

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

“Because I’m Blasian”: Tiger Woods, Scandal, and Protecting the Blasian Brand

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This article deconstructs the rhetoric around Tiger Woods after his extramarital affairs became public. Woods had been able to use his mixed-race identity to market himself broadly though the scandal effectively removed any postracial claims afforded by his multiraciality. His self-identification as mixed-race Black and Asian to a mistress brought Blasians under scrutiny, resulting in moves to protect his commodifiability. Woods offers an interesting case study of the way Blasians, and by extension non-White racially mixed people, are discussed in media. This article splits the coverage of Woods into 3 categories of racialization—pathological, comical, and recuperative. The multiple ways in which Blackness and Asianness were deployed offer an extended glimpse into the way Blasians trouble U.S. constructions of race.

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The purpose of this statement is to explain my heritage for the benefit of members of the media who may be seeing me play for the first time. It is the final and only comment I will make regarding the issue. . . . The media has portrayed me as African-American, sometimes, Asian. In fact, I am both. Yes, I am the product of two great cultures, one African-American and the other Asian. On my father’s side, I am African-American. On my mother’s side, I am Thai. Truthfully, I feel very fortunate, and equally proud, to be both African-American and Asian. (Rosaforte, 1997, p. 181)

Before the 1995 U.S. Open, Tiger Woods (1995) gave that statement to the sports media. Most ignored is Woods’s assertion that he is Blasian—both Black and Asian (Callahan, 2010; Kern, 1995). In the nearly 20 years since that statement,

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Tiger Woods's racial identity has come full circle, and he is again reasserting his Blasian identity. Research on Tiger Woods provides a timeline of his racial trajectory throughout his career. This article continues that timeline by examining the coverage of Woods postscandal and charts its impact on Woods's racial trajectory. Woods offers an interesting analysis because much has been written about him prescandal, which makes it possible to follow the shifting logics of race that continue to be mapped onto his body. Woods's image has been crafted to be broadly appealing. He has been racialized throughout his career as Black,¹ then multiracial,^{2,3} and finally as Blasian. His multiraciality has been leveraged to sell everything from golf to Nike products to management consultants. I argue in this article that Woods did once enjoy the illusory postracial benefits of multiraciality, but his affairs made it impossible to distance him from both Blackness via the hypersexuality of Black masculinity, and Asianness through his bumbling dealings with women. The multiple ways in which Blackness and Asianness were used to make sense of Woods simultaneously reifies and resists hegemonic racial constructions. Woods's self-identification as Blasian, revealed as the scandal was unfolding, brought Blasians under scrutiny, which resulted in moves to recuperate Woods's personal brand by strategically using the Blasian brand.

On 25 November 2009, *The National Enquirer* broke the story about Tiger Woods's extramarital affairs. Not until reports of his car crash on 27 November did the original *Enquirer* story gain any traction. That same day Woods released a statement acknowledging he was in a minor accident. I begin my analysis here of Woods's apology and the narratives emerging from a variety of media sources to address the discovery and disclosure of his affairs. It is impossible to look only at the multiple discourses deployed against Woods without also looking at the defensive strategies undertaken by Team Tiger⁴ as a response to the criticism.

Since the scandal erupted there has been some research on the news coverage and the efficacy of Woods's apology. Sanderson notes the frames used to understand his actions differed between traditional media, which framed them as a tragic flaw, versus social media, which framed them as "a manifestation of humanness, and evidence of true moral character" (2010, p. 444). Kozman challenges and extends Sanderson's conclusion in her study, which found people were not responding so much to the "humanness" Woods exhibited, but were instead engaged in a "moral decoupling" as a way to support his performance despite his moral failings (2013, p. 228). Andrews, King, and Leonard (2011) claim that Woods escaped mostly unscathed from the usual raced discourses used against athletes of color behaving badly. They note the "Public reaction and media coverage almost universally avoided engaging blackness as it has been so often deployed around the transgressions of black athletes" (p. 250). My analysis shows just the opposite occurred, and the reaction and media coverage derived from not just his Blackness, but also his Asianness.

In order to map both Tiger Woods's apology and the multiple narratives emerging from the scandal, I analyzed a number of texts ranging from newspaper, trade, and magazine articles, entertainment blogs, popular sport websites, television shows, interviews, commercials, press conferences and releases, a divorce agreement,⁵ to

social media content.⁶ To collect more data, especially from Internet sources, I relied on “Tiger Woods” Google alerts.⁷ I organized the narratives into three thematic categories—pathological, comical, and recuperative. These narratives were the most common and revealed tensions around race in the United States. The examples highlighted in this article were chosen because they were most often the texts referenced by other media in the discussion of Woods, yet also representative of Woods’s racialization. These narratives delved into everything from sexuality, marriage, success, sport, infidelity, criminality, religion, and class in terms of race and mixed-race. In fact, each of the major narrative themes I examine in this article signify the availability of opportunities to discuss Woods’s racial identity in ways that declaring himself Cablinasian⁸ had not previously allowed.

Pathology and race

The most popular and widespread narrative of postscandal Tiger Woods was one of shame. The shame manifested itself as disappointment and/or disgust at being both duped and betrayed by Woods (Bissinger, 2010; Cowlshaw, 2009; DeFord, 2010; Houpt, 2009; Kay, 2011; Lupica, 2009a; Seal, 2010a). Media coverage noted the emergence of the “real” Tiger Woods, by pathologizing his hypersexuality as endemic to Blackness, and then linking Blackness to criminality. Woods went from being “superhuman” (Gibson, 2009) to just another athlete bidding “permanent farewell to invincibility” (Jenkins, 2010). *Vanity Fair* magazine took umbrage at the nonthreatening and noncontroversial image of Woods, when really the abnormal Woods was hidden away, waiting to come out (Bissinger, 2010). One *Vanity Fair* article (Seal, 2010b) offered accounts from some of Woods’s mistresses who relayed their hurt and betrayal at finding out Woods used them for sex. Other coverage offered similar takes on Woods’s transition from the “squeaky clean” (Feinstein, 2009), “clean-living citizen” (Houpt, 2009) golfer who was the “paragon of virtue” (Cowlshaw, 2009) to an athlete who had become ruined. Woods’s nomination for a Congressional Gold Medal “for promoting good sportsmanship and breaking down barriers in the sport” by Congressman Joe Baca was dropped “in light of the recent developments surrounding Tiger Woods and his family” (“Congressman,” 2009, para. 1). The scandal and subsequent revelation of Woods’s foibles was also too much for the “First church of Tiger Woods,” formed in 1996 to “celebrate the emergence of the true messiah,” which was dissolved as the scandal developed (“Church,” 2009, para. 1). Woods’s decline highlights how much postracial hope had been heaped on him, which serves partly as explanation for why this narrative was so intense and abundant as the scandal unfolded.

A dominant mode of representing Blackness is through its conflation with criminality. For example, *Vanity Fair* used an old photo of Woods shirtless, wearing a skullcap, lifting weights, and unsmiling for the cover. Meant to address the blackening of Woods reputation, the cover did double duty by also “blackening” Woods vis-à-vis a setting reminiscent of prison. The cover marked a shift in the coverage of Woods

as not just a cheater, but also as potentially criminal by tapping into a narrative of Blackness as dangerous. The *Vanity Fair* articles, like much of the coverage, also talked about Woods's relationship with retired basketball players Michael Jordan, known for his gambling/womanizing problems, and Charles Barkley, who both did not believe athletes should be role models and received a DUI, which he attributed to his quest to receive oral sex (Daulerio, 2008). Jordan and Barkley are already framed within the familiar hypersexualized, hyperaggressive Black athlete narrative, and they became signposts for Woods's degeneration (Bissinger, 2010; Dahlberg, 2009; Deford, 2010; Jackson, 2006; Kawakami, 2009; Rohde, 2010; Seal, 2010b). In discussing Woods's loss of multiple endorsements,⁹ members of the news media noted the scandal was "different from an NFL or NBA player going bad" (Marlow, 2009, para 2) because golf featured mostly White players who rarely dominated news cycles with scandals. Since the coverage of Woods prescandal framed him as a "nonthreatening" and "non-controversial" athlete (Bissinger, 2010) and made him a foil for dominant narratives of Black athletes, the swiftness with which he was compared to other Black athletes postscandal was remarkable. This coverage would often declare his career was not dead by comparing him to other Black athletes whose personal failings had also been made public (Lazarus, 2011; Lupica, 2009a, 2009b). The sympathetic strand in this narrative thread tried to reframe the scandal by asking the public to put his behavior in perspective when compared to other Black athletes. By comparing his affairs to other Black athlete behaviors, this particular narrative utilized positive and negative rhetoric simultaneously to highlight Woods's Blackness.

There were the understandable comparisons between Woods and basketball player Kobe Bryant who had also cheated on his wife, with some advising Woods to call Bryant in order "to get the dirt off him with his wife" (Lelinwalla, Abramson, & Ebenezer, 2009). However, the coverage glossed over that Bryant had been accused of raping the woman, bringing his affair into criminal, rather than simply moral territory. Woods had not been accused of any abuse against his mistresses nor were there any allegations of rape or assault. Yet by connecting Woods to Bryant the coverage criminalized his sexuality by conflating sexual immorality with criminality. When Bissinger (2010) explained the ramifications of Woods's accident by comparing it to "one taken by another sports celebrity on the San Diego Freeway, followed by a convoy of Los Angeles police cars, in 1994," he placed Woods within the hegemonic narrative of Black athletes by linking Woods's scandalous behavior to O. J. Simpson's double murder case. Despite Woods's actions not being actual crimes in the way Bryant and Simpson's actions allegedly were, he was nevertheless linked to them. Together the references to these cases were of a type of narrative, constituting a frame that represents men constructed as Black in relation to criminality, regardless of criminality, and thus racializing all three cases in similar ways.

In addition to the *number* of women Woods slept with, much of the press coverage discussed the *types* of women and sex Woods chose for his affairs. These women were waitresses, cocktail servers, nightclub hostesses, porn stars, alleged escorts, and strippers. At one golf tournament in which Woods was to play, dueling airplanes circled

the course with banners that read: “We miss you Tiger! Déjà vu Showgirls,” and “We miss you too Tiger! Dreamgirls” (Kroichick, 2010). A sports website even cataloged and scored the women involved with Woods, ranking them from “believability” to “hotness” (Brinson, 2009). That Woods met some of these women gambling in Las Vegas, and some allegedly via escort services, bolstered the pathology narrative. By consorting with women deemed, within dominant discourse, as crass and lower-class, Woods fulfilled stereotypical notions of Black male sexuality and its appetite for White women. It also linked his Blackness to lower-class tastes and identity. Additionally, articles like the series in *Vanity Fair* noted Woods was “very rough,” “tugged [his mistress’s] hair and spanked her butt,” and had “a voracious appetite for sex” (Seal, 2010a). These statements “evoked the age-old specter of the black menace to society by emphasizing how this ‘Tiger’s’ animal desires drove him to brutal, compulsive behavior” (Apostolidis, 2011, p. 185).

Tiger Woods’s media coverage did not include much praise, but the moments in which he garnered praise almost always revolved around his sexual practices. The majority of the public reactions and coverage that praised Woods, praised him for having a large penis, and for having sex with a large number of women. Maino, a rapper, created a song he titled “Tiger Woods,” which he claimed was more than an homage to the golfer, it was an anthem “to all men who deal with a lot of women” (Feeney, 2010). As his mistresses came forward, some similar themes arose from their interviews, especially around how Woods was well-endowed (Bissinger, 2010; Fanelli, 2009; Seal, 2010a). Mindy Lawton, the Perkins waitress, praised Woods’s sexual prowess, noting, “he has a very strong sex drive and knows his way around the bedroom. On a scale of 10, I would give him 12” (Fanelli, 2009). She would later acknowledge in *Vanity Fair* that Woods had the biggest penis she had ever seen (Seal, 2010a). By connecting the hegemonic idea of Black men and large penises to both the amount and type of sex Woods engaged in, this narrative effectively positioned him within a discourse of hypersexualized Blackness.

The socioeconomic status of Woods’s mistresses was made even more apparent when contrasted with the coverage Elin Nordegren received. Nordegren, more than the wronged wife, became the embodiment of White femininity. By portraying the Swedish Nordegren as a wealthy, supportive, antifame-seeking, college-educated, beautiful blonde mother, the media signaled she was too good for Woods. In her only interview with *People* magazine, the reporter stated that before the divorce Nordegren’s “long, blonde hair began falling out,” but she good-naturedly laughed at the comedic portrayals of her that appeared during the height of the scandal (Armour, 2010; Westfall, 2010). By claiming Woods had subjected Nordegren to a “candy shop, open 24/7 and it’s certainly not the life for a spouse regardless of sex who takes marriage vows seriously,” continued the pathological depiction of Black male sexuality in general, and Woods’s sexuality specifically (Poole, 2009). When details of the divorce leaked, the feature covered most was not the \$750 million settlement for Nordegren, but the clause that kept Woods from visiting his children if he was in the company of women to whom he was not married or engaged (Walker & McMullen,

2010). Nordegren's representation as the ultimate wronged White woman victim of Woods's uncontrollable sexual appetite was completed with the contractual demonization of his errant sexuality. In linking Nordegren's behavior to her Whiteness, she could effectively serve as a cautionary tale for the perils of interracial relationships, especially when positioned against Woods's pseudocriminal Blackness.

Race relations and humor

The glee with which people could now skewer Woods, who had been above reproach, was almost palpable in the many jokes, jabs, parodies, one-liners, and puns delivered at Woods's expense. The Tiger Woods joke cycle revealed the underlying anxieties and tensions wrought by both his Blackness and Asianness. The jokes employed hegemonic notions of Black male hypersexuality and Asian male asexuality/femininity, which were almost all meant to recuperate White masculinity. The equipment and terminology of golf provided a number of puns to address Woods's extramarital affairs, mostly involving a play on wood/clubs and holes as metaphors for male and female genitals (Barry, 2009; Brown, 2010; Fallon, 2009; Leno, 2009; Letterman, 2009; O'Brien, 2009). For example: "Tiger's name should be changed to Tiger's wood," and "Is it true that Tiger is playing around? Yeah, he's doing 18 holes" (Brown, 2010, para. 18). There were countless jokes about Woods's "club," the length of his "iron," the shortening of holes to "hos" to stand in for the women, and sand traps and bogeys to characterize the caliber of the women.

One of the more popular responses to initial reports about the accident was to reference Woods's Asianness by connecting him to the stereotype of bad Asian drivers (Byhoff, 2009; Klemencic, 2009; Oldenburg, 2009; Shake, 2010; Wojdyla, 2009). The week following the accident three different comedians, George Lopez, Wanda Sykes, and Jo Koy, told the same joke about Woods: "Tiger Woods is half Black and half Asian. I guess the Black half bought the Cadillac, and the Asian half crashed it" (Lopez, 2009; Byhoff, 2009). This particular joke provided the audience a chance to laugh at Woods's Blackness as evidenced by his car of choice,¹⁰ and a chance to laugh at his Asianness, as evidenced by crashing his car. Comedian Paul Mooney continued the Asian thread when he joked, "that little White girl beat the Black out of him. That's why the Asian part of him crashed into that tree" (Shake, 2010). Mooney links Woods's Asianness to the absence of essentializing masculinity by noting "no self-respecting Black man would allow a woman to have her way with him" (Shake, 2010). *Saturday Night Live* drives (no pun intended) this point home in a sketch involving Keenan Thompson as Tiger Woods and Blake Lively as Elin Nordegren. The sketch plays on the idea that Nordegren has beaten Woods over his transgressions. This is made obvious when Woods's press conference shows him reading from an apology with "Help" and "She is so strong" written on the back of the papers (King, 2009). Both Mooney's joke and *SNL* allow for reading Woods as emasculated by Nordegren because his Asianness does not provide him with the proper amount of masculinity to avoid such an incident. A derivative telling of this narrative involves interchangeable White golfers

hiring Elin Nordegren to teach them how to beat Tiger Woods. This particular joke allows for the explicit recovery of White masculinity from both Black success in sport and Asian economic domination. The jokes about Woods's lack of skill with women had the same emasculating effect on the golfer. His use of text message as the preferred mode of communication with his mistresses was deemed to be another feminizing trait. For example, *GQ* magazine's website offered a "Very Tiger Xmas Gift Guide" for Woods, which included the Nokia Twist cellphone as a gift option because, "OMG! U txt as much as a teenage girl, Tiger :-). Get a Twist so u can txt faster, k? XOXO" (Sintumuang, 2009). Though *GQ* did not mention any racial characteristics in their gift-giving guide, they link Woods's behavior to teenage girls and is part of a familiar feminizing discursive strategy deployed against Asian men.

Jokes about Tiger Woods's sexual relationship with White women allowed for the most obvious means of addressing racial tensions. This particular joke thread enabled the discursive equivalent of putting Woods in his place. For example, Mooney, in an interview titled "Tiger Woods's Wake Up Call," states Woods "was running around saying he was cablincanasian (sic), he knows what he is now" (Shake, 2010). Mooney, despite his jokes in the same interview about Woods's Asianness, used the scandal to assert Woods's use of Cablinasian to distance himself from Blackness was unsuccessful as evidenced by how quickly media pointed out his Blackness. Mooney's interview is one of the many examples of the simultaneously contradictory ways Woods was discussed racially.

A number of jokes revolved around Woods's mistresses being White, or appearing to be White: "What is Tiger Woods's handicap? White women" (Brown, 2010). *SNL* had a sketch featuring a character named simply "Mistress 15." During the interview "Weekend Update" host Seth Meyers asks what she thought of the other women who had come forward, to which she replies, "well at first I thought they were just me in different outfits and hairs" (Kasen, 2009). The joke being that these women were interchangeable in their Whiteness, and that was the characteristic that mattered most to Woods. After Woods checked himself into a sex rehabilitation clinic, a software company released the game *BoneTown: Tiger Woods Affair Tour 10*. The game allows players to be like Woods by "sleeping with pornstars (sic) and cocktail waitresses, fighting with other golfers at a nightclub, or just partying and getting drunk" (Bans, 2010). In the aforementioned "Very Tiger Xmas Gift Guide," gifts ranged from a new Cadillac Escalade "with seating for up to seven Orlando waitresses," to Beyond Seven condoms because Woods gave "Wilt Chamberlin¹¹ (sic) a run for his money—they don't call you Tiger for nothing! We recommend these Japanese manufactured condoms. . . They're thin yet strong enough" (Sintumuang, 2009). Woods's hypersexuality was allowable, and even encouraged in this context, because he was not going for the most valuable White women, of which his ex-wife was an example. By making it obvious that the mistresses were not a respectable cadre of women, Woods could be eliminated as a threat to White masculinity.

In keeping with the idea that Asian masculinity is a joke, another strand of this narrative made Woods a sympathetic figure by portraying him as a hapless square,

incapable of attracting women sans fame and fortune. This theme would begin most often by mentioning how many times Nordegren turned down Woods for a date. Then follow-up with examples like the voicemail Woods left asking mistress Jamie Grubbs to change her outgoing message in case Nordegren called. This example was used to show how unskilled, and implicitly how Asian, Woods was when it came to women. Despite Woods's professional athlete status he was both a "rookie at having women" and naïve for thinking they would keep the relationships secret (Lelinwalla et al., 2009; Shake, 2010). Woods relied on his bumbling as a counter to charges of arrogance. The *New York Post* published texts between Woods and Grubbs where he tells her "having an asian (sic) mother and a military father you cannot and will not ever be full of yourself" (Staff, 2009). This narrative utilized Woods's nonmasculine behavior as evidence he should be pitied.

Recuperating the image

Benoit (1995) notes apologiae can "reduce, redress, or avoid damage to reputation" (p. vii). Initially Tiger Woods eschewed hiring a crisis management team and relied on Team Tiger to contain the fallout from his many affairs. The missteps in his apologia were blamed on the lack of people specifically trained to manage such a large crisis. Husselbee and Stein (2012) note Woods's apologia started off shakily enough to warrant an *antapologia*, which included strengthening the initial attack on Woods and responding in such a way to further weaken his apology. After his national press conference Woods hired former White House press secretary Ari Fleischer to help plan his return to golf (Montopoli, 2010) and respond to the antapologia. While Team Tiger's motivation was the maintenance of Woods's image in order to recoup and retain his endorsement deals, Woods's apologia also worked to protect his own personal Blasian brand identity. Though he had been able to mostly avoid talking about race, especially after the Cablinasian episode of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* (1997), he returned to his Blasian racial identity as the foundation of his apologia and as a response to media misidentification. He strategically deployed his mixed-race identity to counter the popular narratives being used to racialize him. Kruse (1981a, 1981b) notes apologiae can include a variety of mediums and methods. Using commercials, statements, a more fan friendly persona, a televised apology, a column in a national newsmagazine, sex addiction treatment, and sometimes purposeful silence, the success of Woods's apologia has been mixed based on public reaction and media coverage.

The narratives also act as a *kategoria*, or accusations, against Woods. In evaluating the merits of the accusations, the impossibility of demarcating between Tiger Woods, the golfer, and Tiger Woods, the brand, is made clear. Various publics used the scandal to lodge accusations against both Woods's "policy" and "character" (Ryan, 1982, p. 256). Knittel and Stango (2013) noted, "firms with substantial coinvestments in new products linked to the 'Tiger brand' suffered greater declines in value, presumably reflecting declines in the asset values or brand equity association with those products" (p. 14). In proffering a defense, Woods's apologia had to account for both his

actions, and his moral responsibility to the community. Hearit (1995) notes the corporate apologia is different from an individual's apologia, mostly because corporations become embroiled in a social legitimation crisis, which compels some sort of corrective action(s). Furthermore, corrective action was only the beginning for Woods's apologia. As a brand, Woods and Team Tiger also had to "demonstrate legitimacy [by praising] the values they are reputed to have transgressed" (Hearit, 1995, p. 11). This second part of the apologia, part of any corporation's image management strategy, demonstrates how crucial it was for Tiger Woods to situate his apologia within a broader image management campaign. He did not just have to defend, explain, and apologize for his transgressions while mitigating the damage to his moral character, he needed to also use his apologia in such a way that it would repair, or at least attempt to repair, his damaged reputation and restore his social legitimacy.

Tiger Woods's apologia began immediately following the accident. His curt statement acknowledging the accident and his refusal to meet with police regarding the incident (Toobin, 2009) were purposeful moves, made in an attempt to quash additional publicity. There was the feeling that Woods's "highly paid image-polishers and truth-benders, the omnipotent sports agency International Management Group, and the assorted lawyers and security gorillas who make up the rest of his coterie" might be able to keep the scandal from spreading (Cole, 2009). The strategy of silence backfired because his nondisclosure meant information was supplied from other sources. The public's reaction to Woods's silence became the impetus for the *kategoria* against him. Because Woods's image had been so carefully crafted, the image agents could not prevent his brand from taking a hit, though they predicted his image would be "tarnished only a bit" (Marlow, 2009).

At the core of the accusations against Woods were assertions that his behavior had violated his responsibility to the public. Underlying the pathological and comical narratives were contentions that he had violated the trust of his sponsors, the sport, his family, and most importantly, his fans. Woods's initial statement on 29 November 2009 was meant to address the violations by alluding to a "situation" that was "obviously embarrassing to my family and me" (Woods, 2009a). While he noted, "I'm human and I'm not perfect. I will certainly make sure this doesn't happen again," the statement failed to divert further attention from the "situation," and was thus another misstep in Woods's apologia. Though he had been labeled as "superhuman" and "robotic" before the scandal, humanizing his image did not keep information about his extramarital affairs from being released, and subsequently exploited. While Woods needed to relegitimize his brand, this strategy provided more fodder for attacks against his image.

The chorus of disapproval surrounding Woods's statement about his "situation" was followed with a new statement about his "transgressions" and the abandonment of his "values" (Woods, 2009b). This statement addressed the unveiling of yet another mistress, in addition to the criticism regarding his previous statement. His new statement differed from the previous statement in that his self-serving "situation" was replaced with "transgressions" in an effort to acknowledge he was accepting the blame.

He also offered an explanation of his actions by stating he had not been “true to [his] values” (Woods, 2009b). This statement allowed Woods to dissociate himself from his extramarital affairs, and present them as isolated acts that did not represent his true self. His image prescandal made him responsible to divergent constituencies, and as such he had a “limited amount of time to explain the events, or risk staining both his own brand and those of his sponsors” (Haupt, 2009). Woods’s own brand is an entity not entirely separate from the brands he endorsed, and while he lost some endorsements as the scandal deepened, the ineffectiveness of his apology did major damage to his personal brand. The deployment of his statements as press releases instead of press conferences, Nordegren’s refusal to speak on Woods’s behalf, and his unavailability for questioning from the police to reporters to Oprah Winfrey, seemed to aggravate the public’s anger. His statement, however, appeared to be enough for his fellow golfers on tour, who voted him as their PGA player of the year (“PGA,” 2009). Since the golfers seemed to be the only group moving past the scandal, Woods issued yet another statement. This time his statement announced he was taking “an indefinite break from professional golf” (Woods, 2009c). Still his critics charged that his behavior, and his responses to having that behavior discovered, continued to violate the public’s trust.

As each statement intensified the public scrutiny and pressure, the next tactic in his apology was entering a sexual rehabilitation clinic. Woods could no longer adopt a strategy of evasiveness, he had already admitted to the transgressions and women continued to come forward. However, by entering rehab, Woods showed he was taking corrective action. Sexual rehabilitation becomes an important part of his apology and works rhetorically because it demonstrates Woods has established measures of control to ensure it would not happen again.

Hearit, in his analysis of organizations and apology, notes corrective action is only the beginning of reestablishing legitimacy. The next step is demonstrating legitimacy “through a form of epideictic, value-oriented discourse in which they praise the very values they are reputed to have transgressed” (1995, p. 11). Thus, Woods apologized during a nationally televised press conference (Woods, 2010). He acknowledged he had cheated, and also admitted to transgressing the “boundaries” of his marriage, as well as the boundaries of the public’s trust. As a measure of sincerity intended to act as a reassurance, Woods spoke about checking himself into “in-patient therapy,” where he had been for the last 2 and a half months. To reassure his many constituencies that he had indeed changed, Woods called on his mother and their shared Buddhist faith for teaching him “to stop following every impulse and to learn restraint.” He ended his apology by asking for help from those “who believed in me” so they may one day believe in him again. Woods’s apology is part of a familiar ritual for celebrities and public figures who transgress social norms. Yet he managed to repair some of the damage done to his reputation by touching on the values—honesty, transparency, not sleeping with (multiple, White) women—he had been accused of violating. He also brought in religion, remorse, repentance, and transformation to continue his brand’s restoration process.

There were strategies in Tiger Woods's apology meant to establish his Blasian brand. His sex addiction situated him squarely within dominant discourses of Black masculinity, effectively depicting his sexuality as something to be feared. His apology addressed rehab and his continued therapy for sex addiction, allowing him to rhetorically allay fears of an out of control Black masculinity. Additionally, as he spoke before his carefully vetted audience of family, supporters, and Team Tiger members, the camera framed Woods against the backdrop of his mother's stoic face. The image of Woods and his mother as he spoke about her guidance and his return to Buddhism, worked as reminders about Woods's Asianness. Invoking Buddhism conferred to Woods an authentic Asianness, and with it possibly nonthreatening Asian masculinity and sexuality. Nishime (2013) notes "the redemptive power of an Asian cultural identity provides an antidote to the fleshy embodiment of Woods's racialization as an African American" (p. 60). As pundits explained Buddhism's benefits for both Woods and as a religious practice, Fox News's Brit Hume instead urged, "Tiger, turn to the Christian faith, and you can make a total recovery and be a great example to the world" (Hume, 2010). Hume claimed Woods's Buddhist faith did not offer the kind of "redemption and forgiveness offered by the Christian faith," as he tapped into centuries-old tradition of disciplining non-White bodies through religion. When O'Reilly offered Hume a chance to clarify, he explicitly linked Buddhism to Woods's Thai mother, "I mentioned the Buddhism only because his mother is a Buddhist and he has apparently said he was, I'm not sure how seriously he practices that" (O'Reilly, 2010). Deeming Buddhism as inferior to Christianity allowed Hume to marginalize both the influence of Kutilda Woods, and Tiger Woods's claim to an Asian identity.

Tiger Woods's apologia did not end with his public apology. As Woods prepared for the Masters Tournament, Nike released a commercial: a close shot of Woods on the golf course in black and white, while the voice of Earl Woods, his dead father, asked if "he had learned anything" (Nike, 2010). The commercial posed the question the public wanted answered: *Had he learned his lesson?* That question might have made sense if Woods had been racialized only as Black and thus could now recognize his place within U.S. racial hierarchy. However, the scandal had conferred onto Woods some multiracial visibility, as evidenced by the conflicting narratives and tensions analyzed in this article, and thus the commercial was nearly universally panned.

Conclusion

Woods was praised for acknowledging his transgressions and for attempting to be more fan-friendly rather than the unemotional "robot" he had long been labeled. For example, the focus upon his return was on how he "smiled and waved and acknowledged most of the applause that came his way. He was even spied signing autographs out on the range Saturday, something he never does" (Fidlin, 2010). Some fans felt Woods was "gracious" (Goodall, 2009), and greeted him with cheers and applause at his first tournament postscandal to "show appreciation for Tiger, an acknowledgement of his significance to golf and his potential significance beyond golf" (Group,

2010). Those same cheers greeted Woods when he played in his first postdivorce golf tournament in August 2010 and his fans were rewarded with his best golf since the scandal (Cochran, 2010). The cheering and ratings boost for the PGA when Woods played were proof that Woods's apology had resonated with the public.

When Jamie Grubbs wondered in a text "why I keep falling more and more for u (sic)," Woods replied, "because I'm blasian (sic)©" (Staff, 2009). While he was locating her romantic attraction to his mixed-race body, I claimed in this article the universal attraction to the spectacle of Woods was also because of his mixed-race body. The production of Woods's Blasian identity worked for the benefit of numerous and concurrent news stories, jokes about his masculinity and sexuality, and the shaming and (scant) praising of his behavior. Although there were very few narratives that addressed race explicitly, all were deployed in very specific ways to reveal the tensions around non-White racially mixed people. In other words, the reaction and coverage engaged not just his Blackness, but his Asianness as well. The restoration of the brand came via negotiated branding strategies that positioned his Blasian identity in an effort to win back trust. Woods's postscandal moment reveals some insights about multiracial identity and celebrity that can be applied to other groups. The lack of consistency across media on the coverage of Woods as his scandal played out should be taken as a sign of progress because it illuminates how quickly some were able to keep up with dynamic transformations in racialization, and forces others left behind to begin acknowledging the changes. The lack of consistency also recognizes that Blasians (and by extension other multiracials) are not inscribed with a singular, "right" meaning, despite the presence of hegemonic (or preferred) meanings.

Possibly the most important intervention this article makes is that it is possible to talk about multiracial people in a way that escapes the anti-Black, self-loathing, or celebratory themes of previous research on mixed-race, while offering a way of reconceptualizing race through its disruption of the hegemonic order of society. Also important is acknowledging there might not be a way to escape the ascription of race by media and society, but the conflict of ascription with personal choice opens up a realm of possibilities. Blasian identity challenges extant discursive identity models by recognizing the ways identities and subjectivities evolve, and shift, and potentially change. Furthermore, if prevalent notions of racial authenticity, or realness, can be overcome, then opportunities for building coalitions across the pluralities of subjectivities and identities grow exponentially. Lastly, by not privileging Blasian identity over both monoracial Black or Asian identities, examining the branding of Blasians allows for taking a truly antiracist research position. In other words, this article opens up the possibility of studying race and mixed-race in ways that do not sustain racial disparities.

Notes

- 1 See (Callahan, 2010; Cole & Andrews, 2001; Dorman, 1996; Ibrahim, 2009; Perez, 2005; Turner, 1997; Weisman, 2001; Yu, 1996) for how Woods had been framed as Black via

- Nike's branding strategy, proximity to his Black father, placement alongside other Black athletes, and the purposeful exclusion of any mentions of his Thai mother. There were also those who saw Woods as trying to distance himself from Blackness (Houck, 2006; Nordlinger, 2001; Pierce, 1997; Pitts, 1997)
- 2 For more on Woods as "America's multiracial son" and the commodification of his "postrace" body for broader audiences, see Cole and Andrews (2001), Cole (2002), Hall (2001), Kamiya (1997), Smith (1996), Starn (2011), Uchacz (1998), and White (1997).
 - 3 Billings (2003), Perez (2005), and Yu (2002, 2003) discuss Woods's Cablinasian identity in terms of U.S. military imperialism and the history of White sexualized violence.
 - 4 Team Tiger is Woods's inner circle—consisting of various sport and media agents, business associates, managers, attorneys, public relations specialists, close friends, and assistants.
 - 5 Without the prenuptial and postnuptial stipulations or any settlement details that were confidential and not available online.
 - 6 I conducted a Lexis-Nexis search for "Tiger Woods" from 27 November 2009 to 1 January 2011, filtering through major world publications then broadcast transcripts. With these results, I excluded transcripts that did not feature Tiger Woods in the title, were duplicates, or had fewer than 200 words. I also excluded metacommentary about Tiger Woods, using the original as a source. In total I read over 2,000 articles.
 - 7 The alert included all results, and was delivered to my e-mail inbox every day. From those results, I excluded anything that did not have Tiger Woods in its title duplicate news items, and blog posts. Videos were excluded if they were not about Tiger Woods explicitly. Included in the videos were commercials featuring Tiger Woods, his public apology, parodies of the commercials or the scandal, and comedy sketches about the cheating, Tiger himself, and/or the accident.
 - 8 Cablinasian = CAucasian, BLaack, INdian, ASIAn.
 - 9 Woods was dropped by a number of his sponsors, most notably Accenture, his presence was reduced in Gillette commercials, and he was removed from U.S.-specific marketing materials for Tag Heuer.
 - 10 The Cadillac Escalade has been linked in popular culture to an almost overwhelmingly number of Black athletes, rappers, and entertainers.
 - 11 Wilt Chamberlain (1991), a Black professional basketball player, claimed to have slept with over 20,000 women in his 1991 biography *A View From Above*.

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