

The Application of Biracial and Monoracial Asian American Stereotypes

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Abstract

Previous research suggests that the multiracial stereotype (across all multiracial groups) consists of the following characteristics: multiracial people are unusually good looking and they struggle to fit in (Skinner, Perry, & Gaither, 2019). This general multiracial struggle to fit in has been also described as “confused over their identity” and has been attributed as the reason for why they are judged as less trustworthy and less warm (Sanchez & Bonam, 2009) than their monoracial peers. Compared to biracial African American and Whites, Asian American and White biracial people are less accepted by their monoracial Asian group (Sanchez & Bonam, 2009; Chen, Kteily, & Ho, 2018). This biracial group is judged as less competent and less loyal than monoracial Asians and monoracial Asians worry that their biracial peers will “trade up” to their white identity when it’s advantageous. Our studies focus on whether people make stereotypical distinctions between biracial and monoracial Asian males. In this mixed subjects design, participants rate headshots of Asian monoracial and multiracial actors on a series of traits consistent with Asian and multiracial stereotypes. When participants are presented with pictures of Asian Americans that they are led to believe as identifying monoracial or multiracial, we predict the following: Participants will rate targets believed to be monoracial relatively higher on traits consistent with the Asian stereotype compared to targets believed to be biracial. Participants will also rate the monoracial targets relatively lower on traits consistent with the multiracial stereotype compared to targets believed to be multiracial. Participants are presented with 11 headshots (6 multiracial and 5 monoracial actors) then they are asked to provide their ratings.

Introduction

Though interest is growing, there has been little research on multiracial communities and the stereotypes that are formed about multiracial individuals. However, with the increase of multiracial individuals reporting their multiracial identities, the amount of research around these individuals has increased as well. When researchers have collected data on multiracial stereotypes, the most commonly accepted stereotype is that “mixed race individuals are physically attractive” (Sims 2012). Research by Johnson et al. (2010) has reviewed how those who are perceived as more attractive have gained advantages over time and how “physically attractive individuals receive higher offers for starting salary (Jackson, 1983) and receive higher performance evaluations (Drogosz & Levy, 1996).” However, these results do not suggest that all stereotypes about multiracial individuals are positive. While there is a general consensus that multiracial individuals are more physically attractive, people have begun to form new stereotypes specific to a person’s multiracial identity. Multiracial individuals are generally judged as less socially accepted (Chelsey & Wagner, 2013), less loyal to their group (Albujar, Sanchez, Gaither, 2017), and socially awkward (Remedios, Chasteen, & Oey, 2012) and less warm (Sanchez & Bonam, 2009) than their monoracial peers.

Compared to biracial African American and Whites, Asian American and White biracial people are less accepted by their monoracial Asian group (Sanchez & Bonam, 2009; Chen, Kteily, & Ho, 2018). This biracial group is judged as less competent than monoracial Asians and less loyal and monoracial Asians worry that their biracial peers will “trade up” to their white identity when it’s advantageous.

The purpose of this study is to focus on one group of monoracial and multiracial Asian individuals and determine if participants can make distinctions between monoracial and biracial targets, and whether these distinctions lead to participants rating the individual targets in more stereotypically consistent ways. Data were collected to conclude if people would judge the target individuals with premade Asian stereotypes (high competence, low warmth), or if they would use judgement consistent with multiracial stereotypes (high warmth, good social skills).

Based on previous research, we believed that participants would rate targets believed to be monoracial relatively higher on traits consistent with the Asian stereotype compared to targets believed to be multiracial (In this case, Asian stereotype traits are related to competence cluster, loyal and trustworthy, modest, and thoughtful).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis study 1:1-Participants will rate targets believed to be monoracial relatively higher on traits consistent with the Asian stereotype compared to targets believed to be multiracial (In this case, Asian stereotypical traits are related to competence cluster, loyal and trustworthy, modest, and thoughtful)

Hypothesis study 1:2- Participants will also rate the monoracial targets relatively lower on traits consistent with the multiracial stereotype compared to targets believed to be multiracial (Multiracial stereotype would higher on warm cluster and the pro-multiracial stereotype).

Method

Participants

The sample group was collected by sending a survey to students attending the University of San Francisco, and offering credit to those who completed it towards their General Psychology course. The sample size was comprised of 97 students ranging from freshman to seniors.

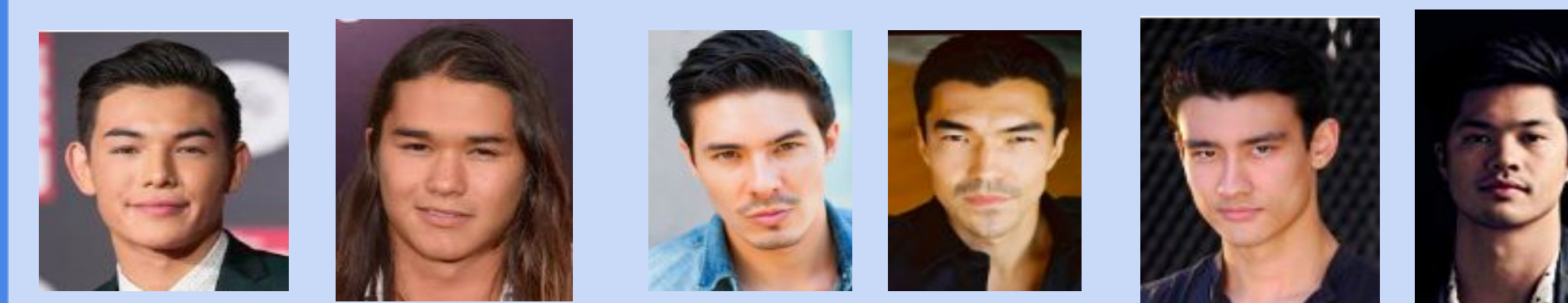
Participant Ethnicity		Participant Gender	
Asian/Pacific Islander	37	Male	30
Black/African-American	2	Female	66
Indian/Pakistani	4	Other	1
Latino/Latino-American	16	Total	97
White/Caucasian	22		
Middle Eastern	2		
Multiracial	14		
Total	97		

Design and Procedure

Participants were presented with 11 headshots (6 multiracial and 5 monoracial actors). Participants were asked to rate each headshot on a series of traits consistent with Asian and multiracial stereotypes, including four items assessing the pictured person’s ability to play varying roles in movies, including roles such as scientist, government agent, close family member, or a confused and unhappy character. The next part of the survey asked participants to indicate whether they believed each actor could play a character described as “White-American,” “Asian-American,” or “Multicultural/Biracial Asian American.” The last part of the survey asked participants to guess the ethnicity of each headshot, with the choices of White, Asian, Biracial (Asian/White), and not being able to tell. Items were rated in terms of agreement on a five point Likert Scale (1 - Not at All, 5- Extremely). We then used a mixed-model within-subjects design to analyze participants’ perception of targets’ character traits depending on their judgement of the targets’ multiracial or monoracial status.

Composite Traits	Survey Items
Warm	Friendly, Likeable, Trustworthy, Honest, Sincere
Competence	Competent, Intelligent, Skilled, Efficient, Assertive, Confident
Positive Multiracial Stereotypes	Good Looking, Relatable, Comfortable with Self, Comfortable with Others
Good Social Skills (Different traits from warmth)	Extraverted, Funny, Good Social Skills
Positive Asian Stereotypes	Modest, Thoughtful
Negative Multiracial Stereotypes	Low Loyalty, Low Trustworthiness

Multiracial Headshots



Monoracial Headshots



Results

On average, participants correctly categorized target pictures correctly as monoracial Asian or biracial Asian. Using a mixed effects model for repeated measures, ratings of all monoracial actors were compared to ratings of biracial actors. As predicted, monoracial actors are rated lower on warmth and traits related to positive multiracial stereotypes. They are rated more favorably on competence and negative traits related to negative multiracial stereotypes. There was no difference in ratings for positive monoracial Asian stereotypes. Overall, participants did rate biracial targets consistently according to the general multiracial stereotype.

Conclusion

Participants rated monoracial targets lower on pro-multiracial and anti-biracial stereotypes than their biracial counterparts. Monoracial targets were also rated higher in competence and lower in warmth than their counterparts, which supports wide-held stereotypes of monoracial Asian American individuals. The present study further supports beliefs that participants are able to differentiate between monoracial and biracial targets, and apply the accompanying stereotype to those targets.

While there were some disagreements between perceived ethnicities on a couple of the headshots, those with the most agreement will be used for Study 2.

The purpose of Study 2 is to examine hiring discrimination based upon perceptions of biracial or monoracial status. Participants will be asked to recommend the hiring of biracial or monoracial Asian actors for romantic movies. It is expected that multiracial actors will be more likely to be hired for romantic movies whereas monoracial actors will more likely be hired for movies containing more widely-accepted Asian stereotypes.

Our studies are part of a growing movement in understanding the experience of multiracial individuals.

Contact

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