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Fluid racial presentation: Perceptions of contextual “passing” among biracial people

Analia F. Albuja^{a,*}, Diana T. Sanchez^a, Sarah E. Gaither^b^a Department of Psychology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, USA^b Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Duke University, Durham, NC, USA

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ABSTRACT

Existing monoracial identity frameworks fail to capture the experiences of biracial people, for whom racial identification may depend on the social context. Though biracial people can vary their racial identity, the social consequences of context-dependent racial self-presentation remain underexplored. Five studies examined how contextual racial presentation among biracial people is perceived by high status groups. White participants read vignettes describing a biracial person contextually presenting in an academic situation and evaluated the target's character and behavior. Asian/White or Black/White biracial students who contextually presented as monoracial (compared to biracial presentation) were evaluated more negatively because they were perceived as less trustworthy (Studies 1–5). The effect of White contextual presentation was mediated by endorsement of stereotypes that biracial people are confused about their racial identity (Studies 4–5). Responses were robust to the status of the monoracial identity (Studies 1–2) and intention to benefit (Study 5), but varied by the availability of choice (e.g., conditions of forced choice; Study 3). The results suggest contextually choosing an identity carries social repercussions because it can activate explicit negative stereotypes about biracial individuals.

1. Introduction

Biracial identity can be fluid. Although approximately 9 million people selected multiple racial identifications in the 2010 United States Census, many mixed-race adults do not identify as “biracial,” and approximately 30% report having changed their identification throughout their lives (Jones & Bullock, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2015). However, the existing psychological literature has largely applied monoracial frameworks to understand biracial people, thereby viewing biracial identity as fixed. Yet, biracial identity may vary situationally. For example, biracial people's identity choices can change ephemerally in response to a social situation or be influenced by long-term experiences such as family connections (Davenport, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2015). Thus, we propose the term *Contextual Racial Presentation* (CRP) which describes identity changes that are influenced by the immediate context. In this paper we define individuals who contextually present their racial identity as those who personally identify a certain way but regulate their public racial presentation according to the demands of the context or situation.

Referred to in other literatures as “passing”, CRP research suggests contextually presenting as another race is commonplace through history into the present and has been negatively received. For example,

racial minorities historically presented as White to derive contextual benefits through both identification and physical changes including surgical or skin lightening procedures (Daniel, 1992; Davis, 2003; Hall, 1995; Kennedy, 2003). Sometimes presenting as White involved actively denying another racial identity, as did *New York Times* writer Anatole Broyard, who concealed his Black ancestry to avoid being seen as simply a “Black writer” (Staples, 2003). Societal norms, rooted in historically essentialist conceptualizations that suggest race is determined by the genetics of one's parents (Prentice & Miller, 2007), typically prohibit CRP and consider it a misrepresentation of oneself (Kennedy, 2003; Sasson-Levy & Shoshana, 2013). However, given biracial people's full membership in their respective racial groups, a contextual presentation of their identity is not truly dishonest because biracial people often view themselves as full members of both groups. Thus, identifying with one identity in the moment (a common occurrence) is not necessarily considered a misrepresentation, at least within the multiracial community (Khanna & Johnson, 2010).

Though legal history indicates negative perceptions of CRP, no work to date has examined how modern-day CRP by biracial people is perceived by others. Therefore, the present research addressed (a) how biracial people who contextually present are perceived by others, and (b) whether the target or choice context influenced this effect. The

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: analia.albuja@rutgers.edu (A.F. Albuja).

present studies do not address whether contextual presentation is acceptable or not, but rather whether it is perceived as such by others. CRP is possible due to the flexibility of biracial identity, and perceptions of it may be influenced by norms of racial identification, existing stereotypes of biracial people, and the choice architecture of a given context. We explore these variable contexts in the sections that follow.

1.1. Evidence of CRP

Biracial people may contextually present because their membership in multiple racial groups grants them a choice in their identity (Sanchez, Shih, & Wilton, 2014; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). As a result, many biracial individuals experience a dynamic racial identity, changing their identification across time (Lou, Lalonde, & Wilson, 2011; Sanchez & Garcia, 2009; Sanchez, Shih, & Garcia, 2009; Wilton, Sanchez, & Garcia, 2013). For example, adolescents who once identified as multiracial were four times more likely to change their identity five years later than to maintain the same identity (Hitlin, Brown, & Elder, 2006). Multiracial identity can also be influenced by the immediate context. Adolescents fluctuated between a monoracial and multiracial identification when interviewed at home versus at school, suggesting that the social context can make one racial identity more salient (Harris & Sim, 2002). Similarly, Black/White biracial adults reported contextually presenting as Black when they were in mostly Black social situations to fit in or avoid stigmatization from African Americans (Khanna & Johnson, 2010).

Despite the fluidity of biracial people's identity, CRP may have specific consequences for the development of trust because it may be seen as a lack of self-disclosure. Trust, or holding positive expectations and confidence in another person's intentions and behaviors, is an important aspect of interpersonal relations as it promotes cooperation and reduces conflict (Tropp, Boatswain, Stout, Wright, & Pettigrew, 2006). Self-disclosure promotes more trusting relationships, while withholding information may hurt them (Aron, Melinat, Aron, Vallone, & Bator, 1997). Therefore, contextually selecting a single racial identity may signal that biracial people are hiding information about themselves which may arouse skepticism (John, Barasz, & Norton, 2016). Moreover, trust between outgroup members tends to be lower than between ingroup members, suggesting that perceptions of trust may be influenced by group identity (Kramer & Carnevale, 2008). Indeed, people who follow the social norms of a group are seen as more prototypical and are trusted more (van Knippenberg, 2011). Given the lack of self-disclosure and adherence to norms for a biracial person choosing only one identity, it is expected that biracial individuals who contextually racially present will be perceived as less trustworthy, and therefore be evaluated more negatively.

1.2. Stereotypes of biracial people

Because biracial people have multiple identities, they are often stereotyped as being confused, conflicted, and unsure of their own identity (Jackman, Wagner, & Johnson, 2001; Remedios, Chasteen, & Oey, 2012). Initial identity theorizing approached biracial identity from a problem perspective, focusing almost exclusively on biracial experiences of identity confusion and conflict (see McRoy & Freeman, 1986; Park, 1928). Though identity models have evolved to include more positive aspects of biracial identity (see Gaither, 2015; Shih & Sanchez, 2005), the perception of biracial people as conflicted about their identity persists. Indeed, some work suggests biracial people are expected to be less socially adept (Remedios et al., 2012) and are evaluated as less warm than their monoracial counterparts (Sanchez & Bonam, 2009). We posit that CRP may activate stereotypes about biracial people as conflicted and confused about their own identity, which may contribute to negative perceptions of biracial people who contextually present. Because those people are seen as vacillating between two identities, people who contextually present may be viewed

as having a fragmented, incoherent identity that would activate the confused stereotype. Therefore, we tested the hypothesis that a biracial person who contextually presents may activate an explicit "confused" biracial stereotype, with implications for trustworthiness and downstream evaluations. Given that little research exists on stereotypes of biracial people, the present study will contribute to our understanding of when the stereotype of biracial people as confused about their identity is activated.

1.3. Norms of racial identification

CRP may be penalized because biracial people who engage in it are perceived as breaking social norms and withholding information. Societal preferences for single categories create a norm of single, stable racial identification (Sanchez & Garcia, 2009). For example, widely endorsed essentialist beliefs about the biological underpinning of racial categories assume that people cannot be members of two racial groups or change their identity (Ho, Roberts, & Gelman, 2015). Essentialist views continue to be widely held in society and create expectations of how people should identify (Kung et al., 2018). Furthermore, the history and persistence of hypodescent in the U.S. may also influence perceptions of CRP. The one-drop rule of the Jim Crow era has become a heuristic wherein Black/White biracial people are automatically classified into the lower status group, regardless of other ancestry, phenotypic presentation, or personal identification (Chen & Ratliff, 2015; Hickman, 1997; Kahn, Ho, Sidanius, & Pratto, 2009; Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008; Sanchez, Good, & Chavez, 2010). Given the continued documentation of hypodescent, the present studies examined CRP as minority or White for Black/White and Asian/White biracial targets. Because presenting as White violates historical hypodescent and allows an individual to attain greater privilege, it may engender social penalties. However, presenting as Black or Asian complies with hypodescent. Therefore, we predicted that contextually selecting a White identity would be evaluated more negatively than contextually presenting as a low status group member, or not contextually presenting.

1.4. Choice context

Evaluations of CRP may depend on the availability of choices as a signal of intentionality. Biracial people are often unable to choose more than one identity on major demographic forms, such as Medicaid applications, many college applications, and until recently, the U.S. Census (Department of Education, 2008; Jones & Bullock, 2012). These contexts that restrict choices essentially force biracial people to pick only one of their identities. In contrast, contextually selecting only one identity in situations where one has the ability to select multiple racial identities signals volition. According to attribution theory, chosen behaviors are perceived to reflect people's true motivations and dispositions, while unchosen behaviors can be explained situationally (Jones, 1976). It follows that harmful behavior perceived to be intentional is viewed as more negative than accidental harmful behavior (Cushman, 2008). Similarly, contextually selecting one race within a multiple-choice context where a biracial person had the ability to select their full identity may be seen as more intentional and less trustworthy than doing so in a forced-choice scenario, where the choice architecture limited the person's ability to authentically identify (Sanchez, 2010). By altering the choice context of the scenarios, we tested the hypothesis that CRP would be evaluated more negatively when the biracial person was able to select multiple identities compared to when they were unable.

1.5. Overview of studies

Little is known about perceptions of CRP, yet research shows biracial individuals commonly engage in CRP (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003;

Khanna, 2010). The present studies test whether biracial targets who engage in CRP receive a social penalty and explore several mechanisms and possible boundary conditions. Specifically, we test whether the CRP penalty is moderated by the relative status (racial majority or minority status) of the selected monoracial identity (Studies 1 & 2), the availability of identity options for the target (Study 3), and target intentions to benefit (Study 5). Additionally, trust (Studies 1–5), and biracial stereotypes (Studies 4–5) are tested as mechanisms driving the proposed CRP penalty. All studies examined White perceivers because White individuals have greater racial privilege and greater control over maintaining the racial status quo (McIntosh, 1989). Studies 1 and 4 explored additional moderators such as essentialism and moral identity, which ultimately did not influence the CRP penalty. Explanations of these secondary hypotheses are discussed in the Online Supplemental Materials [OSM]. The OSM also reports initial experiments, ruling out of alternative models, and an additional experiment examining the role of incongruence between the contextual identity and the parents' racial background in perceptions of CRP, which were ultimately determined to be tangential to the aims of this paper. All measures, manipulations, and exclusions in the studies are disclosed.¹ For all studies, sample size was determined before any data analysis.

2. Study 1

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants and procedure

We recruited 238 White Amazon Mechanical Turk workers. Participants ($n = 2$) who incorrectly answered all three attention check questions or who selected multiple racial identifications ($n = 10$) were removed from the analysis, leaving a final sample of 226 participants (59% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 38.35$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.38$, $\text{Age}_{\text{range}} = 19\text{--}72$). A sensitivity power analysis suggests that this sample size provided 80% power to detect effect sizes of $\eta_p^2 = 0.06$ or greater. All participants read a filler vignette about a man's new diet and completed filler evaluations. Next, participants were randomly assigned to read a short blog post purportedly written by a biracial identified person who either contextually presented as White, contextually presented as Asian, or did not contextually present. Participants in the CRP as White condition read the following vignette (CRP as Asian text is in parentheses; see OSM for full vignettes used in the other conditions):

When I was in high school, I took my first psychology class and decided it was for me. I studied more about the field, and which universities were the best. Unsurprisingly, Harvard has one of the top undergraduate psychology programs in the country. I wanted to put together a great application, so I looked through the whole university website and read as much as I could. I found the incoming student demographics for the university and saw that most new students were Asian (about 65% of the incoming class). I wanted to make my application stand out from the rest, so I decided to only mark "White" on my application (I wanted to make my application as strong as possible, and since it seemed like they were admitting a lot of Asian students, I decided to only mark "Asian" on my application), though I have one White parent and one Asian parent, and usually identify as Asian and White. I ended up getting accepted and am currently a student there now.

In the control condition, the student selected both White and Asian. After reading the vignette, participants rated the student's trustworthiness and completed measures of behavioral disapproval and target evaluations (in that order). Participants then completed measures

¹ In all studies, participants also reported how harmful they believed CRP to be. Given that the harm variable is conceptually consistent with disapproval and dislike and the results demonstrated the same pattern, these results are reported in the OSM.

of moral identity (Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Felps, & Lim, 2009; $\alpha = 0.83$), racial essentialism (No et al., 2008; $\alpha = 0.82$), and a demographic questionnaire.² Lastly, participants were debriefed and paid \$0.40. All scales may be found in the OSM.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Trustworthiness

Participants rated the student's trustworthiness by indicating how much ten traits (e.g., sincere, genuine) described him using a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale. These items were averaged ($\alpha = 0.90$), such that higher scores represent greater perceived trustworthiness.

2.2.2. Disapproval of behavior

Using a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), participants indicated their endorsement of five items designed to assess behavioral disapproval. An example item is, "The student should not have done what he did." These items were averaged ($\alpha = 0.95$), such that higher scores represent greater disapproval of the behavior.

2.2.3. Target evaluation

On either a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) or 1 (*extremely unlikable*) to 7 (*extremely likable*), participants indicated their target liking with seven items. An example item is, "How likeable do you think this student is?" The items were averaged such that higher scores indicate greater liking of the target ($\alpha = 0.92$).

2.3. Results & discussion

2.3.1. Social penalties

There was a significant effect of CRP on trustworthiness, $F(2, 223) = 31.81$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.22$, 95% confidence interval (CI) = [0.13, 0.31]. Participants rated targets who contextually presented as Asian ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.14$), or White ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.95$) as less trustworthy than targets who did not contextually present ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.77$), $t_s(223) > 6.82$, $ps < 0.001$. There was no significant difference between the CRP as Asian and CRP as White conditions, $t(223) = 0.28$, $p = 0.78$.

There was a significant effect of condition on disapproval of behavior, $F(2, 223) = 30.26$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.21$, 95% CI = [0.12, 0.30]. Planned contrasts revealed that CRP as Asian ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.68$) or CRP as White ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.41$) was evaluated more negatively than no CRP, ($M = 2.24$, $SD = 1.14$), $t_s(223) > 6.50$, $ps < 0.001$. Approval of CRP as Asian did not differ from CRP as White, $t(223) = -0.55$, $p = 0.580$.

No effect of condition was found on target evaluation, $F(2, 223) = 0.57$, $p = 0.57$.

2.3.2. Trustworthiness as mediator

To test whether CRP was judged negatively by perceivers because biracial targets were perceived as less trustworthy, we conducted a bias-corrected bootstrapped mediation analysis using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2012). We tested the indirect effect of CRP as White or Asian (compared to no CRP) on disapproval of behavior through changes in perceived trustworthiness using 95% confidence intervals and bootstrapping with 10,000 samples. The confidence intervals indicated a significant indirect effect for CRP as White, $b = 1.20$ (standard error [SE_{boot}] = 0.17), 95% CI = [0.88, 1.57] and CRP as Asian, $b = 1.15$ ($SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.21$), 95% CI = [0.77, 1.60] on disapproval. CRP as monoracial, regardless of whether the choice was to identify as

² In Study 1, participants also completed a feeling thermometer for Black/White, Asian/White, and biracial groups, as well as a suggested donation towards MAVIN, a biracial support group. There were no effects of condition on these variables, so they are not discussed further.

Asian or White in that context, was disapproved of by perceivers because the target was seen as more untrustworthy compared to the no CRP condition. Though analyses revealed that this mediation model was optimal, several alternative models were explored and can be found in the OSM.

The results of Study 1 suggest that CRP as monoracial engendered social penalties for biracial people. Study 1 did not find significant differences in the consequences of selecting a high status (White) versus a low status (Asian) monoracial identity, which does not support the hypothesis that biracial people who identify counter to hypodescent norms are penalized more. These findings may be due in part to the positive stereotypes associated with Asians in academic domains (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000) and the weaker adherence to hypodescent rules towards mixed-race Asians (Ho, Sidanius, Levin, & Banaji, 2011). Asian Americans are often stereotyped as being exceptionally intelligent, ambitious, and academic, suggesting that contextually selecting a monoracial Asian identity in an academic domain may not differ from selecting a monoracial White identity in terms of status (Maddux, Galinsky, Cuddy, & Polifroni, 2008). Therefore, it remains unclear whether biracials contextually presenting as a low-status monoracial person are more accepted than biracials contextually presenting as a high-status monoracial person. Study 2 sought to replicate and expand Study 1 by examining whether the negative reactions to CRP differed when Black/White targets were included, for whom hypodescent rules are more strictly enforced.

3. Study 2

Study 2 used a 2 (target race: Black/White, Asian/White) \times 3 (CRP condition: CRP as White, CRP as minority, no CRP) design using the same college admissions scenario from Study 1. Because Black Americans are negatively stereotyped in academic domains (Steele & Aronson, 1995), testing the effects of CRP as Black for college admission allows us to test the effect of status in CRP evaluations. We expected to find a main effect of CRP condition such that presenting as White or minority would be evaluated more harshly than not contextually presenting, replicating our results from Study 1. Moreover, we predicted an interaction between target race and CRP condition such that there would be no difference between CRP as White and CRP as Asian, but CRP as White would be evaluated more negatively than CRP as Black. These results would be consistent with past research on hypodescent, as contextually selecting a high status identity would violate the racial hierarchy.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants and procedure

We recruited 379 White Mechanical Turk workers. Participants ($n = 4$) who failed the manipulation check and both attention check questions, or who selected multiple racial identifications ($n = 15$) were removed from the analysis, leaving a final sample of 360 White participants (60% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 39.30$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.67$, $\text{Age}_{\text{range}} = 19\text{--}79$). This sample size exceeded the estimated required sample size of 78 based on the effect sizes of Study 1 (average $\eta_p^2 = 0.16$) and provided 80% power to detect a minimum effect size of $\eta^2 = 0.03$. Participants first read the same filler vignette about a man's diet and completed filler evaluations. Next, participants were randomly assigned to read a blog purportedly written by a Black/White or Asian/White biracial student in one of three CRP conditions: CRP as White, CRP as minority, or no CRP. Identical to Study 1, the student in the CRP as White condition marked his race as "White" in his college application, while the student in the no CRP condition marked his race as both Asian and White, or Black and White (see OSM for full wording). In the CRP as minority condition, the Black/White student selected "Black" and the Asian/White student selected "Asian." After reading the post, participants completed the same evaluations from Study 1. Lastly, they

completed a demographic questionnaire and were debriefed and paid \$0.40.

3.2. Measures

Participants completed the trustworthiness ($\alpha = 0.92$), behavioral disapproval ($\alpha = 0.96$), and target evaluation ($\alpha = 0.93$) measures from Study 1.

3.3. Results & discussion

3.3.1. Social penalties

Two (target race: Black/White, Asian/White) \times 3 (CRP condition: CRP as White, CRP as minority, no CRP) between-subjects ANOVAs were conducted on trustworthiness, behavioral disapproval and target evaluation. For trustworthiness, there was a significant main effect of CRP condition, $F(2, 354) = 122.56$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.41$, 95% CI = [0.33, 0.47]. CRP as White ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.00$) or minority ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.91$) was viewed as less trustworthy than no CRP ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 0.84$), $ps < 0.001$. There was no difference in perceived trust between the White CRP and minority CRP conditions, $p = 0.65$. There was also no significant effect of target race, $F(1, 354) = 0.33$, $p = 0.57$, or interaction between benefit and CRP, $F(2, 354) = 1.98$, $p = 0.14$.

For behavioral disapproval, the analysis yielded a significant main effect of CRP condition, $F(2, 354) = 109.79$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.38$, 95% CI = [0.31, 0.45]. Participants reported more disapproval of CRP as White ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.43$) or CRP as minority ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.52$) than students who did not contextually present ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 1.08$), $ps < 0.001$. Moreover, participants evaluated contextually presenting as White more negatively than presenting as a minority, $p = 0.03$. There was no significant effect of target race, $F(1, 354) = 0.25$, $p = 0.62$, or interaction between target race and CRP condition, $F(2, 354) = 1.64$, $p = 0.20$.

Target evaluation also varied by CRP condition, $F(2, 354) = 18.48$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.10$, 95% CI = [0.04, 0.15]. Participants reported liking the student who did not contextually present ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.21$) more than the student who presented as White ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.32$), or as minority ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.10$), $ps < 0.001$. However, presenting as White was not different from presenting as minority, $p = 0.35$. There was no effect of target race, $F(1, 354) = 1.15$, $p = 0.28$, or interaction between target race and CRP condition on target evaluation, $F(2, 354) = 0.89$, $p = 0.41$.

3.3.2. Trustworthiness as mediator

We examined the bias-corrected 10,000 sample bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals to test the indirect effect of presenting as White or minority (versus not contextually presenting) on behavioral disapproval through changes in perceived trustworthiness. The indirect effect was significant for CRP as White, $b = 1.55$ ($SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.15$), 95% CI = [1.24, 1.84] and CRP as minority, $b = 1.66$ ($SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.15$), 95% CI = [1.36, 1.97] on disapproval. Similarly, the indirect effect was significant for CRP as White, $b = -1.06$ ($SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.13$), 95% CI = [-1.35, -0.82], and CRP as minority, $b = -1.14$ ($SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.13$), 95% CI = [-1.42, -0.91] on target evaluation. The results suggest that contextually selecting only White, or only minority, was disapproved of and the students who did so were less liked because they were seen as less trustworthy.

Studies 1 and 2 provided converging evidence that CRP and biracial people who engage in CRP were viewed negatively because their behavior cued concerns about trustworthiness. CRP penalties were not limited to those who contextually selected a high status (Study 1) or low status (Study 2) identity. However, both studies used the same social context, which does not allow us to explore how these social penalties may vary given different social factors. Specifically, we were interested in how choice restraints influenced perceptions of CRP.

4. Study 3

Study 3 tested whether the CRP penalty is dependent on the choice context. In many college applications and other academic institutions (e.g., LSAT exam), students are only allowed to select one race. In this scenario, selecting a monoracial identity may be penalized less because it is a function of institutional barriers and does not signal active intent. Within this choice context, observers tend to attribute behavior to the situation rather than to an individual's internal dispositions (Weary, Stanley, & Harvey, 2012). Using a 2 (choice condition: forced choice, multiple choice) \times 2 (CRP condition: CRP as Black, no CRP) between-subjects design, we tested whether the availability of choice is a boundary condition of the CRP penalty. Specifically, we tested the hypothesis that participants would penalize biracial students who contextually presented as Black primarily in the multiple choice condition, but not in the restrained choice condition. Because there were no reliable differences between CRP as White and CRP as Asian or Black, we only included one CRP condition in Study 3.

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants and procedure

We recruited 153 White Mechanical Turk workers. Participants who selected multiple races were removed ($n = 5$), leaving a final sample of 148 White participants (60% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 41.22$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.65$, $\text{Age}_{\text{range}} = 19\text{--}74$). This sample size exceeded the estimated necessary sample of 43 based on the average effect sizes of Study 2 (average $\eta_p^2 = 0.24$), and provided 80% power to detect a minimum effect size of $\eta^2 = 0.05$. All participants read the same filler vignette and completed the same filler scales from Studies 1 and 2. Next, participants read a blog post purportedly written by a college student detailing his selection of either “Black” or “Biracial” in a multiple-choice scenario where he was able to select more than one racial option or in a forced choice scenario where he could only pick one (e.g., “When I got to the race question in my application, I could only select one race/I could select more than one race”; see OSM for the full vignette). Next, participants recalled the race selected by the student and the choice context. Participants who answered incorrectly ($n = 9$) were shown the blog post again and asked to re-read. They were asked the same attention check questions and if they answered incorrectly again their participation was terminated ($n = 0$). Next, participants completed the same evaluations of the student as in the previous studies, with the addition of a measure of perceived autonomy as a manipulation check (see OSM for results). Lastly, participants completed a demographic questionnaire, were debriefed, and paid \$0.40.

4.2. Measures

Participants completed the same measures of trustworthiness ($\alpha = 0.91$), behavioral disapproval ($\alpha = 0.95$), and target evaluation ($\alpha = 0.92$) from Studies 1 and 2.

4.3. Results

4.3.1. Social penalties

For trustworthiness, there was a significant effect of choice condition, $F(1, 144) = 13.34$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.09$. Students in the multiple-choice scenario ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.20$) were seen as less trustworthy than students in the forced-choice scenario ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 0.94$). There was also a main effect of CRP condition, $F(1, 144) = 35.61$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.20$, such that students who contextually presented ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.17$) were perceived as less trustworthy than targets who did not contextually present ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 0.81$). These effects were qualified by a significant interaction, $F(1, 144) = 10.29$, $p = 0.002$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$. In the multiple-choice scenario, the students who contextually presented ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.11$)

were seen as less trustworthy than students who did not contextually present ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 0.77$), $t(73) = -6.35$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.47$, 95% CI = [0.95, 1.98]. This difference was similar in the forced-choice scenario, but was much weaker, $t(71) = -2.00$, $p = 0.049$, $d = 0.49$, 95% CI = [0.001, 0.93].

There was a significant effect of choice condition on behavioral disapproval, $F(1, 144) = 11.07$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$. The multiple-choice scenario ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.69$) was evaluated more negatively than the forced choice scenario ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.13$). There was also a main effect of CRP condition, $F(1, 144) = 32.24$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.18$. Replicating the effects of Studies 1 and 2, CRP was evaluated more negatively ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.64$) than no CRP ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.00$). These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between choice and CRP conditions, $F(1, 144) = 13.23$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$. When the student was able to select multiple racial options, CRP ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.67$) was evaluated more negatively than no CRP ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 0.98$), $t(73) = 6.02$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.39$, 95% CI = [0.88, 1.90]. This difference was not significant when the student was forced to choose, $t(71) = 1.62$, $p = 0.11$.

There was a main effect of choice condition for target evaluation, $F(1, 144) = 4.26$, $p = 0.04$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$. The students who had multiple choices were liked less ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.19$) than the students who had a forced choice ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.14$). There was also a main effect of CRP condition, $F(1, 144) = 5.11$, $p = 0.03$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$, such that the students who contextually presented ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.16$) were liked less than students who did not contextually present ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.16$). These were qualified by a marginal interaction between choice and CRP conditions, $F(1, 144) = 3.34$, $p = 0.07$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. In the multiple-choice context, the student who contextually presented ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.16$) was liked less than the student who did not contextually present ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.10$), $t(73) = -2.92$, $p = 0.005$, $d = 0.68$, 95% CI = [0.21, 1.14]. This difference was not significant when the student was forced to choose only one racial identity, $t(71) = -0.30$, $p = 0.76$.

4.3.2. Trustworthiness as mediator

To test the hypothesis that the CRP penalty is mediated by differences in the perceived trustworthiness of the student, we examined the effect of CRP condition on disapproval of behavior and target evaluation through trustworthiness in each choice condition (Hayes, 2012). Because the interactions between CRP condition and choice condition were significant, we tested for moderated mediation using Process model 8 (Hayes, 2012). For behavioral disapproval, the mediation effect was significantly moderated by choice, index of moderated mediation = -1.02 , 95% CI = [-1.64 , -0.39]. There was a significant indirect effect in the multiple-choice, $b = 1.46$, ($SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.23$), 95% CI = [1.02, 1.92], and forced-choice conditions, $b = 0.44$, ($SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.23$), 95% CI = [0.03, 0.94]. Participants disapproved of CRP because the student was seen as less trustworthy (see Fig. 1), though more so in the multiple choice condition.

For target evaluation, the index of moderated mediation = 0.33 , 95% CI = [0.14, 0.58]. The indirect effect of CRP on judgment through trustworthiness was significant for participants in both the multiple choice, $b = -0.47$, $SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.09$, 95% CI = [-0.68 , -0.30], and forced choice conditions, $b = -0.14$, $SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.08$, 95% CI = [-0.30 , -0.01]. Though the effect was stronger in the multiple choice scenario, in both conditions the student was perceived as less trustworthy when he contextually presented, which lead to more negative target evaluations (see Fig. 2).

Study 3 demonstrated that the CRP penalty is buffered or eliminated when the biracial person did not have the ability to select multiple race options. In a forced-choice context, CRP did not carry behavioral disapproval and target evaluation penalties, and the increased distrust was attenuated. These results indicate that choice context is an important boundary condition of CRP. Based on the attribution theory literature, we expect that when the target had unrestricted choices, their behavior

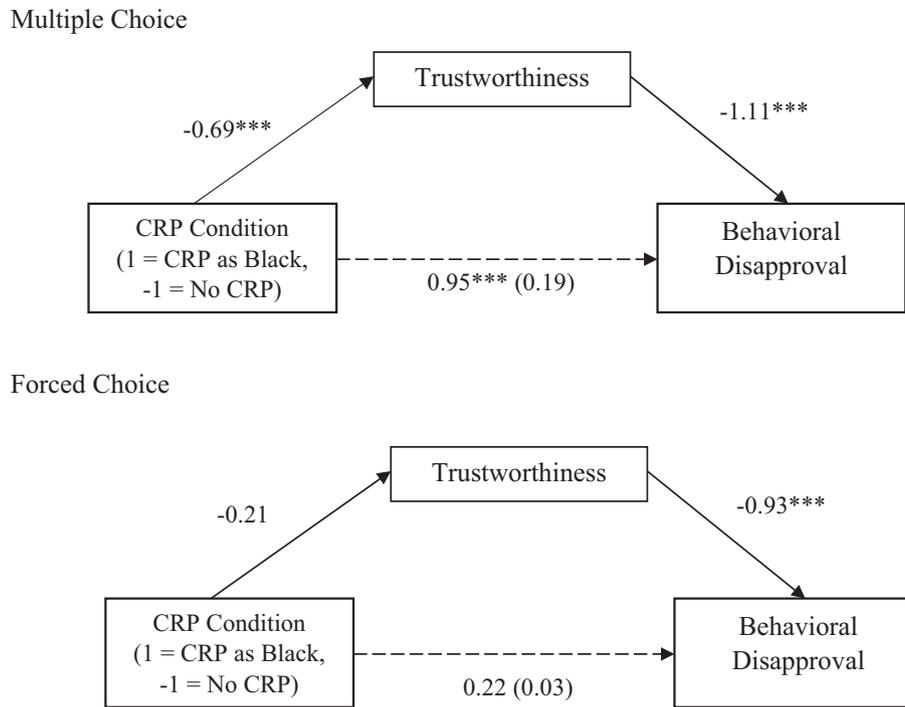


Fig. 1. Mediation model of CRP condition on behavioral disapproval via trustworthiness for participants in the forced choice and multiple choice conditions. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

was more easily attributed to their dispositions than the situation, which led to social penalties. However, it remains unclear what these perceived dispositions may be. It is possible that participants viewed the target's behavior as driven by a general identity confusion (Study 4), or by a desire to benefit (Study 5). Perceptions of biracial people as torn between two worlds or unsure of their identity may be activated when they view a biracial person identifying contextually because that breaks their expectation of stable identification. Similarly, this identification

may be seen as driven by a desire to gain something, particularly within the academic admissions context where identification may be seen as strategic. Thus, we continued to untangle the underlying mechanisms that led to perceived dishonesty in the multiple-choice context. While some of the CRP penalty may be driven by the negative impression people have of anyone that withholds information about themselves (John et al., 2016), CRP may also make negative biracial stereotypes salient because instability of identity may imply that targets experience

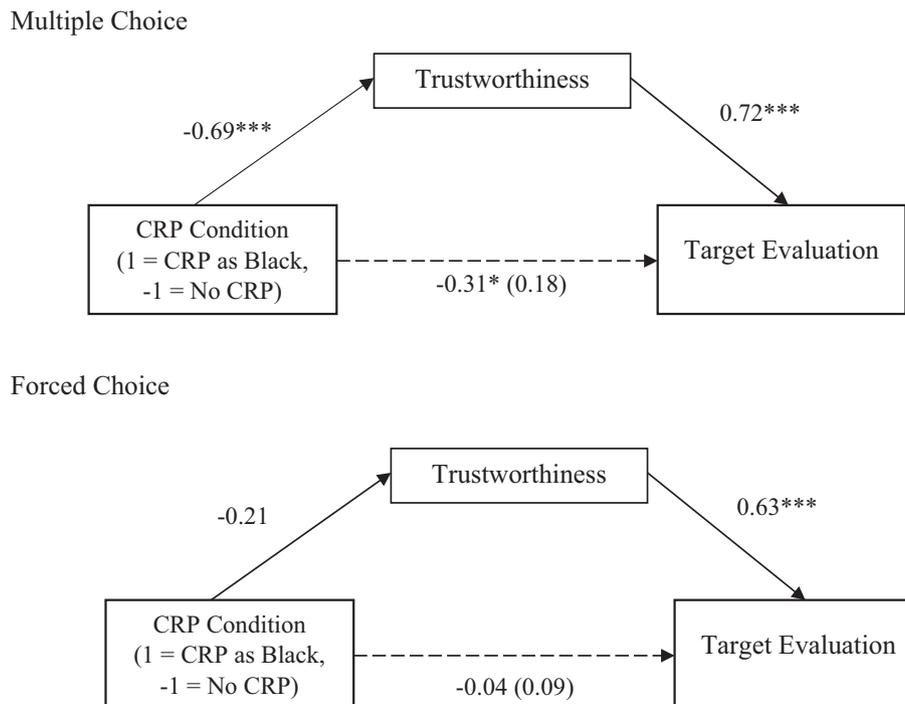


Fig. 2. Mediation model of CRP condition on target evaluation via trustworthiness for participants in the multiple choice and forced choice conditions. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

identity confusion or a fragmented sense of self. Specifically, CRP may activate perceptions of biracial people as conflicted in their identity and socially awkward (Remedios et al., 2012), which can decrease perceptions of trustworthiness because people are generally expected to be certain and unchanging in their racial identification. Therefore, Study 4 tested biracial stereotype activation as the mechanism explaining the CRP trust penalty.

5. Study 4

Using a two group (CRP versus no CRP) design, we tested whether negative evaluations of biracial people who contextually present when they are able to select multiple options are mediated by activation of the stereotype of biracial people as confused about their identity, and lower perceived trust. Through a serial mediation model, we tested the hypothesis that people who read about a biracial person contextually presenting would report increased activation of a confused identity stereotype, which would predict lower perceived trust, and ultimately account for the negative social evaluations. We also included measures of essentialism and identity advantage sanctity (the belief that identities are not resources to be manipulated for gain) as exploratory moderators (see OSM for results).

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants and procedure

We recruited 121 White Mechanical Turk workers. Participants who missed at least one of the two manipulation check questions ($n = 11$) or selected multiple races ($n = 8$) were removed from the analysis, leaving a final sample of 102 participants (59% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 36.73$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.21$, $\text{Age}_{\text{range}} = 20\text{--}71$). This sample size exceeded the estimated necessary sample size of 48 based on the effect sizes of Study 3 (average $\eta_p^2 = 0.15$), and provided 80% power to detect a minimum effect size of $d = 0.56$. Participants were randomized to either the CRP as White or control conditions. The blogs were the same as those used in Study 2 and thus, multiple identity options were allowed (i.e., choice context was held constant). After reading the blog, participants completed measures of biracial stereotypes, identity advantage sanctity, and the same evaluations of the student as in the previous studies. Next, participants completed a modified measure of essentialism and were then asked two manipulation check questions regarding the race and background of target. Lastly, they completed a demographic questionnaire, were debriefed, and paid \$0.70.

5.2. Measures

Participants completed the same measures of trustworthiness ($\alpha = 0.91$), behavioral disapproval ($\alpha = 0.95$) and target evaluation ($\alpha = 0.92$) from Studies 1–3. In addition, they completed the measures below.

5.2.1. Biracial stereotypes

Participants completed a six-item measure of stereotypes about biracial people as unsure of their identity ($\alpha = 0.94$; Chesley & Wagner, 2003; Remedios et al., 2012). In order to avoid social desirability bias, participants reported how much the average American agrees with items such as, “Biracial people are confused about their identity” on a scale of 1 (*The average American strongly disagrees*) to 7 (*The average American strongly agrees*).

5.2.2. Biracial essentialism

Participants completed a six-item measure of essentialism specific to biracial people ($\alpha = 0.83$). Items were based on Williams and Eberhardt's (2008) Race Conception Scale, and included statements such as, “Biracial people belong fully to two racial groups.” Participants responded on a scale of 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*).

5.2.3. Identity advantage sanctity

Participants responded to a five-item measure of identity sanctity created by the authors ($\alpha = 0.96$). This scale measured the extent to which participants believe that identities should not be manipulated for personal gain. Participants responded to items such as, “People shouldn't use their identities (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation) to their advantage” on a scale of 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*).

5.3. Results

5.3.1. Social penalties

Participants trusted the student who engaged in CRP ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.02$) less than the student who engaged in no CRP ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 0.88$), $t(100) = -8.59$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.70$, 95% CI = [1.24, 2.15]. Participants in the CRP condition reported more behavioral disapproval ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.64$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.07$), $t(100) = 6.02$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.19$, 95% CI = [0.77, 1.61]. Participants also reported liking the student who contextually presented ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.21$) less than the student who did not contextually present ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.22$), $t(100) = -3.47$, $p = 0.001$, $d = 0.69$, 95% CI = [0.29, 1.09]. Lastly, participants in the CRP condition reported greater perceived endorsement of biracial stereotypes ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.17$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.41$), $t(100) = 2.36$, $p = 0.020$, $d = 0.47$, 95% CI = [0.07, 0.86]. There were no significant differences between conditions on essentialism, $t(100) = 0.32$, $p = 0.753$, or identity sanctity, $t(100) = -0.01$, $p = 0.990$.

5.3.2. Mediation

We first conducted a replication test of the model presented in Studies 1–3, where the CRP penalties are mediated by lower trustworthiness. The indirect effects of condition on behavioral disapproval, $b = 0.91$, $SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.13$, 95% CI = [0.67, 1.17], and target evaluation, $b = -0.56$, $SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.12$, 95% CI = [-0.82, -0.35], were significant, indicating that the results found previously replicated in Study 4. We then tested a serial mediation model wherein the effect of condition on behavioral disapproval and target evaluation was mediated via biracial stereotype endorsement and trust, respectively. Using 10,000 samples, there was a significant indirect effect of condition on behavioral disapproval $b = 0.05$, $SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.04$, 95% CI = [0.004, 0.16] and target evaluation, $b = -0.03$, $SE_{\text{boot}} = 0.02$, 95% CI = [-0.10, -0.003] through stereotype activation and trust. Participants in the CRP condition reported greater endorsement of biracial stereotypes compared to control, which in turn predicted lower trust of the student, and greater disapproval and dislike (see Figs. 3–4).

Study 4 replicates the main effect of a CRP penalty, which is mediated by lower trustworthiness. Moreover, the results of Study 4 shed insight into the previous findings by showing that in a multiple choice context, CRP activates explicit stereotypes of biracial people as confused about their identity, which mediates the effect of CRP condition on perceived trustworthiness. This finding suggests that the CRP penalty is not merely a result of perceived deception, but rather is specific to contextual racial presentation by biracial people. In Study 5, we sought to replicate this mediation model and explore an alternative explanation for the CRP penalty. It is also possible that participants believe targets who contextually present are seeking to benefit from this action. The previous studies conflated benefit intentions with contextual presentation, yet biracial people may still be negatively perceived when they engage in CRP even when they have nothing to gain.

6. Study 5

Using a 2 (CRP, no CRP) \times 2 (Intention to benefit, Control) design, we examined whether the prior effects of CRP were contingent on biracial people's implied desire to benefit from their racial presentation. We expected to replicate the previous studies by finding that

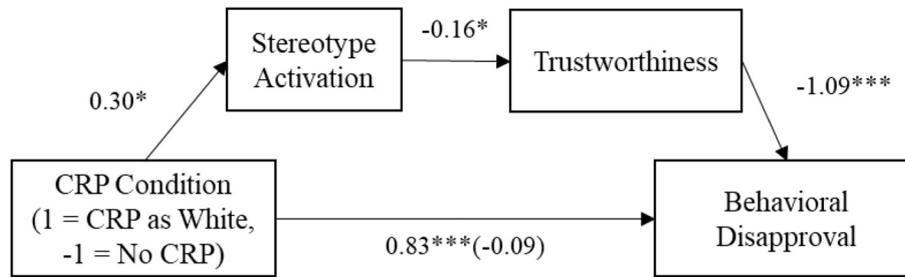


Fig. 3. Serial mediation model of CRP condition on behavioral disapproval via stereotype activation and trustworthiness. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

participants dislike and disapprove of targets who contextually present more compared to those who do not CRP because of biracial stereotype activation and trustworthiness penalties. Our hypotheses for the intention variable were exploratory. If we find that CRP varies by intention, we would expect that the penalty would be stronger in the intention condition compared to the no intention condition because intention to benefit undermines trust and signals a willingness to get ahead. If there is no significant interaction, this would demonstrate that the CRP penalty is not dependent on the intention to benefit and is seen as untrustworthy behavior in general whether or not it is strategic. In addition, we also examined whether CRP evoked negative beliefs about the biracial targets' competence, which could alternatively explain the trustworthiness penalty. It is possible that participants view CRP as an ineffective strategy for college admission, and therefore evaluated the biracial target as less competent. This study was preregistered on the Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/u8fmw>.

6.1. Method

6.1.1. Participants and procedure

We recruited 231 White Mechanical Turk workers. Participants who missed at least one of the two manipulation check questions ($n = 20$) or selected multiple races ($n = 10$) were removed from the analysis, leaving a final sample of 201 White participants (67% female, $M_{age} = 40.19$ years, $SD_{age} = 12.72$, $Age_{range} = 18-81$). Using the serial mediation parameters obtained in the previous study, we conducted an *a priori* power analysis for mediation using Monte Carlo simulations in R (Schoemann, Boulton, & Short, 2017). This sample size nearly met the estimated sample size necessary of 230 for 80% power. It provided 80% power to detect a minimum effect of $\eta^2 = 0.04$. Participants read one of four possible blogs wherein the target either presented as White or not, and either intended to benefit from this presentation or not (see OSM for exact wording). After reading the blog, participants completed the same evaluation measures from the previous study. The biracial stereotype items remained the same from Study 4, but participants were now instructed to indicate their own agreement to each item. Participants also evaluated the student on five items such as “competent,” “confident,” and “intelligent” in order to measure perceived

competence ($\alpha = 0.80$; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Next, participants completed two manipulation check questions regarding the race and background of target, and one item assessing perceived intention to benefit (“The student intended to benefit by selecting a specific racial identity on the application.”). Lastly, they completed a demographic questionnaire, were debriefed, and paid \$0.70.

6.2. Measures

Participants completed the Study 1–4 measures of trustworthiness ($\alpha = 0.91$), behavioral disapproval ($\alpha = 0.93$), and target evaluation ($\alpha = 0.93$). While the same items were used for the stereotype activation ($\alpha = 0.93$) scale as Study 4, we reworded the instructions to capture participants' own beliefs rather than their perception of society's beliefs.

6.3. Results

6.3.1. Preliminary effects

Two (CRP condition: CRP White, no CRP) \times 2 (Intention condition: intention, no intention) between-subjects ANOVAs were conducted on the perceived intention item to test if the manipulation was successful in altering the perceived benefit intention. There was a main effect of intention condition, $F(1, 197) = 48.11, p < 0.001, \eta_p^2 = 0.20, 95\% CI = [0.11, 0.29]$. Participants in the benefit condition ($M = 5.53, SD = 1.55$) believed the author of the blog had a greater intention to benefit from their racial presentation compared to control ($M = 3.85, SD = 2.01$), indicating that the manipulation was successful. Unexpectedly, there was also a weaker main effect of CRP condition, $F(1, 197) = 11.81, p = 0.001, \eta_p^2 = 0.06, 95\% CI = [0.01, 0.13]$. The target who contextually presented ($M = 5.08, SD = 2.05$) was seen as intending to benefit more than control ($M = 4.29, SD = 1.85$). Although CRP on its own appears to signal some purpose in the absence of stated intent, the effect of the benefit condition was stronger and indicates that the variable was manipulated as intended. The interaction was not significant, $F(1, 197) = 2.69, p = 0.103$.

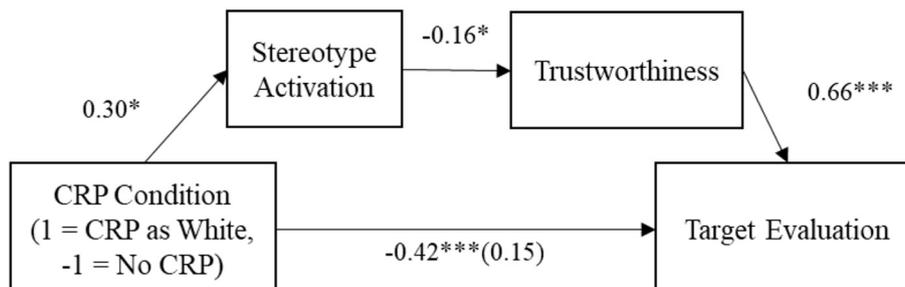


Fig. 4. Serial mediation model of CRP condition on target evaluation via stereotype activation and trustworthiness. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

6.3.2. Social penalties

There was a main effect of CRP condition on perceived trustworthiness, $F(1, 197) = 42.37$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.18$, 95% CI = [0.09, 0.27]. Participants trusted the student who engaged in CRP ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.05$) less than the student who engaged in no CRP ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 0.94$). There was also a main effect of benefit condition, $F(1, 197) = 18.02$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$, 95% CI = [0.02, 0.16]. Participants trusted the student who intended to benefit ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.10$) less than the student with no benefit intention ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 0.99$). The interaction between CRP and benefit intention was not significant, $F(1, 197) = 0.04$, $p = 0.837$.

Participants in the CRP condition reported more behavioral disapproval ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.63$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 1.19$), $F(1, 197) = 48.98$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.20$, 95% CI = [0.11, 0.29]. There was also a main effect of benefit condition, $F(1, 197) = 11.90$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.06$, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.13]. Participants in the benefit condition reported more behavioral disapproval ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.65$) than control ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.42$). There was no interaction between CRP and intention conditions, $F(1, 197) = 1.63$, $p = 0.203$.

Participants also reported liking the student in the CRP condition ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.28$) less than no CRP ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.23$), $F(1, 197) = 7.77$, $p = 0.006$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$, 95% CI = [0.003, 0.10]. There was no effect of intention condition, $F(1, 197) = 1.93$, $p = 0.166$, or interaction, $F(1, 197) = 0.001$, $p = 0.981$.

Participants in the CRP condition reported greater endorsement of biracial stereotypes ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.25$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.28$), $F(1, 197) = 6.61$, $p = 0.011$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$, 95% CI = [0.002, 0.09]. There was a marginal effect of intention condition, $F(1, 197) = 3.35$, $p = 0.069$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$, 95% CI = [0.000, 0.07]. Participants demonstrated greater stereotype activation in the intention condition ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.20$) compared to control ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.34$). The interaction was not significant, $F(1, 197) = 0.34$, $p = 0.558$.

Lastly, there were no significant effects or interactions on perceived competence, $F_s < 1.23$, $p_s > 0.269$.

6.3.3. Mediation

We first tested whether the effect of CRP condition on behavioral disapproval and target evaluation was mediated by perceived trustworthiness. This would replicate the results found in Studies 1–4. Because there were no significant interactions between intention condition and CRP condition, we only included CRP condition in the mediation models. The results suggest that the indirect effect of CRP through trust was significant for behavioral disapproval, $b = 0.90$, $SE_{boot} = 0.16$, 95% CI = [0.60, 1.25], and target evaluation, $b = -0.62$, $SE_{boot} = 0.11$, 95% CI = [-0.86, -0.42]. Next, we used serial mediation to test the hypothesis that the CRP penalty is mediated by activation of biracial stereotypes, which in turn predicts lower trustworthiness of the student (Hayes, 2012). There was a significant indirect effect through stereotype activation and trust for behavioral disapproval, $b = 0.08$, $SE_{boot} = 0.05$, 95% CI = [0.02, 0.21] and target evaluation, $b = -0.06$, $SE_{boot} = 0.03$, 95% CI = [-0.14, -0.01]. Participants in the CRP condition reported greater endorsement of biracial stereotypes, which predicted lower trust of the student, and greater disapproval and dislike.

The results of Study 5 suggest that the evaluations of people who contextually present is separate from a general dislike of people who seek personal gain. There was no interaction between benefit intention and CRP, suggesting that the CRP penalty is not driven by the perception that biracial targets have a self-gain motivation. As in the previous studies, this effect was found to be mediated by lower perceived trust of the target who contextually presents. Replicating the results of Study 4, this association was also mediated by the activation of stereotypes of biracial people as confused about their identity. Thus, the CRP penalty is driven by assumptions about the target rather than the context (Study

3), but not because the target is perceived as intending to benefit or seen as less competent. Reading about CRP may have activated negative stereotypes of biracial people as confused about their identity because the fluidity may be seen as evidence of a fractured self-view. Consistent with the Stereotype Content Model, evaluations of biracial targets appear to differentiate between interpersonal domains (i.e., warmth or liking) and competence domains (Fiske et al., 2002). Though biracial targets were evaluated negatively in interpersonal domains, their perceived competence did not vary.

7. General discussion

The present studies examined the social consequences of contextual racial presentation by biracial people and suggest that biracial people were socially penalized when they contextually presented themselves as White, Black, or Asian in academic settings. The students who contextually selected a monoracial identity in their college application were judged more negatively and were less liked than students who did not contextually present (Studies 1–5). Though these studies tested several boundary conditions, the results suggest that responses to CRP were equally negative regardless of whether the student was presenting as a member of a high status or low status race (Studies 1 and 2), but the penalties were largely eliminated when the student was unable to select multiple racial options (Study 3). In contexts where biracial people are able to express themselves through several identity choices, participants may assume they have internal motivations that result in lower perceptions of trust and social penalties. Study 4–5 tested several possible mechanisms that may underlie these perceptions. Studies 4 and 5 identified biracial stereotypes as a mediator of the effect of CRP on trust. However, Study 5 did not find evidence that the CRP penalty is dependent on a stated or implied intention for self-gain, as students were disliked even if their contextual presentation was unable to incur a benefit for them. Perceiving CRP as seeking self-gain does not seem to drive the social penalties. The CRP penalty was consistently mediated by lower perceived trustworthiness (Studies 1–5). However, Studies 4 and 5 suggest that perceptions of CRP are not merely a reaction to general dishonest behavior because CRP was found to evoke biracial stereotypes that were associated with lower levels of trust and ultimately negative social evaluations. This suggests biracial people may not have full access to fluidity within their identity, as this may reinforce negative stereotypes and incur social penalties. Study 5 replicates that finding and further disentangles CRP from seeking self-gain, suggesting that CRP is a separate process from self-promotion.

Though past work has documented the fluidity of biracial identity (e.g., Rockquemore & Arend, 2002), the present studies are the first to test the consequences of this fluidity. The results suggest that CRP by biracial people is socially penalized by monoracial White perceivers because it activates negative stereotypes and is seen as untrustworthy. These results are consistent with past work suggesting that biracial people may face harsh social evaluations (Remedios et al., 2012; Sanchez & Bonam, 2009). Biracial people's fluid experience of their identities violated established norms of stable identification that led to social penalties. However, this penalty was mitigated when the choice context reduced perceptions of the student's autonomy. Moreover, there were no reliable differences in evaluations of students who contextually presented as a high status rather than low status group member. This finding suggests that breaching the norm of hypodescent was not evaluated more negatively. Though unexpected, this result is consistent with early evidence suggesting that hypodescent may be a fading norm in an increasingly multiracial society. For example, people categorize multiracial faces as “multiracial” more often than as White or Black when given the option to do so (Chen & Hamilton, 2012). This finding indicates that the CRP effect may operate differently than the visual categorization tasks (e.g., Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008) and parent lineage tasks (e.g., Ho et al., 2015) used in previous research, which largely do not offer information about how the target identifies

themselves. Given that past work suggests individuating information limits the application of stereotypes in implicit person perception (Rubinstein, Jussim, & Stevens, 2018), it is possible that hypodescent heuristics similarly operate differently when phenotypic information is absent and individuating information is present.

Thus, the current studies contribute to the literature in several ways. Existing work to date has focused on how biracial people are identified by others (e.g., Freeman, Penner, Saperstein, Scheutz, & Ambady, 2011), or how they are perceived given their own identity (e.g., Sanchez & Bonam, 2009). By examining biracial identity as static, the extant work has failed to account for the dynamic nature of biracial identity. The present paradigm introduces evaluations of a unique identity experience of biracial people, as monoracial people are generally not afforded the ability to select their racial identity. Moreover, this work is among the first to demonstrate negative consequences associated with biracial identity stereotypes (Remedios et al., 2012). Lastly, though past work has documented various benefits of engaging with ones' multiple identities, including greater originality (Steffens, Gocłowska, Cruwys, & Galinsky, 2016) and creative problem solving (Gaither, Remedios, Sanchez, & Sommers, 2015), the present work highlights the negative consequences biracial people may encounter in other contexts.

8. Limitations and future directions

Some aspects of the experimental design limit the generalizability of these results. First, the mediation models were theoretically founded and statistically significant, but we cannot be certain of the causal direction of the observed relationships. Nonetheless, the results signal the importance of trust and biracial stereotypes in perceptions of CRP. The five studies employed similar situational contexts (but, see OSM for additional experiments with similar results conducted in another context), so it is unclear whether similar penalties would generalize to other situations. However, given that college admission is a competitive environment with which most participants are likely to be familiar, situating the vignettes in that context increases the ecological validity. Second, the homogeneity of the samples (all White participants) limits the findings. Minority populations may operate under different concerns (e.g., concerns about resource scarcity or in-group membership; Rodeheffer, Hill, & Lord, 2012). For example, minority groups may similarly penalize biracial people who present as members of their group if they are concerned about extending existing resources to marginalized members (Krosch & Amodio, 2014). However, in a context where coalition between minority groups is beneficial, the social penalty may be mitigated (Craig & Richeson, 2012). Additionally, these effects may be dependent on minority participants' perceived similarity to biracial people, lay theories of race, or strength of racial identity. Third, the present work presented individuals with hypothetical situations but did not test behavioral responses to CRP. Behavioral paradigms would allow us to test the potential benefits of CRP in social interactions. For example, CRP that goes undetected may have positive consequences for biracial people by promoting less anxious interactions with outgroup members (but see Barreto & Ellemers, 2009; Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). Past work has found that when Black/White biracial participants were primed with one of their identities, interacting with a confederate participant of the same race as their primed identity resulted in smoother interactions (Gaither, Sommers, & Ambady, 2013).

Several questions remain for future work. Examining perceptions of CRP by the minority group (i.e., by Black Americans for Black/White biracial people) will help explain how biracial individuals are situated within their two backgrounds, as well as help disentangle the role of racial hierarchy in creating these social penalties. Additionally, several moderators may exist to qualify who is able to CRP, such as phenotype and diversity of social network, as these factors have also influenced how biracial people are racially categorized by others (Chen & Hamilton, 2012; Gaither, Pauker, Slepian, & Sommers, 2016). For

example, a biracial person with a racially diverse social network may be afforded more opportunities to contextually present and receive less penalties than an individual with a homogenous network. The racial makeup of the biracial target may similarly influence CRP penalties. For example, White/Latino biracial people may not receive a penalty if the perceiver does not consider Latino a racial group. Similarly, additional mediators may exist. For example, it is possible that CRP influences people's perceptions of the fixedness of the racial hierarchy, which can trigger a symbolic threat to their worldview that results in negative evaluations. Future work may also explore how perceptions of CRP are informed by the motivations of the target. Study 3 demonstrates that attributions to targets' motivations influence CRP penalties, but do not eliminate it. However, explicit motivations to contextually present to avoid stigmatization or to gain a benefit may be differently perceived.

9. Conclusion

In sum, this is the first set of studies to examine perceptions of contextual racial identity shifting for the biracial demographic. The current research addresses an important gap in the literature by demonstrating that biracial contextual racial presentation is penalized by monoracial White perceivers. The results indicate that these social penalties are present when the student has freedom of choice and are explained by lower perceived trustworthiness and activation of biracial stereotypes. Though contextual racial presentation may be a common experience for biracial people, racial identity fluidity within current societal norms of monoracial identification are accompanied by a social cost and the results highlight a need for a better understanding of these unique social challenges biracial people face.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.04.010>.

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