

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 18, 2012 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

POSTER SESSION 1

Commons East, Easel 74

12:00 PM to 1:30 PM

Cultural Credentials: The Influence of Group Membership on Responses to Positive Stereotypes

Hua (Wenwen) Ni, Fifth Year,

Mentor: John Oliver Siy, Psychology

Mentor: Sapna Cheryan, Psychology

Asian Americans respond negatively to being the target of a positive stereotype (e.g., Asians are smart) even though these stereotypes are often attempts at praising their group (Siy & Cheryan, under review). The current work focuses on how responses to positive stereotypes vary depending on the race of the person stating the positive stereotype. We hypothesize that Asian Americans will respond more positively to other Asians who state positive stereotypes about their race than Whites who state positive stereotypes about Asians, because Asians are assumed to have "cultural credentials" about their own race. In this case, cultural credentials are defined as the perception that a person has sufficient knowledge about a group to enable them to make comments about that group that outsiders cannot. In this study, Asian American participants imagined a situation in which they were positively stereotyped by either a White classmate or an Asian classmate. Results showed that participants responded more positively to the positive stereotype when the stereotyper was Asian, compared to when the stereotyper was White. Positive responses to Asians who state positive stereotypes about their own race were explained by the belief that Asian stereotypers had stronger cultural credentials. This study shows that taking the time to establish cultural credentials may be a useful strategy for times when one desires to praise a group for their accomplishments.

POSTER SESSION 1

Commons East, Easel 76

12:00 PM to 1:30 PM

Underrepresentation of Women in Computer Science

Hyejin Maria (Hyejin) Jin, Junior, Psychology

Mentor: Allison Master, Psychology

Mentor: Sapna Cheryan, Psychology

Women have been steadily increasing their representation in many careers that have been traditionally male-dominated; however, women continue to be underrepresented in computer science. If women learn that their gender is underrepresented, that could lower their interest or deter them from joining because they believe they do not belong in this field. On the other hand, it could increase their interest if they feel they are wanted. This study examined whether learning about the underrepresentation of women in computer science would increase women's interest in this field. We predicted that women's interest would increase especially if they see it as an opportunity to stand out and be unique. Female students in the psychology subject pool (PSP) at the University of Washington voluntarily signed up to participate in the study. There were two conditions: in the control condition, participants were given an article that stated computer science had high demand and that less than 30% of job openings are filled by college graduates; in the underrepresentation condition, participants were given an article that stated computer science had high demand for women and that less than 30% of college degrees are earned by women. After participants read the article they answered questions about their interest in computer science. Results were statistically significant: women who were told that women are underrepresented in computer science showed more interest and belonging in the field than those who were not told. These results imply that an intervention to raise awareness of underrepresentation of women in computer science could help more females become interested and likely to join this field.

POSTER SESSION 1

Commons East, Easel 73

12:00 PM to 1:30 PM

Gaydar: Emotional Facial Expressions Modulate Snap Judgments of Men's Sexual Orientation

Wendy Wenxuan (Wendy) Liu, Junior, Psychology

Mentor: Sapna Cheryan, Psychology

Mentor: Joshua Tabak, Department of Psychology

'Gaydar' is the phenomenon by which people are able to determine a person's sexual orientation based on mere observation. Recent research has shown that people can judge sexual orientation with above-chance accuracy from facial photographs. The present research investigated if smiling is a cue that impacts judgments of men's sexual orientation. Smiling

is associated with femininity, and as gay men are generally stereotyped as feminine, we hypothesized that a man smiling would be rated as appearing more gay (vs. straight) than a man who was not smiling. We also predicted that because smiling, a femininity cue, may be less expected on more masculine faces, the impact of smiling will be greater in straight (vs. gay) men's faces. Participants judged the sexual orientation of a total of 64 gay and straight men's faces with smiles or neutral facial expressions (using a scale of 1=very gay to 7=very straight). As expected, men were judged as looking more gay when smiling (vs. neutral), and this effect was greater among straight (vs. gay) men's faces. The findings of this research suggest that subtle gender cues can be conveyed by emotional facial expressions and influence perceptions of sexual orientation.

POSTER SESSION 1

Commons East, Easel 72

12:00 PM to 1:30 PM

When Being Nurturing Means Being Bad at Math: Positive Stereotypes Lead Women to Underperform on a Math Test

Tong Jin (Daniel) Yu, Senior, Psychology, Sociology

Mentor: Sapna Cheryan, Psychology

Mentor: John Oliver Siy, Psychology

Women who are targets of a positive stereotype (i.e., women are nurturing) assume that the stereotyper also holds negative stereotypes about them (e.g., women are bad at math). The present research investigates whether being the target of a positive stereotype leads women to underperform on a math test because they fear confirming assumed negative perceptions of their group. In this study, female participants were randomly assigned to either the positive stereotype condition (i.e., "why women are generally more nurturing than men") or the no positive stereotype condition (i.e., "why some men and women are generally more nurturing than others"). Participants then proceeded to take a math test. Results showed that women in the positive stereotype condition underperformed on the math test compared to women in the no positive stereotype condition. This study suggests that praise in the form of a positive stereotype may be counterproductive, resulting in negative consequences for people who are targets of a positive stereotype. Moreover, targets of a positive stereotype may perceive negative stereotypes as being implicitly imposed onto them. Therefore, positive stereotypes may lead women to not only underperform on a math test but also accept associated negative perceptions of their group.

SESSION 2A

CULTURAL NARRATIVES

Session Moderator: Valerie Manusov, Communication

Mary Gates Hall 228

3:30 PM to 5:00 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Worth the Weight: Heavy Asian-Americans are Seen as More American

Caitlin Handron, Recent Graduate, Psychology, Italian

Undergraduate Research Conference Travel Awardee

Mentor: Sapna Cheryan, Psychology

Mentor: Jennifer Wang, Psychology

Despite an increasing US-born population, Asian-Americans are often regarded as perpetual foreigners and unrecognized as 'American.' The present research examines whether Asian-Americans that are heavier, a stereotype commonly associated with Americans, are perceived as more American than normal weight Asian-Americans. Sixty-eight students were randomly assigned to see a photo of one of three Asian-American women. The same three women were used in both conditions and photos were edited to reflect a change in weight (the weights estimated by participants differed on average by 46 pounds between conditions). Results showed that heavier Asian-Americans were rated as more likely to have been born in the US and rated as worse at math than normal weight Asian-Americans. This research suggests that weight may reduce the extent to which Asian-Americans are perceived as foreigners and increase acknowledgement of their American identity.