

## Biracial Ancestry and Socioeconomic Status in Acculturation Perception

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This study examines the impact of socioeconomic status (SES) and biracial White ancestry on perceptions of acculturation or “being American,” and the racial categorization of Asian American, African American and Latino American targets. Participants ( $N = 289$ ) read a brief excerpt of a college admissions essay from an applicant in one of the three ethnic groups, and then answered questions about their impressions of the applicant. In general, results suggest that applicants of biracial ancestry (half white/half minority) were perceived to be more acculturated than those of monoracial minority ancestry. Surprisingly, SES was associated with greater perceptions of acculturation for Latino Americans only. Thus, both SES and biracial ancestry independently influence perception. Moreover, perceptions of acculturation and White categorization are correlated for Asian American and Latino American targets, but not African Americans. Findings are discussed in terms of the primacy of culture in impression formation of non-African American ethnic groups.

*Keywords:* ethnicity, biracial identity, acculturation, person perception, racial categorization

Cet article étudie l'effet du statut socioéconomique (SSE) et de l'ascendance mixte sur les perceptions de l'acculturation et la catégorisation raciale de sujets Américains d'origine asiatique, africaine et latine. Les participants ( $N = 289$ ) avaient à lire un extrait provenant d'une lettre d'admission universitaire appartenant à un des candidats de l'un des trois groupes ethniques. Ils devaient ensuite indiquer leurs impressions du candidat. Les résultats suggèrent que les candidats d'ascendance mixte furent perçus comme étant plus acculturés que ceux d'origine ethnique minoritaire. Le SSE fut associé à une perception d'une acculturation supérieure uniquement chez les individus d'origine latine. Ainsi, le SSE et l'ascendance influencent indépendamment la perception. La perception de l'acculturation et la catégorisation sont corrélées significativement avec les candidats d'origine asiatique et latine, mais non africaine. Les résultats seront discutés dans un contexte de l'importance culturelle dans la formation d'impressions par rapport aux groupes ethniques d'origine non africaine.

*Mots-clés :* ethnicité, identité mixte, acculturation, perception, catégorisation raciale

Over the past decade, the United States has experienced substantial growth in the multiracial population, that is, in individuals possessing at least two racial heritages. The multiracial population grew from six million to nine million in 2010, according to the U.S Census. This population increased 32% between 2000 and 2010, and surpassed the growth rate of every other racial category (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Even though the multiracial

population clearly exhibits continuous growth, psychological research on multiracial individuals is a severely understudied domain (Shih & Sanchez, 2009). Only recently, has this demographic shift been studied with the purpose of understanding the minority experience. Moreover, the growing racial heterogeneity of the population challenges the ease to which acculturation is perceived (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). Acculturation is a cultural change in behavior that occurs when a group of individuals possessing a distinct culture migrates into another context and interacts with a different cultural group (Berry, 1997). This brings up important questions: In American society, what ethnic groups are perceived as being more acculturated?

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Are multiracial individuals who possess half White and half minority racial ancestries (i.e., biracial individuals) viewed as more or less acculturated than individuals who possess a single minority ancestry (i.e., monoracial minority individuals)?

Previous research indicates that individuals who are perceived as less acculturated and non-American are at a greater disadvantage than those who are perceived as acculturated. For example, prior studies suggest that individuals from any racial group other than White are perceived as less American, and, as a result, must combat feelings of social rejection, economic rejection, and job discrimination (Barlow, Taylor, & Lambert, 2000; Yogeewaran & Dasgupta, 2010). According to the 2008 immigrant census, by the Pew Foundation, 56% of Americans prefer living in a community with a small immigrant population, and only 24% prefer to live in communities with a large immigrant population (Taylor, Morin, Cohn, & Wang, 2008). The most recent 2013 Pew Foundation census suggested that over half (55%) of adult Americans said that strong conflicts between immigrants and non-immigrants exist today (Morin & Motel, 2013). For example, research suggests that Asian Americans may face identity denial, a phenomenon in which White Americans call into question Asian's American identity, and perceive Asian Americans as less American compared to White Americans (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). Thus, stigma against less acculturated and non-American individuals currently exists. However, little research has examined perceptions of acculturation for biracial individuals, those with half White and half minority ancestry. What serves to cue whether biracials, those possessing both majority and minority ancestry, are perceived as acculturated and American by the predominantly White American population?

### **Biracial Ancestry in Racial Categorization and Acculturation**

Previous research has demonstrated that racial categorization, assigning an individual to a single racial category, may influence perceptions of acculturation. Being racially categorized as White may result in greater perceptions of acculturation. White American targets are generally viewed as more American than targets of minority ancestry, such as Asian Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Devos, Gavin, & Quintana, 2010; Devos & Heng, 2009; Devos & Ma, 2008; Rydell, Hamilton, & Devos, 2010).

The ease of racial categorization may be challenged when individuals have biracial ancestry. Recent research indicates inconsistencies in the racial categorization of individuals with biracial ancestry (Sanchez, Good, & Chavez, 2011; Young, Sanchez, & Wilton, 2013). Minority categorization was consistent with the concept of hypodescent in previous research. Hypodescent is the automatic categorization of a multiracial individual with part White and part minority ancestry to the minority group (Sanchez et al., 2011). For instance, perceivers categorized individuals with one Black minority parent as the minority race when cues of Black ancestry were given (Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008). This effect was stronger for African American targets than for Asian American targets (Ho, Sidanius, Levin, & Banaji, 2011). Conversely, additional evidence suggested another pattern of racial categorization that deviated from patterns of hypodescent. Multiracial parents categorized less their children as minority and more frequently labeled them as Multiracial or White (Brunsmma, 2005). Although the study examines parents' perceptions, the pattern of racial categorization may indicate the beginning of a shift towards less reliance on a one-drop rule for multiracial children. Work on deliberate categorization shows that targets with biracial ancestry were categorized as both minority and White. Perceivers racially categorized a target indicating the percentage of both White and Black ancestry they possessed: Monoracial White targets, identified as 100% White and 0% Black; Monoracial Black targets, identified as 100% Black and 0% White, and Biracial targets, varied in the percentage of both Black and White ancestry they possessed. For instance, some biracial targets identified as 50% Black and 50% White and other biracials identified as 75% Black and 25% White. Participants categorizing the biracial targets focused on the percentage of both White and Minority ancestry that the target indicated (Good, Sanchez, & Chavez, 2013; Sanchez et al., 2011). Specifically, higher percentages of White ancestry in biracials were associated with incremental decreases in Black categorization (Good et al., 2013; Sanchez et al., 2011). In addition, in another published study, participants who were described as Black/White biracial were less likely to be categorized as Black compared to those who were described as Black with no biracial ancestry indicated (Young et al., 2013). Given that the mention of White ancestry influenced participants' racial categorization in prior research, it is reasonable to expect that biracials will be perceived as more White compared to monoracial minorities because biracials possess White ancestry.

Taken together, these studies suggest that when given the opportunity to categorize biracial targets, the rule of hypodescent may not be consistently followed. People tend to categorize biracial targets differently from monoracial minority targets. Thus, biracial ancestry has challenged and complicated perceptions of racial categorization. However, little research has examined if biracial ancestry can also challenge additional perceptions. To what extent can biracial ancestry similarly complicate the perception of being “American”? The present study examines whether biracial ancestry (half white/half minority) increases perceptions of acculturation for African American, Asian American and Latino American targets.

### **Socioeconomic Status in Acculturation Perception and Racial Categorization**

One of the dominant cues of what being “American” means is the economic and social success, where financial success is believed to be a virtue of the American Dream (Hochschild, 1995). Past research has identified trends suggesting that immigrants are more likely to be from lower socioeconomic statuses compared to native citizens (Beiser, Hou, Hyman, & Tousignant, 2002). Additionally, approximately 17% of immigrants in the United States live in poverty, while the number of U.S. born citizens living in poverty reaches 12%. Moreover, about 24% of African Americans and 23% of Latino Americans are living in poverty compared to 8% of Whites in poverty (Hoynes, Page, & Stevens, 2006). Socioeconomic status, social and economic position relative to others, can act as a cue that serves to form further impressions.

Recent findings suggest that socioeconomic status is often used as a cue for racial categorization for both monoracial minority individuals and biracial individuals. Moreover, SES directly influences perceptions of racial categorization (for a review, see Sanchez & Garcia, 2012). Although Monoracial individuals were less likely to be categorized as White, interviewers were more likely to classify them as Black if they had experienced a drop in their socioeconomic status (i.e., incarcerated, unemployed, or low income) regardless of how they were racially categorized beforehand (Penner & Saperstein, 2008). Moreover, individuals from the same study were more likely to racially categorize themselves as Black if they had experienced the same drop in their socioeconomic status. This finding suggests that socioeconomic status is a salient cue that individuals

use to form impressions and that not only do changes in status influence perceptions of racial categorization, but also that SES influences perceptions of acculturation. Interviews of monoracial African Americans from both high and low SES suggest differences in acculturation perceptions. African Americans from lower SES reported being perceived by White Americans as being less American compared to those of higher SES (Barlow et al., 2000). However, previous research has not yet examined how SES may influence perceptions of acculturation for individuals of biracial ancestry. Thus in the present study, we sought to discover how the signaling of an economic cue may influence perceptions of acculturation of African Americans, Asian Americans and Latino Americans of biracial and minority monoracial ancestry.

### **The Present Study**

In the present study, we test whether ancestry (Biracial, half White/half Minority, or Monoracial Minority) and socioeconomic status (higher SES/lower SES) serve to inform acculturation perceptions and racial categorizations for Asian Americans, Latino Americans, and African Americans. The three ethnicities were chosen because of their relatively large presence in the contemporary United States population. Together, African Americans, Latino Americans and Asian Americans represent over 20% of the ethnic population, and American perceivers would have strong schemas of these groups (Humes et al., 2011). Participants read a brief excerpt from a college admissions essay designed to manipulate ancestry and SES. Previous studies that manipulated SES used visual images of clothing depicting status or occupation, or cues of occupational status (Freeman, Penner, Saperstein, Scheutz, & Ambady, 2011; Weeks & Lupfer, 2004). Since participants in the present study were students, utilizing an essay format allowed for an easily controlled manipulation of SES in a realistic context.

Additionally, language has been determined to be one of the primary aspects of acculturation perception as well as of ethnic identity (Laroche, Kim, Hui, & Tomiuk, 1998; Noels, Pon, & Clément 1996). Language is identified as a cultural practice, and thus the ability to speak the language of a new context is a measure of a cultural behavioral change (Schwartz et al., 2010). Previous work studying Asian Americans suggested that English language competence was a better indicator of acculturation relative to other culture-related domains (Kang, 2006).

Furthermore, prior research demonstrates that language operates as a variable that cues acculturation. For example, Latino Americans who spoke English were perceived as more acculturated and less minority than Latino Americans who spoke their native language (e.g., Spanish; Sanchez, & Chavez, 2010; Wilton, Sanchez, & Chavez, 2013). For that reason, language abilities served as the measure of perceived acculturation. In addition, the perception of acculturation and whiteness was tested among three different groups: African Americans, Asian Americans and Latino Americans. Considering the different immigration status of these different ethnic groups (Schwartz et al., 2010), we investigated whether ethnicity (e.g., being African American as opposed to Asian American) resulted in different perceived levels of acculturation and White categorization.

A total of four hypothesis will be tested in the following study. Our first hypothesis is that ethnicity and ancestry will interact to influence acculturation perceptions (hypothesis 1). Our second hypothesis is that ethnicity and socioeconomic status will interact to influence acculturation perceptions (hypothesis 2). For instance, a biracial individual who is half African American and half White will be perceived as more acculturated (hypothesis 1) when more White compared to an individual whose both parents are African American, or to a person who is biracial from another Minority group. We test the hypotheses regarding ancestry and SES (hypothesis 2) on African Americans, Latino Americans, and Asian Americans. We expected Asian Americans and Latino Americans to be viewed as less acculturated in general than African Americans because of their recent and salient immigration status compared to that one of African Americans' (Schwartz et al., 2010). Our third hypothesis is that, in keeping with the previous research, biracial (White and minority ancestry) individuals will be categorized as more White than those with monoracial minority ancestry (hypothesis 3). Our fourth hypothesis is that individuals of higher SES will correspond to a greater White categorization compared to lower-SES participants (hypothesis 4). Overall, any deviation from being a minority (socioeconomically or ancestrally) was expected to predict a greater perceived acculturation and perceived White categorization.

## Method

### Participants

Participants in this study were recruited through Mechanical Turk, an online survey participation website where the computer randomly assigned participants to conditions. Previous research identified MTurk as a valid source of data acquisition (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Each participant was compensated with \$0.50 upon the completion of the survey. Originally, there were 335 participants, but an instructional manipulation check was included at the end of the survey to make sure the participants were paying attention to the questions. The instructional manipulation-check question was "What state do you currently live in?" And then, the instructions of the survey told the participant to respond with the phrase "I have read the instructions". It was found that 65 out of 354 respondents did not complete or failed to pass the manipulation check (18% of the cases). Following Oppenheimer, Meyvis and Davidenko (2009), any participant failing to pass this question was excluded from further analyses.

For the remaining 289 participants, the sample included 155 Females, 132 Males, 2 others. Ages ranged from 18 to 66 years ( $M = 33.38$ ,  $SD = 11.59$ ). Participants indicated their racial background, and were allowed to select more than one option. A total of 233 identified as White, 23 identified as African American, 22 identified as Asian American, specifically, 11 identified as Southeast Asian, 7 identified as East Asian, and 4 identified as South Asian. The sample also included 13 identified as Hispanic/ Latino, 6 identified as American Indian/ Native Alaskan, 3 identified as Middle Eastern/North African, and 3 identified as Pacific Islander. Educational achievement ranged from 1 some high school (1%) to 9 other advanced graduate degrees (1%), where 2 is high school (11%), 3 is some college (43%), 4 is Bachelors' degree (BA/BS) (27%), 5 is some graduate school (4%), 6 is Masters Degree (MA, MS, MFA) (10%), 7 is MD/JD/MBA (2%), and 8 is PhD/Dr.Ph/Ed.D (1%).

### Procedure

Participants read a brief excerpt from a college admissions essay. The essay stimuli were designed by the authors. The essay contained several spelling and

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grammatical errors so participants could interpret it as being realistic. In the essay, the target identified himself/herself (gender is not specified) as minority ethnicity, either Asian American, Latino American or African American. The target identified as either having monoracial minority ancestry or having biracial ancestry. The monoracial minority ancestry targets noted that both parents were of the same minority group (i.e., both African American). Biracial ancestry targets noted that one parent was minority and one parent was White. Next, the applicant indicated his/her SES in two ways. First the applicant indicated whether his/her parents went to college (higher SES/middle class) or not (lower SES/working class). Second, the applicant disclosed the type of neighborhood (wealthy or poor) that he/she grew up in. Participants read one of twelve possible essays following a 3 (Ethnicity: Asian American, African American, or Latino American) X 2 (Socioeconomic Status: Low or High) X 2 (Ancestry: Biracial Half White/ Half Minority, or Monoracial Minority) design. The participants were instructed to read the college admissions essay (see Appendix A for sample essay) and were informed that questions pertaining to the essay would follow. Two sample items include, “This applicant indicated what racial background?” and “Did the applicant’s parents go to college?” Participants responded to measures of diversity scholarship support, racial categorization, perceived acculturation, perceived discrimination, and attitudes toward affirmative action, respectively.

### Measures

**Racial categorization.** To measure racial categorization, we used the measures from prior research (Good et al., 2013; Sanchez et al., 2011) assessing racial categorization of biracial targets. The racial categorization section included four questions, which asked about how White (two items) or Minority (two items) the target was perceived by the participant. The wording of the minority questions was dependent on the ethnicity condition. For instance, if the participant was assigned to an Asian American target, the minority question asked about how Asian American the target was perceived to be. All of the questions used the same rating scale, where 1 was labeled as *Not at all* and 5 was labeled as *Very Much*. The questions included, “To what extent do YOU view this applicant as: White/Minority” as well as, “To what extent do YOU think of this applicant as: White/Minority.” The two White items of perceiver categorization held together reliably

( $r = .94, p < .001$ ). The two Minority items of perceiver categorization also held together reliably ( $r = .90, p < .001$ ). Because the White and Minority categorizations were negatively correlated ( $r = -.39, p < .01$ ), a difference score was created for the relative White/Minority perceiver categorization level such that higher scores corresponded with greater White categorization.

**Acculturation.** Language abilities served as the measure of perceived acculturation. Perceptions of acculturation were measured by the impression of the applicant’s language fluency using a 5 item scale. These items were based on measures of acculturation that typically assess self-identities (e.g., Marin & Marin Acculturation Scale; Marin, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, & Perez-Stable, 1987). For example, items that were worded, “What languages do you usually speak at home?” and “In which language(s) do you usually think?” were changed to “In general what language(s) do you think the applicant speaks?” and “In what language(s) do you think the applicant thinks?” The wording of the anchors for each item varied in each condition in order to match the correct minority language. For instance, the scale for Asian American targets was measured from 1 (*only Asian language*) to 5 (*only English language*). The language scale was also determined to be reliable using Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

## Results

### Preliminary Analysis

Initial analyses suggested no outliers but the Shapiro Wilks test suggested that data was not normally distributed for racial categorization and acculturation, but GLM methods (of which ANOVAs are apart of) have proven robust for normality assumptions (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Box-cox transformation was performed to force a normal distribution, and significance of results and direction were unchanged. For ease of interpretation untransformed results are presented.

### Planned Analyses

Recall that the design of this particular study was a 3 (Ethnicity: Asian American, African American or Latino American) X 2 (Socioeconomic Status: Low or High) X 2 (Ancestry: Biracial Half White/ Half Minority or Monoracial Minority) design. Therefore, two separate 3x2x2 ANOVAs were conducted in order

to test the independent and interactive roles of ancestry, SES, and ethnicity on acculturation perceptions (hypotheses 1 and 2) and racial categorization perceptions (hypothesis 3 and hypothesis 4). Then, follow up ANOVAs were executed with Bonferroni corrections for multiple comparisons.

**Acculturation Perception**

To test hypotheses 1 and 2, we ran a 3 (Ethnicity: Asian American, African American, or Latino American) X 2 (Socioeconomic Status: Low or High) X 2 (Ancestry: Biracial Half White/ Half Minority or Monoracial Minority) ANOVA. First, we found a significant main effect of ethnicity on perception of acculturation  $F(1, 288) = 77.59, p < .001$ . Follow up tests with Bonferroni corrections were conducted to compare perceptions of acculturation for the three different ethnic groups (Asian Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans). We found that African Americans ( $M = 4.70, SD = 0.64$ ) were perceived as the most acculturated compared to Asian Americans ( $M = 3.67, SD = 0.91, p < .001$ ) and Latino Americans ( $M = 3.43, SD = 0.84, p < .001$ ). There was no significant difference between Asian American and Latino Americans ( $p = .098$ ). There was a second significant main effect of ancestry on acculturation perception,  $F(1, 288) = 33.35, p < .001$ . As expected, there was a significant difference in acculturation perceptions between Biracial individuals ( $M = 4.21,$

$SD = 0.79$ ) and monoracial minority individuals ( $M = 3.70, SD = 1.05$ ). There was a significant interaction between ethnicity and ancestry on acculturation perceptions,  $F(1, 288) = 5.89, p = .003$ . Last, we found a significant interaction between ethnicity and SES on acculturation perceptions,  $F(1,288) = 6.15, p = .002$ . There were no other significant main effects or significant interactions. Follow up analyses of the two significant interactions of hypothesis 1 (Ethnicity x Ancestry on acculturation perceptions) and hypothesis 2 (Ethnicity x SES on acculturation perception) were conducted.

**Hypothesis 1**

To further analyze the significant interaction of ethnicity and ancestry  $F(1, 288) = 5.89, p = .003$ , the file was split by each of the ethnic groups (Asian Americans, African Americans and Latino Americans) to examine the effect of ancestry on acculturation perceptions within each ethnicity group (see Figure 1). Examining the data within each ethnic group, the results showed a simple effect of ancestry for Latino American targets,  $F(1, 88) = 21.75, p < .001$ , as well as for Asian American targets,  $F(1, 100) = 17.65, p < .001$ . For Latino American targets, biracial individuals were perceived as more acculturated ( $M = 3.80, SD = 0.72$ ) than monoracial Latino Americans ( $M = 3.08, SD = 0.81$ ).

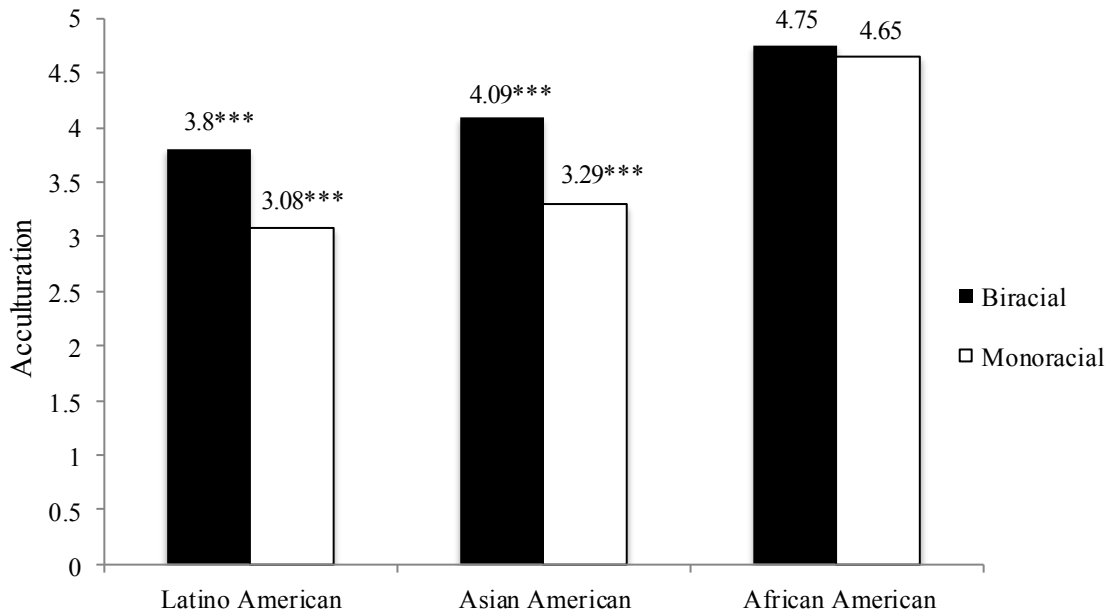


Figure 1. The interaction effect of ethnicity and ancestry on acculturation perceptions. Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

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For the Asian American targets, the same results occurred, where biracial individuals ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ) were seen as more acculturated than monoracial Asian Americans ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ). No effect of biracial ancestry was found for the African American targets. Consistent with the hypotheses, biracial ancestry cued greater perceptions of acculturation, but for only Asian Americans and Latino Americans.

### Hypothesis 2

To further analyze the significant interaction of ethnicity and SES  $F(1, 288) = 6.15$ ,  $p = .002$  the file was split by each of the ethnic groups (Asian Americans, African Americans and Latino Americans) to examine the effect of SES on acculturation perceptions within each ethnicity group (see Figure 2). There was no simple effect of SES on either African American,  $F(1, 98) = 0.24$ ,  $p = .623$ , or Asian American targets,  $F(1, 100) = 1.03$ ,  $p = .313$ . However, there was a significant simple effect of SES on Latino American targets,  $F(1, 98) = 14.95$ ,  $p < .001$ . In this case, the Latino American target with high SES was seen more acculturated ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) than the lower status Latino Americans ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ). As predicted, SES was associated with greater perceptions of acculturation, but for Latino Americans only.

### Racial Categorization

To test hypotheses 3 and 4, we ran a 3 (Ethnicity: Asian American, African American, or Latino American) X 2 (Socioeconomic Status: Low or High) X 2 (Ancestry: Biracial Half White/ Half Minority or Monoracial Minority) ANOVA. Recall that categorization was measured with difference scores for the relative White/Minority perceiver categorization level. Scores at zero reflect equal Minority and White categorization, while scores above zero reflect White categorization, and numbers below zero reflect Minority categorization. Both hypotheses were confirmed and are further described in subsections below. First, we found a non-hypothesized main effect for ethnicity on racial categorization,  $F(1, 288) = 5.66$ ,  $p = .004$ . Follow up tests with Bonferroni corrections for ethnicity were conducted in order to compare multiple ethnicity means (African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino Americans). Individuals who were described as African Americans ( $M = -1.89$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ) were seen as more minority than Latino Americans ( $M = -1.36$ ,  $SD = 1.84$ ,  $p = .003$ ). No differences were found between comparing African Americans and Asian Americans ( $M = -1.69$ ,  $p = .604$ ) as well as comparing Latino Americans and Asian Americans ( $p = .146$ ). Surprisingly, we found a marginally significant interaction between ancestry and SES on racial categorization,  $F(1, 288) = 3.60$ ,  $p = .060$ .

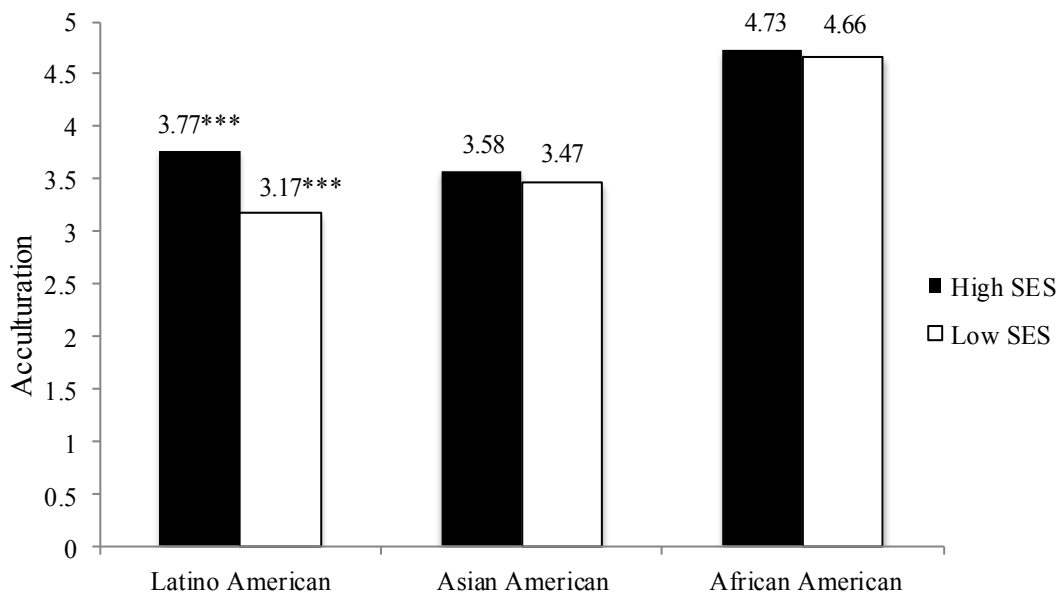


Figure 2. The interaction effect of SES and ethnicity on acculturation perceptions.  
Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 1  
*Correlations between Acculturation and Racial Categorization*

	Overall	Asian	Black	Latino
White Categorization and Acculturation Perception	.24**	.44**	.09	.54**

Note. \*\* $p < .01$ .

In order to interpret the ancestry and SES interaction, effects were examined by ethnicity and revealed that SES predicted racial categorization for those of monoracial minority ancestry,  $F(1, 166) = 5.96, p = .020$ . The results suggest that monoracial minority individuals of lower SES were considered less White ( $M = -3.45, SD = 0.99$ ) than monoracial minority individuals of higher SES ( $M = -3.01, SD = 1.45$ ). No significant simple effect of SES was found for those of biracial ancestry,  $F(1, 121) = .03, p = .870$ .

### Hypothesis 3

In keeping with the third hypothesis, there was a main effect of ancestry on racial categorization,  $F(1, 288) = 559.06, p < .001$ , with a significant difference between individuals of biracial ancestry ( $M = -0.08, SD = 0.83$ ) and individuals of monoracial minority ancestry ( $M = -3.24, SD = 1.25$ ). However, this simple effect is qualified by the interaction with SES described above.

### Hypothesis 4

In partial support of hypothesis four, a marginally significant main effect of SES on racial categorization was revealed,  $F(1, 288) = 2.98, p = .090$ , suggesting that individuals of higher SES ( $M = -1.71, SD = 1.92$ ) were seen as more White compared to individuals of lower SES ( $M = -2.10, SD = 1.89$ ). However, this simple effect is qualified by the interaction with ancestry described above.

### Relationship Between Acculturation and Racial Categorization

Lastly, non-hypothesized bivariate correlations, which explore the relationship between acculturation perception and racial categorization, were examined. These analyses demonstrate how acculturation and racial categorization are interrelated. In general,

targets that were perceived as being more acculturated were concurrently racially categorized as White (see Table 1). In addition to the overall bivariate comparisons, the file was split by each of the ethnic groups (Asian Americans, African Americans and Latino Americans) in order to determine whether similar relationships were found for each group (see Table 1). Similar to the overall correlations across all ethnic groups, Asian American targets that were perceived as being acculturated were also perceived as being White (see Table 1). The Latino American targets demonstrated a similar pattern. The Latino American targets that were perceived as being acculturated were also perceived as being White (see Table 1). Interestingly, no significant correlations between perceptions of acculturation and racial categorization were found for African American targets. In summary, our correlation table highlighted an existing relationship between perceptions of acculturation and racial categorization for Asian American and Latino American targets. However, that relationship was ethnicity dependent and no significant relationship was discovered for African Americans.

### Discussion

To our knowledge, the current study is the first exploration of the potential impact of socioeconomic status (SES) and biracial (half White/half Minority) ancestry on acculturation perceptions and the racial categorization of different ethnic groups. First, as predicted, ethnicity and ancestry interacted and influenced acculturation perceptions. Biracial Latino Americans were perceived as more acculturated compared to monoracial Latino Americans, and biracial Asian Americans were perceived as more acculturated compared to monoracial Asian Americans. For African American targets, however, ancestry did not significantly impact judgments of acculturation. In fact, African Americans were overall perceived to be more acculturated compared to both



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Asian Americans and Latino Americans. Thus, the cue of White ancestry may not have much influence on acculturation perceptions for all groups. These ethnic group differences may also be due to the perceived and actual immigrant populations in the United States. According to recent U.S. Census data (Grieco et al., 2012), the foreign born U.S. population consists predominantly of individuals born in Asia (28%) and Latin America (53%) compared to 4% born in African countries. These findings suggest that White ancestry largely cues acculturation for groups associated with regions that frequently migrate to the United States. For this reason, many American perceivers may hold beliefs associating immigration with Asian and Latino groups, which in turn may influence their perceptions of Asian Americans and Latino Americans. Future studies should examine the role of White ancestry in other populations that represent groups with high or low migration history in order to test the conditions and moderators of the link between White ancestry and acculturation.

Second, the current study found that ethnicity and socioeconomic status interacted and influenced acculturation perceptions. Individuals of a higher socioeconomic status were considered more acculturated than individuals of a low socioeconomic status, but only for Latino American targets. The restriction of this finding to Latino Americans was unexpected. Future studies should examine the stereotype content of various ethnic groups regarding SES to provide a complete picture of the role of SES in racial perception. These findings suggest that SES may be a crucial factor in determining the bias against Latino American targets. For instance, higher SES Latino American targets perceived as more acculturated may be less discriminated compared to lower SES Latino American targets.

Third, the correlation analyses showed that greater perceived acculturation was positively correlated with White racial categorization. The relationships between perceptions of Whiteness and acculturation mimic the previous findings of Devos and Banaji (2005) in such a way that perceived acculturation was highly associated with the White racial category. However, the relationship was only significant for Asian Americans and Latino Americans, not for African Americans. Again, the previous study examined this effect implicitly while the present correlations were formed via explicit perceptions. The lack of relationship for African Americans may be explained

by the conflicting perceptions of African Americans, where they are perceived as being the most American and the least White compared to both Latino Americans and Asian Americans.

Acculturation perceptions represent an important area of research because Americans may hold anti-immigration attitudes that may lead to bias against individuals who are perceived as less acculturated. Thus, biracials perceived as non-acculturated may experience discrimination faced by minorities. For example, prior research shows that individuals hold very negative attitudes towards individuals who do not speak English; it also shows that the former ones perceive this as a cultural threat that triggers anti-immigration attitudes and beliefs (Chandler & Tsai, 2001). As previously mentioned, recent findings suggest that there is a stigmatization against immigrants in the United States (Morin & Motel, 2013; Taylor et al., 2008). Anti-immigration attitudes may not only result in discrimination but may also result in lack of access to jobs, and marginalization of social resources (Schwartz et al., 2010).

The present study expanded on an existing body of research focused on White categorization and acculturation (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Devos & Heng, 2009; Devos & Ma, 2008; Devos et al., 2010; Rydell et al., 2010). While prior studies primarily examined implicit associations between racial groups and acculturation, our study concentrated on explicit judgments of racial categorization and acculturation. Additionally, our findings also further previous research demonstrating that ancestry is taken into account when forming perceptions (Sanchez et al., 2011). These findings also suggest that SES influences categorization of seemingly monoracial targets. The results of the current study follow the suggested pattern discovered by Penner and Saperstein (2008), where monoracial individuals were more likely to racially categorize themselves as Black if they had experienced a drop in their socioeconomic status. While this prior work compared racial categorizations before and after a change in SES, our single categorization still demonstrated the idea that high SES and White racial categorization are related, at least for monoracial targets.

The present study also demonstrates that perceptions of biracial individuals are malleable, depending on the cue (i.e., ancestry or SES) as well as on the ethnic group (i.e., Asian American, African

American, Latino American). This finding has important implications because it shows that perceptions of acculturation are complex and cue dependent. If acculturation perceptions of a group are malleable, then potential interactions with that group may be influenced as a result. For instance, specific biracial groups that are perceived as non-American may experience forms of discrimination not faced by other biracial groups. Additionally, participants' perceptions of biracial individuals may subsequently impact the way biracial individuals perceive themselves. Thus, institutions such as universities or workplaces should recognize that cues of one's ancestry might impact perceptions of being American and have the potential to influence behaviors, such as scholarship dispersal, and hiring or firing employees. Moreover, American citizens should recognize that these similar cues might impact decisions in the political sphere such as voting for a candidate.

### **Limitations and Caveats**

The present study simultaneously examined, for the first time, a combination of ancestry and SES cues, and how they influence perceptions of acculturation across three different ethnicities. Although the current study focused on Asian Americans, African Americans and Latino Americans, pictures were not used to aid in the phenotypic identification of the applicants. Following Sanchez et al. (2011), the participants may have made assumptions about the targets' phenotypic appearances and used these assumptions while forming impressions of the target. Future research should examine how the addition of phenotypic cues may further impact multiple perceptions. Additionally, the participant sample size was notably depreciated as a result of the Instructional Manipulation Check. More responses from the participants could have been included in the data if a greater quantity of participants had demonstrated proper attention to the survey. However, the inclusion of the Instructional Manipulation Check was allowed for more reliable data as well as for greater statistical power (Oppenheimer et al., 2009). Furthermore, despite the ease with which the participants were gathered from the reliable online survey source, the participants' ethnicities did not represent a diverse population. The sample was largely White American (80%) and thus, our conclusions are tempered by this limitation. In initial analyses, we included the participants' race as a factor in the ANOVA; however, no significant interactions were found with the participants' race. The non-significant effects may be

due to the low racial diversity in the participant pool. Thus, question about whether these findings hold for minority race populations perceiving other minorities remains outside of the scope of this paper. Increasing the sample of minority participants would yield results that are more statistically representative of the American population. Future research should examine if the current findings hold for a more diverse participants' sample.

Our final limitation to the study was the use of English language proficiency as the primary measure of acculturation into American society and the reliance on a college essay to cue SES. Prior work suggests that acculturation is a multidimensional model composed of various interrelated items that include language and other cultural indicators (Schwartz et al., 2010); nevertheless, it is unclear whether other measures of acculturation would lead to similar results. Similarly, using the college essay rather than the occupational status as the SES cue may influence the results. Utilizing visual images of clothing depicting status or occupation to manipulate SES may be a more salient cue than an essay (Freeman et al., 2011; Weeks & Lupfer, 2004). Future research should include broader measures of acculturation and see how different types of SES cues may influence specific aspects of acculturation.

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates the importance of cues of SES and biracial ancestry in acculturation and racial categorization perceptions, and how these cues differ for perceptions of Asian Americans, Latino Americans, and African Americans. Results show that SES and biracial ancestry serve to influence both acculturation perceptions and racial categorization, which may have important implications for prejudice and intergroup relations. Moreover, this work adds to a limited but growing literature on biracial populations, for whom categorization is complex. These findings suggest that categorizing Asian American and Latino American biracial individuals as White may result in perceiving them as Americans.

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