comes from.

six commercials listed below). Print advertisements with similar images and messaging were also analyzed.

Commercial 1: "Separated at Birth"/"Born to Assist"
Commercial 2: "Reunited"/"The Power of An Assist"
Commercial 3: "Historical Context"/"Worn to Assist"
Commercial 4: "Tension Between Offspring"/"Heritage of the Assist"
Commercial 5: "Dual Identity Across the Generations"/"Legacy of the Assist"
Commercial 6: "The Next Generation"/"Future of the Assist"

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FINDINGS AND RESULTS: WHAT DOES THE MESSAGE AND CONTENT CONVEY TO THE AUDIENCE?

In terms of a critical analysis of the issues with regards to the six commercials on Cliff/Chris Paul, the next section in this chapter provides a coded analysis of the major themes with each of the six visual representations. Our goal is to problematize each commercial and the entire campaign as a whole, and to discuss the implications of these visual representations. First, by critically deconstructing the binary of Cliff/Chris Paul we learn that the representations perpetuate the dichotomy of either being "cool" or being smart. In other words, both Cliff and Chris have a skill set to assist others and thus add value to their respective organizations. However, the imagery of each identity is extreme. Chris the baller has physical "swagger" and his attire consists of Jordan Brand sweats and sneakers. Cliff is consistently depicted wearing an argyle sweater, large glasses, and in general could be perceived as less than "cool"; for example, one print ad highlights Cliff Paul's "double-dimpled smile." It is worth noting that James Cohen, associate director at the agency that created the commercials on behalf of State Farm, explained that "We don't think of [Cliff Paul] as a nerd … He's an insurance agent with swagger" (Nudd, 2014). These representations are on the slippery slope of stereotypes that are both positive and negative simultaneously. For Black males who are student-athletes viewing this and for those that are not Black males, there is a clear message of what being a scholar and a baller separately and possibly combined actually means. The implications of the commercials are not completely problematic because the representation of the skill-set "assist" is projected as something that exists in the academic and athletic domains. What is problematic is that Cliff and Chris Paul are represented as two extreme human beings while also being constructed as related as twins who were separated at birth.

Table 2 provides a list of key themes from each of the six commercials. What follows is an overview of key content and themes from the commercials.

Themes and Content from Commercial 1

In this first commercial in the ad campaign, the "binary opposition" and "visual representation" of "difference" takes center stage (Hall, 1997,

Table 2. Major Themes of the Six State Farm Commercials.

(1) State Farm Commercial – Born to Assist
4 Major Themes
Innate Ability to Assist
Team Player
Life of a Servant Helping Others
Exceptional Circumstance

(2) State Farm Commercial – The Power of an Assist
5 Major Themes
Extraordinary Gift for Helping
Lifetime Unselfish Assists
Healthy Competition
Positive Influence Due to Assist
Improved Status

(3) State Farm Commercial – Worn to Assist
3 Major Themes
Teamwork
Create Your Own State
Assisting: An Inherent Trait

(4) State Farm Commercial – Heritage of the Assist
4 Major Themes
Extraordinary Family Lineage
Reliable: Like a Good Neighbor
Natural Talent for Giving
Sustained Legacy

(5) State Farm Commercial – Legacy of the Assist
3 Major Themes
Family Legacy of Selflessness
Always Helpful
Superior Situation

(6) State Farm Commercial – Future of the Assist
3 Major Themes
Selfless Pursuits
Inherited Talent for Giving
Enduring Power of an Assist

pp. 226, 277). First, the two identities are separated at birth. While showing the two babies in their individual carriages some imagery is depicted with visual cues that lean on stereotypical definitions of academics and athletics for Black males. Cliff Paul has large glasses and bifocals on while Chris

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Paul does not have any glasses. The commercial mentions "different upbringings" for Chris and Cliff. Throughout the commercial, Chris and Cliff are both shown helping others in different contexts; for example, Cliff picking up a young boy's dropped ice cream cone and Chris dishing out assists in a basketball game. At the end of this first commercial, Cliff and Chris "bump into each other" for the first time as one exits and the other enters an elevator.

Themes and Content from Commercial 2

Cliff Paul continues to be portrayed wearing glasses and argyle sweaters as compared with Chris Paul wearing a hooded sweatshirt or athletic gear. The commercial mentions how fate had reunited Chris and Cliff (i.e., in the first commercial). In this commercial, Chris and Cliff share stories with each other about how they have helped others (i.e., assisted) in various contexts. There appears to be a "healthy competition" as Chris and Cliff go back and forth attempting to show that their "greatest assists" are the most impressive. The commercial ends with a shot of what appears to be a family with two boys, one dressed similar to Cliff and the other dressed similar to Chris. Once again, we see visual representations of these two identities being distinct and mutually exclusive in terms of the two young boys being represented as Chris or Cliff versus Chris and Cliff.

Themes and Content from Commercial 3

Apparel, body language, and facial expressions once again reiterate the binary opposition in terms of the representation of Chris and Cliff Paul. This commercial shows a variety of products that visually combine the identities of Chris and Cliff (e.g., a basketball and Jordan Brand shoes with argyle design). This is the first time in the ad campaign where we see a "merging" of the two identities.

Themes and Content from Commercial 4

The sons of Chris and Cliff are now integrated into the ad campaign. As expected, the clothing and identity portrayals reinforce the separate identities of Chris and Cliff. This commercial also contains content related to the

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ancestors of Chris and Cliff. Just like Cliff, Clifford Sr., Sr., Sr. wore glasses and had a similar "intellectual" mustache.

Themes and Content from Commercial 5

This commercial contains stereotypical representations of the Black male from generation to generation. Chris does not appear in this commercial. Multiple generations of the Cliff Paul family are shown helping people with auto accidents. Outfits and handshakes in the commercial are meant to illustrate what was considered "cool" and "hip" in various decades.

Themes and Content from Commercial 6

A key message in this commercial is that Chris and Cliff pass selflessness onto the next generation. This commercial essentially depicts the sons of Chris and Cliff as having identical character traits and attributes as their fathers, thereby carrying on tradition while also carrying on stereotypical representations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Cliff/Chris Paul identities in the State Farm Commercials reveal interesting themes and a context for examining two individuals that are really one person in each of the commercials. In terms of ethics and the Black male, we want to turn our attention in this analysis to transferable life skills and the concept of "assist" by Cliff/Chris Paul. The commercials portray Cliff as the State Farm agent and Chris as the basketball player. If we apply Hall's (1997) spectacle of the other theory and the combination of positive and negative images, we are able to inform our interpretations of the commercials and the Cliff/Chris binary persona. Hall (1997) highlights that "the problem with the positive/negative repertoire of the dominant regime of representation increases the diversity of the ways in which 'being black' is represented, but does not necessarily displace the negative. Since the binaries remain in place, meaning continues to be framed by them. The strategy challenges the binaries – but does not undermine them" (p. 274).

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What if We Made the Commercial(s) Scholar-Baller Like?

The overall message and theme of this commercial would be to portray one person who possesses all of the character traits and skill sets of Chris and Cliff Paul. Author Collins (1994) would refer to this as creating "the genius of the 'and'" and avoiding "the tyranny of the 'or'." Thus, if Cliff/Chris Paul were to be portrayed counter to stereotypes of Black males as either "ballers" or "dumb jocks" or the other extreme as "poindexter" or "nerd" representations – then the original commercial would actually only show one baby born at birth not two African American boys new to the world. Further, the commercials would show this one person as Chris Paul in a sort of "Clark Kent" identity who becomes superman only in a different context. Hence, Chris Paul would be a super athlete and super thinker (Harrison, 2000) by switching back and forth from his argyle sweater vest to the attire of what is traditionally and even stereotypically perceived as an athlete and baller. When the State Farm campaign projects Paul as dualistic in terms of assisting others in two different spaces (basketball court vs. the insurance claims context) it affirms those scholars who have found that being smart still has some cultural stigma in some African American communities as "acting white" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Harrison, 2002).

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATION RESEARCH, PRACTICE, AND POLICY

The following is a list of topical areas where the academy and higher education is in need of more *education research*:

- Analyze public discourse (e.g., comments to articles and YouTube videos along with interactive media posts) related to the Chris and Cliff Paul State Farm ad campaign to better understand perceptions and misperceptions related to the identity of Black males.
- Examine the process and politics of recruiting Black male student-athletes to college and university campuses; for example, how do we counter stereotypical media messages to make sure academic and athletics administrators are "culturally competent" so these administrators can effectively mentor and assist young Black men?

- Analyze transfer dynamics of student-athletes at community colleges and four-year institutions to track challenges and opportunities with respect to the process and realities of changing schools and athletics programs.
- Investigate diversity and inclusion issues related to how coaches communicate with Black males and how Black males communicate with coaches, and develop practical strategies and programs to increase quality and impact of coach and student-athlete communication.
- Determine best practices for Black males on scholarship to matriculate, graduate, and utilize their lifelong skill set in athletics for occupational and vocational endeavors.
- Highlight student-athletes' favorite classes and those faculty the student-athletes connect with in terms of purposeful engagement (Kuh, 2001).

With respect to *education practice*:

- Facilitate faculty and student-athlete interaction where academic success, not athletic success, is the primary benchmark.
- Market and brand academic accomplishments of student-athletes; for example, National Football League Player Engagement has collaborated with the not-for-profit organization Scholar Baller® to launch the Scholar-Baller of the Month Award, which recognizes one or two football student-athletes each month who are excelling academically.
- Teach students about theoretical frameworks related to identity and representations of individuals, including Black male student-athletes.

In terms of *education policy*:

- Every collegiate athletics program should develop a "split-screen" image of each student-athlete to represent academic and athletics passions and accomplishments because these identities are not "mutually exclusive" (Hall, 1997, p. 238).
- Black males should be informed of pioneering Black men that participated in their sport at the same college or university at which they are matriculating.
- There should be educational incentives for those teams that finish in the top 25 academically in terms of graduate school or internships related to professional development.

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