

The “Linsanity” Effect: To Break the Anti-Asian American Stereotypes

Jeremy Lin was a name that meant nothing - until now. His name, image, and representations in the world of sports have become rampant in television, newspapers, and the Internet. His phenomenal story of triumph is an important topic of conversation for both sports fans and academic researchers from all around the world. The global whirlwind of “Linsanity” is generated by Jeremy Lin’s outstanding performances in the National Basketball Association (NBA). Having been “the New York Knicks” former benchwarmer and now worldwide basketball sensation” (Elina Noor, 2012, p.1), Jeremy Shu-How Lin, the 2010 Harvard University graduate, has become “the new Cinderella Man or ‘Linderella’ of basketball, and maybe even more” (p.1).

As the first American-born player of Chinese-Taiwanese descent in NBA history, the entire racial group of Asian American stands with Lin at the threshold of an extraordinary moment in NBA history. During the prevalence of “Linsanity” and the unprecedented media coverage on Asian Americans in sports, we become interested in what effect such widespread exposure to a positive, counter-stereotypic exemplar might produce on the anti-Asian American prejudice and stereotyping.

Asian Americans share a long history of prejudice and stereotyping, ranging from denigrated as “coolies” in mid-nineteenth Century, propagandized to be “enemy race” during World War II period to the well-educated but excessive competent immigrants and silent “model minority” (Lin et al., 2005). Rick Reilly stated in ESPN in Feb 2012, “People who don't think stereotypes exist are crazy. If Lin's white, he's either a good

shooter or heady. If he's Asian, he's good at math. We're not taking him” (Reilly, February 14, 2012). However, during these months, Americans are treated with the “Linsanity” and the extensive exposure to Lin’s positive exemplar, which contradict the negative stereotypes of Asian Americans. "Maybe I can help break the stereotype," as Lin said in an interview (San Francisco Chronicle, p. B-3, July 22, 2010).

Moreover, recent research proposes that exposure to counter-stereotypic groups members could result in changes in stereotyping attitudes associated with social groups (e.g. Conrey et al., 2005; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006). It is possible that the “Linsanity” and the concomitant level of media exposure may influence the ideas and feelings that come to mind when people think about Asian Americans. In part to broaden the study of prejudice and stereotyping, the present study attempts to investigate whether Lin's positive exemplars as an Asian American are highly accessible in one's mind and would be related to lower levels of implicit prejudice and stereotyping, as well as study how changes in anti-Asian American prejudice and stereotyping are correlated to the exposure of Lin's positive portrayal in media.

The success of Jeremy Lin goes beyond his personal professional achievement. The possible effects that might have on the changes within anti-Asian American prejudice are important to the study area of racial stereotyping. However, the nature of prejudice against Asian Americans as a “model minority” has not been thoroughly examined due to the main focus related to Black-White concern. In addition, by exploring whether there are potential correlations between media exposure and

stereotypic attitudes, we will contribute to the research filed in terms of the effects of counter-stereotypic racial exemplars in media on the modification of the consumers' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and actions.

Literature Review

The term “stereotype” is a crucial part of social science. Lippmann first coined the term “stereotype” and recognized it as “part of a simplifying mechanism to handle the real environment which is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance” (1922, p. 16). Quasthoff (1978) defined a stereotype as “the verbal expression of a belief which is directed towards social groups or single persons as members of these groups”, which has “the logical form of a judgment which ascribes or denies certain properties (traits or forms of behavior) to a set of persons in a (logically unwarrantably simplifying and generalizing way, with an emotionally evaluative tendency)” (Quasthoff, 1978, p. 6).

Although stereotypes are often recognized as negative, there are both positive and negative stereotypes in our society (Lee et al., 2009). Rather than derogatory, Ashmore and Del Boca (1981) claimed the term stereotype to be descriptive, that is, could be positive or negative perceptions, beliefs, or judgments. Gorham (1999) described stereotypical perceptions by using the term “racial myths”. Thus we can see that racial stereotypes are one of the most important parts in critically analyzing and composing research in this area of study.

Racial stereotypes against Asian Americans

Studies have identified current stereotypes towards various racial groups (e.g. Fisher, 1994; Niemann, Jennings, Rozelle, Baxter, & Sullivan, 1994). Caucasians are generally stereotyped to be intelligent, egotistical and friendly as they showed to be the race receiving the highest scores in positive traits, whereas African Americans tend to be stereotyped as inferior, athletic, violent, and antagonistic (Niemann et al., 1994). For years, the racial stereotype has been typically treated as if it were strictly a Black-White concern (Lin et al., 2005). Therefore, to get an understanding of how racial prejudice has been constructed on Asian Americans, or how they have been racialized, scholars are required to look outside of the Black-White racial binary.

The history of Asian Americans range from the arrival of the first Chinese laborers in Hawaii in the mid-nineteenth century to the recent arrival of Southeast Asian refugees in the 1960s (Lin et al., 2005), which mainly include Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Asian Indians, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians etc. As the fastest growing racial minority in the United States, Asian Americans have recently been lauded as the “model minority” and their accomplishments have been affirmed as the realization of the American dream. Yet, Asian Americans have been traditionally perceived as foreigners in their borne country and thus encounter discrimination in higher education and employment (Takaki, 1989).

Research has found stereotypical traits attributed to the stereotypes associated with Asian American, including the following: affluent, highly educated, holding managerial professional occupations, and rapidly growing in number (Fisher, 1994).

Niemann et al. (1994) identified the stereotypes held towards Asian Americans include such top elements as intelligent, soft speakers, and short in stature. Based on the twin interpersonal dimensions of competence and sociability (Rosenberg, Nelson, & Vivekananthan, 1968), in the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), Asian Americans, as an outgroup, commonly fall into the cluster that is respected as high in competence but disliked as lacking warmth, which suggests a mixed nature of this prejudice of admiration, resentment, and envy towards Asian Americans (Lin et al., 2005). Given the two dimensions of excessive competence and deficient sociability differentiated in anti-Asian American stereotypes, Lin et al. (2005) further constructed the Scale of Anti-Asian American Stereotypes (SAAAS) to demonstrate the viability of a mixed, envious stereotype against Asian Americans.

Besides SAAAS, researchers adopted a variety of methodologies in their study conducted to explore common stereotypical traits associated with different racial groups such as opinion polls (McAneny, 1993), content analysis (Taylor & Stern, 1997), free response and cluster analysis (Niemann et al., 1994), and 7-point scale (Tan et al., 1997). The Big-Five personality traits, which were identified as extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (Costa and McCrae, 1996) were also frequently used as a tool for measuring perceptions of personality traits (stereotypes) for different ethnic groups (e.g. Lee et al., 2009).

The Impact of Counter-stereotypic Exemplars on Racial Beliefs

Recent studies have provided evidences that support the correlation between

positive and counter-stereotypic exemplars and decrease in implicit prejudice and stereotyping towards corresponding racial groups. For example, Dasgupta and Greenwald (2001) found that participants tend to reflect less racial bias than control participants when exposed to a series of well-known positive Black exemplars (e.g., Martin Luther King) and negative White exemplars (e.g., Al Capone). By conducting three experiments, Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Waenke (1995) articulated that momentarily salient outgroup exemplars of highly successful African-Americans influence White intergroup's attitudes and beliefs about the economic and political status of African-Americans as a whole, which may suggest decreased discriminatory barriers to black success. Plant, Devine, Cox, Columb, Miller, Goplen, & Peruche (2009) explored the effects of Barack Obama's presidential campaign and the resulting high level of exposure to the positive, counter-stereotypic Black exemplar, on the decrease in prejudice and stereotyping among non-Black participants.

While the majority of previous research on the exemplars' effect restricted the target outgroup in African Americans, little attention has been given to the group of Asian Americans. It might be a result of the Black-White traditions in stereotype studies, but more importantly, it could reflect the unrepresentative status of Asian Americans in American society from past to present times. Although there have been quite a few successful Asian Americans within American society, such as Anna May Wong, Ellison Shoji Onizuka, and Loung Ung, certain personal and context factors might prevent them from having a wide influence as positive and counter-stereotypic exemplars

in the United States.

Jeremy Lin, then, becomes extraordinarily important and outstanding in the histories of Asian Americans, since he received unprecedented and widespread coverage through the media. Most of the media portrayals of Lin are positive and counter-stereotypic (Noor, 2012). Thus, conducting the current research to study the effect of Jeremy Lin as a positive, counter-stereotypic exemplar on the possible changes in anti-Asian American prejudice and stereotyping would be of great significance to fill the void regarding Asian Americans in the research field of racial stereotypes. Based upon the above scenarios, the following hypothesis is posited:

H1: The higher level Jeremy Lin is perceived as a positive and counter-stereotypic exemplar, the lower level the anti-Asian American prejudice and stereotyping will be implicated.

Stereotypes and Media Use

There is a substantial history of theoretical and empirical research studying the effects of media exposure on the construction and maintenance of consumers' social perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in the domains of mass communication, social and cognitive psychology. These studies have found that media use has played a meaningful role in the development of racial cognitions and behaviors (Mastro, 2009).

Several mass communication theories collectively explain a link between existing stereotypes and media exposure. For example, the cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002) postulated that repeated exposure to media with

a more-or-less consistent set of messages might cultivate a worldview that increasingly reflects the perspective of the media. Gerbner et al. (2002) asserted that viewers are more likely to accept media portrayals as valid and real when the media vision is consumed frequently, that is, cultivation process works when one is heavily exposed to stereotypical contents in the media.

While cultivation theory explains media effects primarily from the perspective of media consumption, the social cognitive theory addresses the development of individual cognition resulting from observation, by explaining how attitudes, values, and behaviors can be learned through the process of observing others (Tan, Fujioka, & Lucht, 1997). The audiences may eventually perceive media images to be authentic with heavy exposure to the virtual world constructed by the media, that is, the heavy media consuming shapes audiences' beliefs and conceptions of reality (Lee et al., 2009).

In terms of representation of Asian Americans in media, only between 1% and 3% of the characters were constituted by them on primetime TV, who composed 4% of the U.S. population (Mastro, 2009). Moreover, Asian Americans are portrayed primarily as minor and non-recurring roles, who are often characterized by their passive nature as traditional and conservative (p. 328).

Thus, in the case of "Linsanity", most white Americans as ingroup are limited with direct contact and experience with Jeremy Lin as the positive media characters representing Asian American performing rewarding activities. The media, then, becomes a tool for the ingroup to observe Lin and the minority group and form

subsequent perceptions. In this way, media exposure might contribute to the shaping or changing of racial stereotypes towards Asian Americans. Lee et al. (2009) argues that “individual reality is in part constructed by the surrounding social world, with the media being one part of that social reality” (p. 98). The dependence on the media for information about the world promotes the social cognitive process. Lee et al. (2009) also found that heavy television viewers hold stereotypes of Asians closer to the media portrayal when compared with lighter viewers (p. 98). Gorham (1999) mentioned the important role played by the media in contributing to the building and maintenance of racial myths as a result of the repetitively and heavily exposure to consumers on the language and contextual associations related to mythical viewpoints. In addition, the extensive media exposure of Lin emphasizes Lin’s successful, positive, and counter-stereotypic images, which might make the influence more strong in the process.

Therefore, both cultivation theory and social cognitive theory provide a rich foundation for the analysis of television use and stereotypes. In order to explore the correlation between the media exposure of Lin’s positive and counter-stereotypic images and the changes in White Americans’ anti-Asian American prejudice and stereotyping, the following is predicted:

H2: The higher level of exposure to Jeremy Lin's positive and counter-stereotypic media portrayal, the lower level of anti-Asian American prejudice and stereotyping will be implicated.

Methodology

To test our two hypotheses, we will conduct two studies to create the scale of anti-Asian American Stereotypes and demonstrate the correlation between exemplar effects of Jeremy Lin and changes in stereotypes as well as the link between media use and perceived stereotypes. Study 1 will use an exploratory factor analysis to examine the factor structure of the scale items to measure prejudice or stereotyping towards Asian Americans. Study 2 is designed to use these scale items as the results of Study 1 to measure participants' stereotypic or counter-stereotypic perceptions towards Jeremy Lin and Asian Americans, and their frequency of media exposure to Jeremy Lin.

Study 1

Sampling. Based on the budgets, we plan to invite 100 white college student volunteers from a southeast university in the United States as the initial sample to participate in two separate survey groups, 50 for each. We choose white students because they are the target respondents as the ingroup in American population, where the prejudice and stereotyping towards outgroup mainly comes from. Generally, we select samples from college students because sports culture is dominate in campus and basketball is one of the most popular sports in United States. Thus, American college students tend to concern about sports information, and have more thoughts on sports related issues. We will invite students by posters and online invitations in the university, where white students constitute the major population. We will close the volunteer recruitment access once we collect more than 50 feedbacks from white students.

Procedure. Gifts are given as benefits for participating in the survey. Date and place will be notified in the recruitment announcement. A white instructor is assigned to instruct the entire survey process. At the beginning of survey, an instruction will be announced, which covers the purpose of survey, secrecy of data and thanks to all the respondents. Respondents in Group 1 will be asked to list ten adjectives come up to their mind when thinking about Jeremy Lin, whereas Group 2 will be required to list 5 sentences express any Asian American stereotypes they could call to their first mind as well as thoughts they anticipated other students might hold when they think of Asian American. All the adjectives and thoughts will be recorded into excel documents.

Measurement. Assuming respondents will turn to be conservative rather than reflect their true feelings when they have to do both of the two groups' assignments, we split the participants into two groups for the sake of gathering two group of independent data.

Data Analysis. The collected data will be induced by factor analysis to generate scale items for measurement in future questionnaire to test the hypotheses, which will be analyzed as significant variables. The scale items we identify from Group 1 will be used to measure the counter-stereotypic level of Jeremy Lin's exemplar images perceived in white Americans' minds, while the scales from Group 2 will be use as measurement in the section of implicit anti-Asian American prejudice and stereotypes in white Americans' perceptions. All the results gained from study 1 will be re-arranged and used for designing a scientific research questionnaire in Study 2.

Study 2

Sampling. Here if our budget permits, we shall set the target amount of respondents no less than 100. Considering that the anticipated participants might be of various ethnicities, we will send out over 300 mail invitations for online survey to students from another Southeast university in the United States so as to make sure we can collect at least 200 valid questionnaires from White American students. A simple-random-sampling will be conducted to select 200 valid sample from the responses.

Procedure. We will get 300 on campus email address from the deans of several colleges in the university and ask them to forward the invitation email for the online survey to the students in their college so as to increase the response rate. The purpose of the research and the link to the online survey will be provided in each invitation email. An instruction is available at the beginning of the online survey. We will remind of our identification of graduate students and our research purpose of class final paper to all the respondents in order to increase the authenticity of our research and the response rate of the online survey.

Measurement. A questionnaire is designed to measure the stereotypic or anti-stereotypic perceptions of White Americans towards Jeremy Lin and Asian Americans. The online survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. Basically, the survey questionnaire consists of five main sections. Participants will be asked to report their race and whether they know about Jeremy Lin first by choice questions to

rule out the non-White participants and those who know nothing about Jeremy Lin, following by rating their frequency of exposure to Jeremy Lin from media by multiple choices, then describing their perceptions towards Jeremy Lin by scales of adjective items generated from Group 1 in Study 1, as well as measuring their perceived anti-Asian American prejudice and stereotypes by Likart Scale and scale items induced from Group 2 in Study 1, and ending with demographic measures.

An instruction will be announced at the beginning of the online survey, in which the research purposes and survey contents will be stated completely. We also note the information we collect from the survey will be confidential and anonymous and express our thanks to the time and efforts taken by participants to complete the online survey.

In Section 1 of the questionnaire, we set several simple choice questions to rule out the invalid questionnaires. Assuming we have now already received 200 responses from all the respondents, they might be completed by respondents of races other than our target subject--White American. To rule out non-White participants, the first question will be "how would you describe your race/ ethnicity?" After the race selection, we ask them to report whether they know about Jeremy Lin. If a respondent choose "I don't know who Jeremy Lin is", a "quit the questionnaire" reminder should be involved to save time and labour.

To prove the H2, we will measure the level of frequency of the participants' exposure to Lin's media portrayal. To this part, in Section 2, we set a question "how frequent have you exposed to the information about Jeremy Lin from media source?"

The choice will be ranging from "several times a day" to "once a month".

We then integrate the scale items generated from Study 1 into the section 3 and section 4 of the online survey. To test H1, we use scales items identified from Group 2 in Study 1 to measure the participants' perceived anti-Asian American prejudice and stereotyping, combining with a Likert Scale. The scale items will be descriptive statements regarding to the anti-Asian stereotypes, such as "Asians think they are smarter than everyone else", "Asians are working all the time", "Asians are not as social as other groups of people", and "Asians have less fun compared to other social groups" etc. A Likert Scale will be designed to measure the level of implicit stereotype in each item, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). We will reverse-word some of the scale items to control the acquiescence bias.

Likewise, we use the same way to measure respondents' perceptions on Jeremy Lin as a counter-stereotypic exemplar. We will list several descriptive sentences as measures on Lin based on the adjective scale items identified from Group 1 in Study 1. For instance, we will list items like "Lin is a excellent basketball player". A Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) is designed as response options.

Statistical Analysis. After we collect enough data in a big enough sample, the most significant step before analysis is "Data Entry", during which we enter all the data into SPSS and set up our variables with related labels and essential values. Then "crosstab" analysis will be conducted to test the correlations between different variables.

Final Analysis is built on the factors induced from factor analysis to measure the

variables so as to test two Hypotheses. Through cross tab analysis, we can get the "sig value" under Pearson chi-square Test to judge whether the correlation is supported. If the $\text{sig} < 0.05$, it demonstrates a significant correlation relationship between two variables. After the statistical analysis, we can draw conclusions by describing the results from all the integrated crosstab charts and values.

(Note: A tentative sample for the survey questionnaire in Study 2 is attached as a appendix. Since we haven't conduct the Study 1 yet, the scale items are draw from rough predictions for better understanding of my research method only. The final scale items used in the questionnaire will be based on the results induced from the factor analysis in Study 1.)

Discussion

In this two study, an attempt is made to investigate participants' stereotypic or counter-stereotypic perceptions of Jeremy Lin and Asian Americans as well as their exposure to the media exposure of "Linsanity". In particular, participants will be asked to listed the first five thoughts that came to mind when they think of Asian Americans in Study 1, based on which we identify the dimensions and clusters for the measurement in Study 2. We design the study 2 to measure the perceived personality characteristics of Jeremy Lin and Asian Americans based on the dimensions we found in Study 1. Participants will also identify how frequently they are exposed to media portrayal of Jeremy Lin. Cultivation and social cognitive theory are used as the context for assessing the impact of heavy television observations on changing anti-Asian American

prejudice and stereotyping. In order to test our hypotheses, cross tab analysis will be conducted to examine whether there is a correlation between exemplar effects and stereotypes, as well as media use and stereotypes.

There are several limitations in this study. First of all, given the nature of researching stereotypes of ethnic groups is sensitive, there are several issues when we considering the validity of the data. We cannot ensure that by the self-report measures, what we obtained reflect the individuals' true feelings about other races. In addition, the participants in the study are college students, which means the findings cannot be generalized to the entire public. Also, the participants were all Caucasians as we assume them to be ingroup against Asian Americans as outgroup. Future analysis could be conducted to measure the effects on a more diverse sample of participants in order to detect differences of effects between ingroup and other outgroups such as African Americans and Latino Americans. Finally, we encourage caution in drawing overly strong conclusions from the possible correlations.

We should also note that the longevity of these effects is unclear. Jeremy might continue to be a salient and highly activated Asian American exemplar as a NBA star. On the other hand, he could be subtyped and thus reducing his general impact. Furthermore, the current popularity of "Linsanity" does not mean Lin may remain to an exemplar for his future role. If his professional career is continuously highly successful, he will be more likely to change anti-Asian American stereotypes. Otherwise, the result may be less positive.

The survey instrument also contains a large quantity of questions about stereotypes, some are related to stereotypes and some are not, so as to disguise the true nature of the study. It aims to avoid defensive reactions or response bias, but may lead to some confusion among respondents as well. Future study is also needed to validate the dimensions we identify from Study 1 for the perceived anti-Asian American stereotype among Whites.

Theoretical implications for this research are notable. The potential positive and counter-stereotypic effects of Jeremy that might lead to reduction in implicit racial bias could have a range of encouraging implications. Historically, the negative anti-Asian American biases led to prejudiced behaviors that are not easily controllable and might contribute to the perpetuation of prejudice and stereotyping (Devine, 1989). As all participants are White college students, it will also be essential to examine the effects of “Linsanity” for the attitudes and experiences of Asian Americans themselves.

Furthermore, this study may contribute to the development of communication research and the theories of cultivation theory and social cognition theory, since they are used as a framework for understanding of the present findings. Also, further study should continue to assess the different factors interacting to shape individuals’ perception of other racial groups and the media ‘s role in the process.

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Appendix 1

(Note: A tentative sample for the survey questionnaire in Study 2 is attached here as a appendix. Since we haven't conducted the Study 1 yet, the scale items are draw from rough predictions for better understanding of my research method only. The final scale items used in the questionnaire will be based on the results induced from the factor analysis in Study 1.)

Questionnaire Draft for Online Survey

Instruction:

Dear Participants,

Hello!

We are a group of graduate students from College of Journalism and Communication, University of Florida. We are so grateful that you join us and support our research. In this questionnaire, several questions are set, including single choice question, multi-choice question and scale. You are required to check the boxes next to each item you choose. Please check those choices first come to your mind and you might as well not obliterate. Please don't worry about your privacy because this research is completely anonymous to the public. We are responsible for your personal information. All the data collected will be only used to social research. We guarantee we won't make profits via this research!

Thanks for your cooperation. After finishing your questionnaire please send it back to the email address below. We will mail you a fancy gift for your patience and cooperation.

Have a nice day!

Q1. How would you describe your race/ethnicity?

- A. White
- B. Black
- C. Yellow
- D. Brown

Q2. Do you know about the person in the picture?



- A. Yes
- B. No (Quit the questionnaire. Thanks for your cooperation.)

Q.3 How frequently have you exposed to this player from media source?

- A. Several times a day
- B. Everyday
- C. Two times a week
- D. Once a week
- E. Once a Month

Q.4 Read the statements below and check your best choice.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Asians are hard working					
Asians are smarter than others					
I know nothing about Asian American					
Asians are not easygoing					
Asians work the whole day					
Asians are normally isolated					
I don't want to make friends with Asian					
Asians are shy and quiet					
Asians never relax					

Q.5 Read the statement about Jeremy Lin below and check your best choice.

Statements	Yes	No
Jeremy is easygoing		
Jeremy Lin is a good team player		
Jeremy Lin is not confident		
Jeremy Lin is good at both sports and study		
Jeremy Lin is a star		
Jeremy Lin is humorous		
Asian can play basketball well too		
Jeremy Lin's success is due to his efforts		
Jeremy Lin is smart		

Q.6 Do you know any other Asian player in NBA?

If you do, list them here: _____

Q.7 Jeremy was once posted on the cover of _____. (Magazine)

- A. Life
- B. Fortune
- C. People
- D. Times

Q.8 Which university did Jeremy Lin graduate?

- A. Princeton University
- B. Harvard University
- C. University of Florida
- D. Brown University

Q.9 When did you hear of "Linsanity" for the first time

- A. Last year
- B. in January
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-

- C. in February
- D. in 2008

Q.10 Please leave your information here. They are all kept absolutely safe.

Name:
Gender:
Age:
Highest Degree:
Major:
Favorite Sport:
Face book:
E-mail Address: