This study examined how ethnic minorities negotiate between ethnic and national identities and respond to ads that intend to appeal to consumers through patriotism. Specifically, this study proposed that activating ethnic minorities’ national identity through a prime would affect their evaluation of ads with a patriotic theme. Further, this effect among ethnic minorities would be different from that among the majority. Findings from this study suggest that (1) Caucasian Americans (the majority group) responded more favorably to ads with a patriotic theme than did Asian Americans (ethnic minorities); (2) both Caucasian and Asian Americans became more positive in their ad evaluations when their American national identity was made momentarily salient through a national identity prime; and (3) the effect of national identity activation on evaluation of ads was greater among Asian Americans than among Caucasian Americans.

The ethnic makeup of American society is changing rapidly. It is estimated that ethnic populations will reach 54% by 2050, with non-Hispanic whites composing only 46% of the population (U.S. Census 2010). While members of ethnic minorities consider themselves part of the American mosaic, many still desire to maintain their own language, norms, and values. In this multicultural context, ethnic identity is the social base camp from which they become involved in American culture (Tharp 2001). Researchers have long suggested that immigrants often maintain bicultural identities (Reed et al. 2012; Tsai and Li 2012; Ng and Lai 2010; Chattaraman, Lennon, and Rudd 2010; Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005; Hong et al. 2000; Oswald 1999; Penaloza 1994). Identities of many ethnic minorities in the United States thus are simultaneously rooted in multiple contexts with dual cultural identities functioning in parallel (Chattaraman 2006; Chattaraman et al. 2009). Ethnic minority groups in this study refer to broad groupings of people on the basis of both race and culture of origin (Phinney 1996), which include groups with non-European origin, primarily African Americans, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans in the United States. Therefore, ethnic minority groups in this study can be distinguished from the dominant non-Hispanic white majority. Members of ethnic minority groups often strive to blend ethnic identity with their commitment to the United States as the host country in the form of national identity. An important issue, then, is how these individuals who have internalized more than one culture negotiate different cultural orientations. When the two cultural identities are disconnected within an individual, he or she may be particularly sensitive to issues specific to the two cultural orientations (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005). However, the impact of the negotiation between ethnic and national identities among ethnic minorities in the United States has yet to be fully examined.

An individual generally possesses multiple social identities, and different identities are salient at different points in time. A particular social identity, such as national identity, may have little or no impact on consumer response, unless that identity is activated (Reed 2002). Literature on social identity–based consumption has demonstrated that social/situational contexts and stimulus cues might act as “triggers” for identity salience and “prime” subsequent social identity–congruent attitudes and behaviors. Thus, ethnic consumers may engage in “day-to-day border crossings between home and host culture” (Oswald 1999, p. 307) and switch cultural codes based on
situated demands or contextual cues in the environment. As ethnic minorities continuously face situations where ethnic or national identity is called out, the momentarily salient identity may play an important role in their purchase decision making.

A number of studies have examined the effects of momentary salience of ethnic identity on subsequent judgment and decision making (Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed 2002). While previous research has shown the effect of activating ethnic identity, research has been limited on how the activation of national identity affects ethnic consumers’ attitudinal response. Given the post-9/11 climate and ensuing economic challenges, many advertisers in the United States have turned to messages with patriotic appeals to engage consumers (Stearns, Borna, and Oakenfull 2003; Kinnick 2003; McMellon and Long 2006; Tsai 2010). Ads using symbols such as the Statue of Liberty, the American flag, patriotic colors, and phrases such as “God bless America” and “United we stand” have frequently appeared in the media. Chrysler’s “Imported from Detroit” ad campaigns, for example, set out to stir up Americans’ patriotic emotions by emphasizing the collective nature of America’s past greatness and, by implication, future progress. Together, those ads aim to drive home the impression of a company’s commitment to the nation (Kinnick 2003). They are a unique type of ad that relies on nation- or culture-based symbols and narratives to persuade. How ethnic minority consumers respond to such ad messages may depend greatly on how they negotiate between their ethnic and national identities and the impact of identity activation could be prominent. Given these, the purpose of this study is to shed light on (1) how ethnic minority consumers negotiate between their ethnic and national identities and respond to ads with a patriotic theme and (2) if and how the influence of an activated national identity among ethnic minority consumers is different from that among the majority consumers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemporary social science theorists have repeatedly demonstrated that the notion of the self and its constituent multiple identities are crucial for understanding an individual’s attitudes and behavior (Jussim, Ashmore, and Wilder 2001; Holland 1997; Thoits and Virshup 1997). Individuals may share a common in-group membership on one dimension but belong to a different category on another dimension (Miller, Brewer, and Arbuckle 2009). Most people are members of many social and cultural groups and therefore differentiated along many social dimensions, including ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. Each of these divisions provides a basis for shared group membership that is an important source of social identity.

Identity Complexity

Roccas and Brewer (2002) suggested that multiple social identities can be represented along a continuum of complexity, reflecting the degree to which different identities are differentiated and integrated in an individual’s cognitive representation of his or her group memberships. When the complexity is low, an individual’s in-group is the intersection of all of his or her group identities, meaning memberships to different identity groups are integrated. In contrast, the complexity is high when an individual considers each of his or her group memberships unique, and the combined representation is the sum of all of those group identities. Social identity complexity therefore influences an individual’s in-group and/or out-group attitudes and behavior (Roccas and Brewer 2002). As an individual’s identity structure becomes more complex, the importance of any one social identity for satisfying his or her need for belonging is likely reduced (Brewer 1991; Brewer and Pierce 2005), which in turn lessens the motivational basis for in-group bias. Therefore, individuals with low complexity may feel stronger attachment to their in-groups and exhibit higher in-group favoritism than individuals with high complexity.

Most ethnic immigrants in the United States need to work on negotiating between their ethnic identity and national identity with the host country. Their national group membership (residency or citizenship) and ethnic group membership represent distinct cultures with overlapping but nonconvergent social groups. This could make their identity structure complex. Ads using nation-based appeals, such as patriotic themes, may therefore require more effort from ethnic consumers who need to rearrange their multiple cultural identities.

Although the divergence between different cultural identities is more characteristic of recent ethnic immigrants (Gil, Vega, and Dimas 1994; Tsai, Ying, and Lee 2000), it is also common among individuals with many years of exposure to the culture of his or her host nation, as well as American-born ethnic minorities (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005; Kibria 2000; Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997; Vivero and Jenkins 1999). Among the various ethnic minority groups in the United States, Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial group (Pew Research Center 2012). Asians recently surpassed Hispanics as the largest group of new immigrants to the United States from 2000 to 2010 (Pew Research Center 2012). A report from Pew Research Center (2012) stated that 43% of Asian Americans described themselves most often using their ancestral country of origin, 22% described themselves as Asian American, and 28% described themselves as American. The report also suggested that Asian Americans were less likely than Hispanics to see themselves as typical Americans (39% versus 47%). Rather, they saw themselves as different from typical Americans (53%). These statistics indicate that many Asian Americans are still working to reconcile their multiple cultural group identities. This is not only because cultures and traditions of Asian Americans are distinct from that of Americans but also because they have a relatively short immigrant history (Pew Research Center 2012). This study focuses on Asian Americans as an example of ethnic minorities with high identity complexity as they are more likely to
identify with their ethnic culture and less likely to see themselves as typical Americans than members of other ethnic minority groups.

When there is incompatibility between ethnic and national identities, as is the case of many Asian Americans, a strong identification with one culture can result in a weaker sense of the other identity or even in distancing away from the other. Social dominance theory (Sinclair, Sidanius, and Levin 1998) suggests that contemporary societies can be described as “group-based social hierarchies” where “a small number of dominant social groups enjoy a disproportionate amount of social value” in terms of economic power and status. Meanwhile, a number of “subordinate groups” may “endure a disproportionate amount of negative social value” (Sinclair, Sidanius, and Levin 1998, p. 742). Although the United States has always been a multicultural society, its cultural practices have resulted in ethnicity being used as one of the main bases of social identity and privileges. Because of this, members of the dominant group (i.e., Caucasian Americans) may feel greater attachment to the nation than members of ethnic minority groups (Sidanius et al. 1997). In this respect, the theory suggests that, as identification with ethnic culture increases, individuals are less able to strongly identify with the host nation’s culture. That is, attachment to the nation is significantly greater among members of the majority group with relatively low identity complexity than among members of the ethnic minority groups with high identity complexity (Sinclair, Sidanius, and Levin 1998; Sidanius et al. 2004; Sidanius et al. 1997; Roccas and Brewer, 2002). Findings from Bush’s (2004) research are also consistent with social dominance theory, showing that Caucasian Americans considered being “American” as similar to being “white.” As part of the dominant culture, Caucasian Americans would see themselves as completely aligned with the American national identity. On the other hand, findings on members of ethnic minority groups were far more diverse, ranging from biculturality to total separation from either their American identity or their ethnic identity (Rodriguez, Schwartz, and Whitbourne 2010), which could weaken national identity.

**Patriotic Consumption as an Expression of National Identity**

National identity means that individuals routinely identify themselves as belonging to a nation and are prepared to honor their obligations arising from national identity (Carvalho and Luna 2005). One’s sense of national identity may present itself as a mere expression of attachment, love, or loyalty to one’s nation, an expression of superiority to other nations, or protective behavior toward one’s nation. When national identity is strong, people are highly committed to supporting their country’s economy and welfare (Verlegh 2007). A strong national identity might result in consumers having favorable evaluations of ads that pair brands with national symbols or rhetoric. Those individuals may be willing to choose domestic over foreign brands and even to buy more expensive domestic brands if, by doing so, they could help bolster the country’s economy.

Various national affairs in the United States, such as 9/11, the war against terror, and the 2008 financial crisis have prompted advertisers to incorporate patriotism into their messages in hopes of evoking positive attitudinal and behavioral responses from consumers. Companies hope that patriotic advertising appeals will stimulate consumers’ sense of responsibility to help their country through their purchases (Tsai 2010). Consumers with strong national identity might exhibit a positive evaluation of those ads and associated brands as an expression of their patriotic sentiment.

In line with this theoretical explanation, national identity and the associated attachment to the nation should be stronger among Caucasian Americans (low identity complexity) than among Asian Americans (high identity complexity). Specifically, this should be reflected in their respective response to ads using a patriotic theme. Thus, we propose our first hypothesis:

**H1:** Caucasian American consumers’ evaluations of ads using a patriotic theme in terms of (a) attitudes toward the ads (Aad), (b) attitudes toward the brands (Ab), and (c) purchase intention (PI) will be more favorable than those of Asian American consumers.

**Activation of National Identity and Evaluation of Ads With a Patriotic Theme**

Because people generally have many identities, the notion of identity salience takes on particular importance. Social identity salience refers to the activation or “switching on” of an identity-related conceptual structure in an individual’s self-concept (Reed 2002). Without knowing how and when which identity becomes salient, it is difficult to predict the impact of identity cues on persuasion (Reed 2004). When activated, the individual is likely to be affected by identity salience in “a state characterized by heightened sensitivity to identity-relevant stimuli” (Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed 2002, p. 1086). A number of studies have found that when a particular social identity is made momentarily salient, that identity affects subsequent perception, behavior, and performance (e.g., Stayman and Deshpande 1989; Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed 2002; Giles and Johnson 1987; Hogg 1992; Stryker and Serpe 1982; Turner et al. 1987; Reed 2004; Xu et al. 2004). Some scholars, for example, have found that ethnic minority group members who were exposed to an ethnic prime such as actors of the same ethnicity or the use of ethnic language demonstrated increased ethnic identity salience. This in turn significantly influenced culture-specific behaviors, such as an increase in the consumption of ethnic food and entertainment (Xu et al. 2004) and favorable
evaluations of ethnically targeted ads and featured brands (Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Reed 2004).

Past research suggests that the ethnic composition of a consumer’s immediate social situation (Stayman and Deshpande 1989; Wooten 1995; Grier and Deshpande 2001) may also trigger the momentary salience of a cultural identity in the consumer. This may lead to attitudes and behaviors consistent with that identity (Stryker and Serpe 1982; Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed 2002). For example, while shopping at a store with a predominantly mainstream consumer base, a Hispanic consumer may experience greater temporary access to his or her Hispanic identity. Particularly, within the consumption context, a product or stimulus, such as an ethnic entertainment CD or multilingual store signage, may lead the consumer to self-categorize based on his or her Hispanic identity (Chattaraman 2006).

In addition, a variety of contextual and stimulus cues can increase identity salience (Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Hong et al. 2000; Reed 2002). While examining the effect of anAsian ethnic prime on Asian and Caucasian consumers’ response to the targeted ad, Forehand and Deshpande (2001) found that Asian Americans exposed to the ethnic prime (“for Asian hair”) increased their evaluation of the Asian-targeted ad, while the prime did not have a significant effect on Caucasian Americans’ responses to the targeted ad. They argued that because advertisers have more control over contextual cues than they do situational factors, contextual primes may be more feasible for them to consider.

Contextual cues can also be found in media content and act as an identity prime. Research has found that TV programs or news reports exert an important influence on viewers’ evaluation of embedded ads and the products being advertised (Burton and Lichtenstein 1988; Coulter 1998; Kamins, Marks, and Skinner 1991; Murry, Lastovicka, and Singh 1992; Yi 1990). Further, media content plays an important role in the activation of national identity (Entman 1991; Rivenburgh 2000). For instance, media may help reinforce one’s national identity via broadcasts of issues directly related to the nation, such as internal conflicts and external threats. When people’s national identity is threatened (high salience), they are motivated to engage in actions to offset the threat (actions consistent with the identity), thus bringing the self-concept back to a more positive state. Media content may also perpetuate national symbols, rhetoric, and rituals. Carvalho and Luna’s (2005) study provided empirical evidence of the influence of media content on activating national identity and subsequent attitudinal responses, showing that priming participants with the news report of a national tragedy made their national identity salient, which in turn led to favorable responses to ads containing national identity cues.

Given this line of discussion, this study proposes that exposure to a national identity prime through media content will activate an individual’s national identity by temporarily altering the hierarchical order of his or her cultural identities. Specifically, this study expects that priming individuals with stories associated with a national identity will make their national identity momentarily salient. Further, the increased salience of national identity will lead to favorable evaluations of ads using a patriotic theme in their attitudes toward the ad (Aad), attitudes toward the brand (Ab), and purchase intention (PI). The following hypotheses are therefore proposed:

**H2:** Caucasian Americans in a national identity (NI)–primed condition will show more favorable evaluations of ads with a patriotic theme in terms of (a) Aad, (b) Ab, and (c) PI than those in a non-primed condition.

**H3:** Asian Americans in an NI-primed condition will show more favorable evaluations of ads with a patriotic theme in terms of (a) Aad, (b) Ab, and (c) PI than those in a nonprimed condition.

As discussed earlier, most ethnic minorities continuously negotiate and move between dual cultural identities. The two identities may represent different, and sometimes conflicting, sets of norms and values. For this reason, many ethnic minorities have reported that their ethnic and national cultures take turns in guiding their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton 1993; Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997). This is important because it suggests that (1) the two cultures are not necessarily blended and (2) absorbing a second culture does not always involve replacing the original culture with the new one (Hong et al., 2000). Oswald (1999) argued that ethnic minorities’ cultural identities are unstable constructs that necessitate the process of “culture swapping” or “context shifting.” This process takes place through activating one or the other cultural identity by making it temporarily salient. Hong and colleagues (2000) made a similar case by introducing the concept of “frame switching” among bicultural individuals—those who have internalized two cultures to the extent that both cultures are alive inside of them. For many bicultural individuals, both cultures take turns in guiding their cognition and behavior (LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton 1993; Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997). The more accessible a construct is, the more likely it is to come to the fore in the individual’s mind and guide interpretation. Hong and colleagues (2000) further argued that priming individuals with images of cultural symbols from one culture elevates the accessibility of the constructs that network comprises. They found that Chinese Americans primed with American icons made more attributions to the individuals over the groups, a characteristically Western internal attribution style. Chinese Americans primed with Chinese icons, however, made more attributions to the groups over the individuals, a characteristically East Asian external attribution style. Their results suggest that cultural primes activate cultural frame switching and make that culture’s constructs more accessible and the associated cultural identity more salient.
This study therefore proposes that because ethnic minority consumers shift between ethnic and national identities in responding to stimulus cues, the effectiveness of patriotic ad messages is likely to depend on which cultural identity is activated and salient at the given moment. Specifically, priming ethnic minorities with stories about crucial national events will momentarily help them switch on their national identity, which will lead to an increase in their evaluations of ads using a patriotic theme. This study further suggests that the impact of national identity salience on ethnic minorities should be different from that on the majority. While ethnic minorities’ dual cultural identity is a complex, unstable construct that requires “cultural frame switching,” members in the majority group do not need to do so. Thus, switching on national identity might have a greater impact for ethnic minority than for majority consumers. That is, the degree of increase in ad evaluation among ethnic minorities will likely be greater than that among the majority. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4**: The difference between ad evaluations in terms of $A_{ad}$, $A_{b}$, and $P_{I}$ toward ads with a patriotic theme in the NI-primed condition and those in the nonprimed condition will be greater among Asian Americans than among Caucasian Americans.

**METHOD**

**Overview of Experimental Design**

To test the proposed hypotheses, an experimental study using a 2 (Ethnicity: Caucasian Americans versus Asian Americans) × 2 (NI prime: primed versus nonprimed) × 2 (themes in ads: with a patriotic theme versus without a patriotic theme) mixed factorial design was carried out online. This design consisted of two between-subjects factors (ethnicity and NI prime) and one within-subjects factor (patriotic themes in ads). Research participants were either primed or not primed with national identity. In ad manipulation, participants were exposed to one of two conditions: (1) Brand A with a patriotic theme and Brand B without a patriotic theme or (2) Brand B with a patriotic theme and Brand A without a patriotic theme.

**Study Participants**

A total of 453 undergraduate students enrolled in a major Southwestern university in the United States were recruited to participate in the online experiment. Because this study focused on examining how national identity salience influences consumer response to ads with a patriotic theme, only those data obtained from American citizens were used; data from 51 international students and noncitizens were excluded. In addition, 14 participants were screened out due to patterned or unreliable responses. As a result, data from a total of 388 subjects were used in analyses. Of these, 202 were Caucasian American and 186 were Asian American. Caucasian American participants consisted of 105 female (52.2%) and 97 male (47.8%) students, with an average age of 22 years. Asian American participants consisted of 100 female (54%) and 86 male (46%) students, with an average age of 23 years. With respect to the country of origin, 33.3% of the Asian American participants were Chinese American, 29.7% were Korean American, 23.3% were Taiwanese American, 10.1% were Vietnamese American, and 3.6% were Thai American. The generational status for the Asian American participants included 50.8% second-generation immigrants, 37.6% third-generation immigrants, 9.5% fourth-generation immigrants, and 2.1% of fifth generation or higher.

**Pretest 1: National Identity Prime**

The first pretest was conducted to determine whether the news article created as a NI prime activated participants’ national identity and made it momentarily salient. Two news articles, one for an NI-primed condition and the other for a nonprimed condition, were developed. The article developed for the NI prime discussed recent economic decline in the United States, reporting that the United States has been losing global leadership. For the nonprimed condition, the article reported continuous global economic downturn and factors that have affected the long-term slowdown. For the pretest, 30 Caucasian Americans and 22 Asian Americans were recruited. Each participant was randomly assigned to either a NI-primed feature article or a nonprimed feature article. After reading the article, participants were asked to describe themselves using McGuire and colleagues’ (1978) open-ended measure. For both groups, the probability of participants spontaneously reporting their American identity in the NI-primed condition was compared to that of the nonprimed condition. Results indicated that participants given the NI-primed article showed a greater increase in national identity salience than those reading the nonprimed article. Specifically, results from a binary logistic regression showed that participants who were exposed to the NI prime (63.6%) were more likely to self-report their national identity (e.g., “I am American,” “I was born in the U.S.,” “I am a U.S. citizen”) than nonprimed participants (6.7%). In the logistic regression, the parameter estimate for this NI-prime effect was 3.199 (SE = .856, $\chi^2$ (1, $N = 52$) = 20.656, $p < .001$).

**Pretest 2: Ad Tagline and Symbol Selection**

The goal of the second pretest was to select ad tags and a symbol for the patriotic theme manipulation. Five phrases for an automobile brand and five phrases for a beer brand were developed as taglines. In addition, a set of symbols representing the United States was chosen to help select the most appropriate symbol for ad manipulations. Different groups of 39 Caucasian Americans and 30 Asian Americans were recruited for this test. Each participant was exposed to two sets of
taglines (one for an automobile brand and one for a beer brand) and a set of national symbols. After that, participants were asked to rate how patriotic each phrase and symbol was on a 7-point scale anchored by Not patriotic at all (1 = 1) and Very patriotic (7 = 7). It was found that the tagline perceived as most patriotic for an automobile brand was “Our Country, Our Car” (M = 5.46), followed by “America, the Best,” “Pride of America!,” “America Drives the Future!,” and “Driving for Our Country.” For the beer brand, “Our Pride, Our Beer” (M = 5.35) showed the highest mean score, followed by “Love For Our Country,” “Keep America United!,” “Cheers, America!,” and “Let’s Be Real Americans!” Among the national symbols provided, the national flag (M = 6.51) was perceived as most patriotic, followed by the bald eagle, the Statue of Liberty, Uncle Sam, and the White House. Therefore, “Our Country, Our Car” and “Our Pride, Our Beer” were selected as ad taglines for the automobile brand and the beer brand, respectively. The national flag was selected as the patriotic symbol for ad manipulations for the main experiment.

Pretest 3: Ad Manipulations
The purpose of the third pretest was to see if ad manipulations created using the taglines and a symbol selected from the second pretest were perceived as patriotic. A fictitious automobile brand and a beer brand were generated for ad manipulations. Those two product types were selected because they have been frequently and consistently paired with patriotic appeals during the past decade. For each brand, two different versions of an ad were created, one with the patriotic theme and one without the patriotic theme. Another group of 15 Caucasian Americans and 15 Asian Americans was recruited for the third pretest. Participants rated each of the four ads on a 7-point scale anchored with Not patriotic at all (1 = 1) and Very patriotic (7 = 7). In addition, they were asked to identify the country of origin of the brand advertised. A paired-samples t test was conducted to compare the mean ratings of ads. For the automobile brand, participants perceived the ad with the patriotic theme significantly more patriotic than the ad not using the patriotic theme (M_{Patriotic} = 5.77, M_{Nonpatriotic} = 3.27, t(29) = 5.414, p < .001). Furthermore, 90% of participants thought that the automobile brand featured in the ad with the patriotic theme was made in the United States, while only 43.7% thought the brand featured in the ad without the patriotic theme was made in the United States. Similarly, for the beer brand, participants perceived the ad using the patriotic theme significantly more patriotic than the one without (M_{Patriotic} = 6.03, M_{Nonpatriotic} = 3.30, t(29) = 6.376, p < .001). Regarding the country of origin of the brand, 93.3% of participants thought that the beer brand in the ad with the patriotic theme was made in the United States, while only 40% thought so for the version without the patriotic theme. Because the patriotic version of ads for both automobile and beer brands were perceived as significantly more patriotic than the nonpatriotic versions, the four ads were used in the main experiment.

In the main study, fictitious brand names (i.e., TZ-R for the automobile brand and Kheers for the beer brand) were created to avoid the influence of preexisting brand inferences. Using the two fictitious brands, counterbalance conditions were achieved by reversing the two versions of the ad (with and without the patriotic theme) for each brand. This way, we were able to determine whether the participants responded favorably or unfavorably to the ads because of the patriotic theme manipulation.

Measures
To assess the influence of the identity prime on momentary national identity salience, the spontaneous self-description method developed by McGuire and colleagues (1978) was used. The specific wording of this open-ended measure asked participants: “Please tell us about yourself in your own words. Please take about a minute to do so.” The probability that a participant spontaneously reported his or her national identity as American in this self-description was used as the critical measure of identity salience (McGuire et al. 1978).

To measure ad evaluation, participants completed items on Aad, Ab, and PI. Aad (α = .95) was measured by using six 7-point semantic differential scales that included Bad/Good, Unattractive/Attractive, Unpleasant/Pleasant, Convincing/Unconvincing, Believable/Unbelievable, and Not at all interested/Very interested (MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch 1986). To assess Ab (α = .96), five 7-point semantic differential scales were used and anchored by Bad/Good, Unsatisfactory/Satisfactory, Unfavorable/Favorable, Dislike/Like, and Inferior/Superior (Batra and Stephens 1994). Finally, PI (α = .89) was measured by four 7-point scales, including the potential for “trying,” “buying,” “seeking out,” and how likely the respondent would patronize the advertised product (Baker and Churchill 1977).

RESULTS
Evaluations of Ads With Patriotic Themes: Caucasian Americans Versus Asian Americans
Hypothesis 1 proposed that Caucasian Americans’ responses to ads with a patriotic theme would be more favorable than those of Asian Americans. To test this hypothesis, independent-samples t tests were conducted with composite scores of Aad, Ab, and PI as dependent variables. The results show that Caucasian Americans’ Aad was significantly more favorable than that of Asian Americans (M_{Caucasians} = 4.03, M_{Asians} = 3.32, t(206) = 3.765, p < .001). Similarly, Caucasian Americans’ Ab was significantly more favorable than that of Asian Americans (M_{Caucasians} = 4.06, M_{Asians} = 3.48, t(206) = 3.467, p = .001). Further, the PI among Caucasian Americans was significantly higher than that among Asian Americans (M_{Caucasians} = 3.46, M_{Asians} = 3.46, t(206) = 3.467, p < .001).
$M_{\text{Asians}} = 2.88, t (206) = 2.588, p = .010$). These results indicate that Caucasian Americans were more receptive to ads with a patriotic theme and the advertised brands than were Asian Americans, thus supporting hypothesis 1 (see Table 1).

To check whether these results were due to the manipulation, additional independent-samples $t$ tests were conducted with Ad, Ab, and PI scores for ads without a patriotic theme. The results did not show any significant differences between Caucasian and Asian Americans for any dependent measures. Specifically, Caucasian Americans’ Aad ($M_{\text{Caucasians}} = 4.12, M_{\text{Asians}} = 3.93, t (197) = .863, p = .389$), Ab ($M_{\text{Caucasians}} = 4.14, M_{\text{Asians}} = 4.56, t (197) = -1.358, p = .176$), and PI ($M_{\text{Caucasians}} = 3.27, M_{\text{Asians}} = 3.69, t (197) = -1.532, p = .127$) were not significantly different from those of Asian American participants. Because the only difference between the two ad conditions are the existence of the patriotic theme, these results confirm that, due to the ad manipulation, Caucasian Americans responded to ads with a patriotic theme more favorably than did Asian Americans.

### The Influence of NI Salience on Evaluations of Ads With Patriotic Themes

Hypothesis 2 proposed that Caucasian Americans in the NI-primed condition would evaluate ads featuring a patriotic theme more favorably than those in the NI-nonprimed condition. To test this hypothesis, a series of independent-samples $t$ tests were conducted. As expected, the results indicated that Caucasian Americans who were exposed to the NI prime showed significantly more favorable responses to the ads with a patriotic theme than those who were not exposed to the NI prime in terms of Aad ($M_{\text{NI Primed}} = 4.58, M_{\text{NI Nonprimed}} = 4.03, t (200) = 3.145, p = .002$), Ab ($M_{\text{NI Primed}} = 4.85, M_{\text{NI Nonprimed}} = 4.06, t (200) = 4.863, p < .001$), and PI ($M_{\text{NI Primed}} = 3.97, M_{\text{NI Nonprimed}} = 3.46, t (200) = 2.489, p = .014$). These results demonstrate that activation of Caucasian Americans’ national identity has a positive effect on increasing their evaluation of ads using the patriotic theme, therefore supporting hypothesis 2 (see Table 1).

Similarly, Asian Americans who were exposed to the NI prime showed significantly more favorable Aad ($M_{\text{NI Primed}} = 5.03, M_{\text{NI Nonprimed}} = 3.32, t (184) = 9.426, p < .001$), Ab ($M_{\text{NI Primed}} = 5.08, M_{\text{NI Nonprimed}} = 3.46, t (184) = 9.388, p < .001$), and PI ($M_{\text{NI Primed}} = 4.16, M_{\text{NI Nonprimed}} = 2.88, t (184) = 6.334, p < .001$) than those in the NI-nonprimed condition, thus supporting hypothesis 3 (see Table 1). Overall, these results demonstrate that the activation of participants’ national identity has a positive effect on increasing their evaluation of ads with a patriotic theme, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.

### Table 1

Results of Independent Samples $t$ Tests on Evaluation of Ads With a Patriotic Theme

<table>
<thead>
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<th>DVs</th>
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<th>t</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>NI Nonprimed</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>NI Primed</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>.794</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>4.863</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>NI Nonprimed</td>
<td>4.06</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PI</td>
<td>NI Primed</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.489</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>NI Nonprimed</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>H3. Asian Americans: NI-Primed versus NI-Nonprimed Condition</td>
<td>Aad</td>
<td>NI Primed</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>1.707</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>9.426</td>
</tr>
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<td>NI Nonprimed</td>
<td>3.32</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>NI Primed</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>1.617</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>9.388</td>
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<td>NI Nonprimed</td>
<td>3.46</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PI</td>
<td>NI Primed</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.285</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>6.334</td>
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<td>NI Nonprimed</td>
<td>2.88</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Indicates significance at $p < .05$; **indicates significance at $p < .01$. 

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND ADS WITH A PATRIOTIC THEME
Subsequent analyses were conducted to test if these results were due to ad manipulation. A series of paired-sample t tests were conducted with scores of Aad, Ab, and PI for ads without a patriotic theme. For both Caucasian and Asian Americans, evaluations of ads without a patriotic theme in the NI-primed condition were not significantly different from those in the NI-nonprimed condition. Specifically, for Caucasian Americans, results showed that mean values for Aad (MNI Primed = 4.09, MNI Nonprimed = 4.12, t (200) = .183, p = .855), Ab (MNI Primed = 4.29, MNI Nonprimed = 4.14, t (200) = .794, p = .428), and PI (MNI Primed = 3.58, MNI Nonprimed = 3.27, t (200) = 1.532, p = .127) in the NI-primed condition were not significantly different from those in the NI-nonprimed condition. A similar pattern was observed for Asian Americans: Aad (MNI Primed = 3.85, MNI Nonprimed = 3.93, t (184) = -.238, p = .812), Ab (MNI Primed = 4.27, MNI Nonprimed = 4.46, t (184) = -.577, p = .565), and PI (MNI Primed = 3.43, MNI Nonprimed = 3.69, t (184) = -.727, p = .469). Based on these results, it was confirmed that participants exposed to the NI prime evaluated the ads using a patriotic theme favorably due to the ad manipulation.

In addition, as supplemental analyses, a series of paired-sample t tests were conducted to see if, under the NI-prime condition, Caucasian and Asian Americans actually responded more favorably to the ads with a patriotic theme than those without. As expected, the results showed that when their national identity was salient, Caucasian Americans’ responses to ads with a patriotic theme were significantly more favorable than to those ads without such a theme in terms of Aad (M PatrioticAds = 4.58, M NonpatrioticAds = 4.09, t (91) = 2.983, p = .004), Ab (M PatrioticAds = 4.85, M NonpatrioticAds = 4.29, t (91) = 2.712, p = .008), and PI (M PatrioticAds = 3.97, M NonpatrioticAds = 3.58, t (91) = 2.139, p = .035). On the contrary, no significant mean differences were found on Aad (M PatrioticAds = 4.03, M NonpatrioticAds = 4.12, t (109) = -.575, p = .566), Ab (M PatrioticAds = 4.06, M NonpatrioticAds = 4.14, t (109) = -.553, p = .581), and PI (M PatrioticAds = 3.46, M NonpatrioticAds = 3.27, t (109) = 1.035, p = .303) when subjects were not primed (see Table 2). These results support the notion that activating Caucasian Americans’ national identity through an NI prime has a significant, positive effect on increasing their evaluation of ads using a patriotic theme.

Similarly, when national identity was salient, Asian Americans’ evaluations of ads with a patriotic theme were significantly more favorable than to those ads without the theme in terms of Aad (M PatrioticAds = 5.03, M NonpatrioticAds = 3.85, t (96) = 4.330, p < .001), Ab (M PatrioticAds = 5.08, M NonpatrioticAds = 4.27, t (96) = 3.234, p = .002), and PI (M PatrioticAds = 4.16, M NonpatrioticAds = 3.43, t (96) = 2.738, p = .008). Interestingly, however, opposite results were found among Asian Americans who were not primed (see Table 2). Specifically, when their national identity was not activated, Asian Americans were significantly more favorable to ads without a patriotic theme.

### Table 2
Results of Paired Samples t Tests on Evaluation of Ads in NI Primed versus Nonprimed Condition: With versus Without a Patriotic Theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DVs</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Caucasian Americans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI-Primed Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aad Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2.983</td>
<td>.004**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
<td>.563</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2.712</td>
<td>.008**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
<td>.390</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2.139</td>
<td>.035*</td>
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<tr>
<td>NI-Nonprimed Condition</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aad Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
<td>-.08780</td>
<td>1.61511</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>-.575</td>
<td>.566</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ab Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
<td>-.08214</td>
<td>1.57103</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>-.553</td>
<td>.581</td>
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<td>PI Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
<td>.19420</td>
<td>1.98522</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>1.035</td>
<td>.303</td>
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<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI-Primed Condition</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aad Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
<td>1.182</td>
<td>1.988</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4.330</td>
<td>.000**</td>
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<td>Ab Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
<td>.808</td>
<td>1.818</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3.234</td>
<td>.002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
<td>.731</td>
<td>1.943</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>2.738</td>
<td>.008**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI-Nonprimed Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aad Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
<td>-.60057</td>
<td>1.94313</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>-.2354</td>
<td>.022**</td>
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<td>Ab Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
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<td>2.15129</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>-.3528</td>
<td>.001**</td>
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<td>PI Patriotic Ads - Nonpatriotic Ads</td>
<td>-.81466</td>
<td>2.20772</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>-.2810</td>
<td>.007**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Indicates significance at p < .05; **indicates significance at p < .01.
The Interaction Effects of National Identity Salience With Ethnicity on Evaluations of Ads With Patriotic Themes

Hypothesis 4 postulated that the evaluation of ads with a patriotic theme between the NI-primed condition and the non-primed condition would be greater among Asian Americans than among Caucasian Americans. To test this hypothesis, a series of analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted, one for each dependent variable. As predicted, the results reveal a significant interaction between NI salience and ethnicity in predicting participants’ evaluations of ads using a patriotic theme. While NI salience had an effect on increasing the evaluation of ads using a patriotic theme for both Caucasian and Asian Americans, such effect was significantly stronger for Asian Americans than for Caucasian Americans. Specifically, a significant interaction effect was found, indicating that when NI was primed the degree of increase in Aad for ads with a patriotic theme was significantly greater among Asian Americans ($M_{NI \text{ Primed}} = 5.03$ versus $M_{NI \text{ Nonprimed}} = 3.32$) than among Caucasian Americans ($M_{NI \text{ Primed}} = 4.58$ versus $M_{NI \text{ Nonprimed}} = 4.03$), $F(1, 388) = 18.106, p < .001$ (see Figure 1). Similarly, the increase in Ab scores was significantly greater for Asian Americans ($M_{NI \text{ Primed}} = 5.08$ versus $M_{NI \text{ Nonprimed}} = 3.46$) than for Caucasian Americans ($M_{NI \text{ Primed}} = 4.85$ versus $M_{NI \text{ Nonprimed}} = 4.06$), $F(1, 388) = 10.349, p = .001$ (see Figure 2). Finally, the degree of increase in PI was significantly greater among Asian Americans ($M_{NI \text{ Primed}} = 4.16$ versus $M_{NI \text{ Nonprimed}} = 2.88$) than among Caucasian Americans ($M_{NI \text{ Primed}} = 3.97$ versus $M_{NI \text{ Nonprimed}} = 3.46$), $F(1, 388) = 5.922, p = .016$ (see Figure 3). Therefore, hypothesis 4 was supported.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the concept of social identity salience, this study proposed that consumers’ national identity can become momentarily salient through a prime, and that this increased national identity salience would influence their responses to ads with a patriotic theme. Three pretests and one main experiment were carried out to test the proposed research hypotheses. Results showed that when the American identity was made salient, ad evaluation was significantly increased among both Caucasian and Asian Americans. These results confirm that a person’s national identity can be activated through a prime. Further, consistent with theoretical postulations from past research, the heightened salience of national identity led consumers to react more positively to ads with a patriotic theme and the advertised brands. These findings offer important implications for marketers and advertisers when using patriotic appeals in marketing communication. As discussed, individuals cope with external threats by adopting group-based strategies that increase in-group identification. For example, national crises, such as threats to national security, tragedies, or economic depression, make individuals’ national identity...
More important, this study found that when the American national identity became salient, Asian Americans showed a greater increase in their ad evaluation than did Caucasian Americans. This result can be explained by the concept of "culture switching" (Oswald 1999) or "frame switching" (Hong et al. 2000) and social identity complexity (Roccas and Brewer 2002). While Caucasian Americans' national identity is relatively stable, Asian Americans' dual cultural identity is a complex construct that necessitates "cultural frame switching." That is, Asian Americans momentarily shifted their cultural identity to the United States (i.e., "I am American") in response to an NI prime, and that activation of their American identity resulted in a significant increase in their evaluation of ads containing patriotic messages. While the effect of national identity activation was also found among Caucasian Americans, the degree of increase in their ad evaluation was not as great as that of Asian Americans. This difference could be due to the complexity of cultural identities. Since Asian Americans need to move between ethnic and national identities, switching on one's national identity might have a greater impact for Asian Americans than for Caucasian Americans. Overall, this study provides empirical evidence to suggest that patriotic ad appeals can be more effective when consumers are primed with the appropriate identity and that the impact of this identity may be greater for ethnic minorities.

Many researchers have called attention to understanding how ethnic minorities switch between cultural identities and make alternating choices in response to cultural cues (e.g., Stayman and Deshpande 1989; Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Bolton and Reed 2004; Reed 2004). While most of past research has focused on the effect of salient ethnic identity, this study tried to uncover how ethnic minorities momentarily "switch on" the national identity and its subsequent impact. This study adds to previous research by examining how the activation of national identity influences ethnic minorities' evaluations of ads using a patriotic theme. In addition, by investigating how this impact could be different between ethnic minorities and members of the majority, this study helps illuminate the need to understand identity structure complexity and its implications for consumer response.

Findings from this study further suggest that research is needed to uncover how complex identity structures, developed through various social contexts, affect consumer response to persuasive messages. Kleine and Baker (2004), for example, argued that attachment to specific social groups, geographic locations, brands, and experiences can affect the formation of an individual’s self-identity. It would therefore be valuable to examine how consumers negotiate complex identities and respond to marketing communication efforts.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research provides a starting point for understanding the role of national identity in patriotic consumption behavior. As such, the findings discussed here should be considered with future research in mind.

Several limitations in this study provide opportunities for future research. First, participants of this study were drawn from college students. Although the goal of the study was to understand the psychological process, a much larger and more diverse sample should be employed to confirm the observations made here. Further, while this study focused on Asian Americans, it is important that future research examines other ethnic minority groups to provide a comprehensive understanding of the boundary conditions and variations of the theoretical insights presented here. Next, while discussing the influence of national identity activation on Asian Americans’ response to ads intended to appeal to their patriotism, the issue of whether such an effect will occur homogeneously within a single ethnic group or whether individual differences within the group will interact with the temporarily activated national identity should be considered. That is, individual difference variables, such as the strength of ethnic identification and consumer acculturation, may affect the activation of national identity and consequent response to patriotic ad appeals. In future research, such individual difference variables should be taken into consideration. In this study, a negative news story was used as the national identity prime. Future studies should also
examine cases in which positive media content, such as a story about national success, would activate national identity and influence subsequent consumer response. Finally, this study considered only two product types. Patriotic themes, however, have been used for a variety of product categories. The effectiveness of patriotic ad appeals may vary depending on product characteristics such as high versus low involvement, utilitarian versus hedonic, masculine versus feminine, and functional versus emotional. Therefore, it would be valuable to understand if and how consumers respond differently to ads with a patriotic theme across product categories.

In summary, the present study offers important implications for theoretical advancement and practical guidance regarding consumer response to ads using a patriotic theme. Findings from this research provide evidence that national identity can be primed and made momentarily salient, and that this increased national identity salience may lead consumers to respond favorably to ads containing patriotic messages. Further, such effects are greater for ethnic minority consumers due to the complex nature of their cultural identities. For advertisers considering employing patriotic ad appeals, this study offers insights to conditions under which the effectiveness might vary.

**REFERENCES**


