

Bui 1

Senior Project Proposal for PSY 499

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*Working Title*

An experimental Study on the Effects of Ethnicity and Gender on Social Perception and Impression Formation of Résumés

*Objective*

Social perception studies show that perceivers use stereotypes or categories to understand their social world (Franzoi & Herzog, 1988; Kunda & Thagard, 1996; Taylor & Fiske, 1978). The parallel-constraint-satisfaction theory (Kunda & Thagard, 1996) states that people use different stereotypes about ethnic minority groups as a way to organize their thoughts about members of these groups. These schemas, or mental frameworks, can influence impressions that are made of ethnic minorities by limiting impression formation. When certain schemas that are related to stereotypes are activated, perceivers will make biased judgments that are based on these stereotyped schemas. One example is Friedland, Crockett, & Laird's study (1973) on the negative ratings female targets received when they held positions that were stereotypically masculine. Raters formed impressions of these targets based on their schemas of women "in power". These studies inspired the current research project. Do people base their judgments of others based solely on stereotypes about gender and ethnicity, without much other information? This is an important question, since there are many instances, such as for job applications, answering personal ads, or finding a merchant in the phone directory, where all the information that is given is the person's name. Names often can be used to determine gender (feminine or masculine) and can also indicate ethnicity.

The three hypotheses in this study will attempt to address these questions. First, it is believed that perceivers will make negative judgments about targets' when the ethnicity of the target is not of the majority (White American vs. Asian). Secondly, perceivers will make negative judgments about male targets' when females have typically held the position, such as "secretary" or "nurse". Finally, perceivers will rate Asian male targets lowest than other targets overall because of the interaction of ethnicity and gender for the position of "secretary".

*Proposed Method*

Participants will be told to help in hiring a new staff member (secretary) for the Psychology Department. They will not be told that the résumés are fictitious until after the experiment. Four different résumé samples will be given in random order to participants. Each résumé will only vary on gender (male or female) and ethnicity (Non-Asian or Asian), with all other information held constant. Content of the résumés will be tested prior to the experiment for consistency by independent raters. Participants will be given all four résumés to rate using Likert-scale from 1 to 5, and will be judging : likeability, suitability for the position, level of professionalism, and likelihood of hiring the person.

*Proposed Data Analysis*

The dependent variables will be the ratings on the four scales: likeability, suitability for the position, level of professionalism, and likelihood of hiring the person. The independent variables are the gender (male or female) and ethnicity (Non-Asian or Asian). A 2 x 2 factorial repeated measures ANOVA will be performed.

*Ethical Considerations*

The proposed study involves mild deception because participants will not be aware that the experiment is being conducted, until they are debriefed following their ratings. This is due to the fact that prior knowledge may influence their ratings. The study will not put anyone at risk because target names and information are fictitious and participants' personal information will be held confidential and anonymous. Participants will sign a consent form following the experiment allowing the researcher to use his/her responses in the study.

Preliminary List of References

- Franzoi, S.L., & Herzog, M.E. (1988). Judging physical attractiveness: What body aspects do we use? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *13*(1), 19-33.
- Friedland, S.J., Crockett, W.HI, & Laird, J.D. (1973). The effects of role and sex on the perception of others. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *91*(2), 273-283.
- Kunda, Z., & Thagard, P. (1996). Forming impressions from stereotypes, traits, and behaviors, A parallel-constraint-satisfaction theory. *Psychological Review*, *103*(2), 284-308.
- Taylor, S.E., & Fiske, S.T. (1978). Salience, attention, and attribution: Top of the head phenomena. In L.Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol II, pp. 250-289). New York: Academic Press.