

Finally, Someone Who “Gets” Me! Multiracial People Value Others’ Accuracy About Their Race

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Monoracial people typically encounter correct views about their race from others. Multiracial people, however, encounter different views about their race depending on the situation. As a result, multiracial (but not monoracial) people may regard race as a less visible aspect of the self that they hope others will verify during social interactions. Multiracial people should therefore value others’ accuracy about their race more than monoracial people. In Study 1, multiracial and monoracial participants expected to meet a partner who was accurate or confused about their racial backgrounds. Multiracial (but not monoracial) participants reported heightened interest in interacting with an accurate partner. In Study 2, multiracial (but not monoracial) participants perceived accurate partners as more likely than confused partners to fulfill their needs for self-verification during an interaction. Increased expectations for self-verification, moreover, explained multiracial (but not monoracial) participants’ heightened interest in interacting with accurate partners. The results suggest that multiracial (but not monoracial) people view race as an aspect of the self (like personality traits or values) requiring verification from others during interactions.

Keywords: multiracial identity, social interactions, self-verification

Psychologists have examined how perceivers sort members of multiple racial groups (multiracial people) into racial categories (Chen & Hamilton, 2012; Ho, Sidanius, Levin, & Banaji, 2011; Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008). However, psychologists have paid little attention to how multiracial individuals feel about the different racial labels applied to them. Unlike people who belong to a single racial group (monoracial people), who encounter consistently correct views about their race from others (Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Remedios, Chasteen, Rule, & Plaks, 2011), multiracial people encounter different views about their race in different situations (Chen & Hamilton, 2012; Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009). Multiracial individuals of both White and minority ancestry, for example, may be mistakenly perceived as monoracial members of their minority groups (Ho et al., 2011; Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008). In other situations, multiracial people encounter confusion about their race from others because they are more likely than monoracial people to be racially

ambiguous (Townsend et al., 2009).¹ In her book, *What Are You? Voices of Mixed-Race Young People*, for example, Gaskins (1999) related the stories of 45 multiracial individuals. Many respondents revealed that it was common for them to begin conversing with another person, only for that person to interrupt and ask, “So, what are you, anyway?” Indeed, it is unclear whether multiracial people ever experience the effortless understanding that characterizes contexts in which others are accurate about their race. As a result, whereas monoracial people may take others’ accuracy about their race for granted, multiracial people may highly value others’ accuracy about their race. We conducted two experimental studies to investigate this possibility.

Few studies have examined multiracial individuals’ reactions to how others perceive their race, despite the fact that multiracial people represent one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States (Shih & Sanchez, 2009). Past research, however, has identified both advantages and disadvantages associated with being multiracial. Compared with monoracial people, multiracial people are less susceptible to race-based memory biases (Pauker & Ambady, 2009) and are better able to maintain high levels of academic performance when race-based stereotypes about poor performance are salient (Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007). In contrast, multiracial people are stereotyped as less socially skilled than monoracial people because they are rejected by both majority and minority groups in society (Chesley & Wagner, 2003; Jackman, Wagner, & Johnson, 2001; Remedios, Chasteen, & Oey, 2012; Sanchez & Bonam, 2009). In addition, multiracial people feel pressured by others to identify with traditional racial catego-

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¹ It is not the case that all multiracial people are racially ambiguous. Researchers generally agree, however, that racial ambiguity is correlated with multiraciality (Pauker et al., 2009; Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008).

ries that fail to capture their racial complexity (Shih & Sanchez, 2005), particularly in situations in which others express confusion about their race (Townsend et al., 2009).

The observations of Townsend and colleagues (2009) reveal that multiracial people cannot assume that their race is obvious to others. Virtually all that we know about the perspectives of racially stigmatized people, however, builds on the premise that race is obvious. In the current article, we examine whether multiracial people value others' accuracy about their race. According to self-verification theory, people desire to be perceived accurately during social interactions (Swann, 1983, 1987) because individuals know what is expected and assumed of them by accurate perceivers (Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992). Swann et al. (1992) discovered that self-rated unsociable individuals preferred interaction partners who evaluated them negatively because individuals felt reassured by accurate partners that their own self-perceptions were true. Unsociable people also felt that interactions with negative evaluators would proceed smoothly because negative evaluators knew what to expect from them. Similarly, we predicted that multiracial people assume that people who are accurate about their race make good interaction partners because accurate partners reassure multiracial people that their own self-perceptions (i.e., that they belong to multiple, definable racial groups) are true.

Given that self-verification is an important psychological need that all people strive to fulfill (Swann, 1983, 1987), why should only multiracial (not monoracial) people value interaction partners who are accurate about their racial backgrounds? Although encountering accuracy may be positive for multiracial and monoracial people alike, it is important to consider the distinction between positive affect and self-verification in order to understand multiracial and monoracial individuals' reactions to accurate racial categorizations. We are interested in self-verification, in particular, and we predict that accurate perceptions about race cause only multiracial people to feel that their self-verification needs will be met during social interactions. For multiracial people, race represents a less visible aspect of identity (like other less visible traits, such as personality traits) that has the potential to provoke unpredictable reactions from perceivers. Indeed, multiracial people are more likely to view racial groups as flexible, socially constructed groups (Shih et al., 2007; Shih & Sanchez, 2009) rather than as fixed, immutable categories (Haslam & Whelan, 2008). Although viewing race as flexible conveys many advantages to multiracial people (e.g., multiracial people are less likely to perceive relevant stereotypes as threatening; Shih et al., 2007), viewing race as flexible may also foster a preoccupation among multiracial people with how others perceive their race (Townsend et al., 2009). To the extent that targets view their own identity cues as flexible, and therefore as likely to provoke unpredictable reactions from perceivers, targets will seek accurate judgments from others about their identities (Swann, 1984).

For monoracial people, in contrast, race is highly visible. Perceivers rarely make mistakes when judging the races of monoracial targets (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Remedios et al., 2011), indicating that monoracial people should be able to predict, with a high degree of accuracy, how others will see them. As a result, race should not represent a characteristic of the self that monoracial people need others to verify. Instead, monoracial people likely view their own race as immutable and incontrovertible—as a “fact” about the self. Support for this idea comes from work

showing that people tend to think of monoracial members of different racial groups as representing “natural kinds,” such that one group possesses stable qualities and attributes that make the group fundamentally different from other groups (Haslam & Whelan, 2008). Although past work suggests that monoracial minorities prefer others who are accurate about their cultural backgrounds (Flores & Huo, 2013), it is also likely that monoracial minorities encounter inaccuracy about their (specific) cultural backgrounds more often than inaccuracy about their (broad) racial backgrounds. We predicted, therefore, that monoracial individuals would not feel strongly about the relatively less salient issue of others' accuracy about their race.

In two studies, we explored whether multiracial, but not monoracial, people value others' accuracy about their race. We predicted that multiracial people expecting to meet accurate (vs. confused) partners would show increased interest in interacting with their partners. It is important to note that, in the present studies, we compared accuracy about race with confusion about race, rather than with *inaccuracy* about race. Past research suggests that individuals dislike interaction partners who incorrectly categorize them as members of the wrong ethnic or cultural groups because incorrect categorizations provoke experiences of *social identity threat* (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Flores & Huo, 2013). Social identity threat refers to the experience of being categorized in a manner that is inconsistent with one's self-perceptions (Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten, & Smith, 2010; Ellemers & Barreto, 2006). It is possible that multiracial people, like monoracial minorities, experience social identity threat when they are incorrectly categorized by others. Multiracial people, however, can be incorrectly categorized in many different ways (e.g., as monoracial, as belonging to multiple incorrect groups). Indeed, it is unclear whether multiracial people encounter some types of incorrect categorizations more often than others. In contrast, it is clear that multiracial people often encounter confusion about their race (Gaskins, 1999; Townsend et al., 2009). As a result, we examined participants' reactions to others' confusion (vs. others' inaccuracy) in the current work.

Overview and Hypotheses

We reasoned that, because others' perceptions of their racial backgrounds are highly unpredictable, multiracial people should desire accurate partners who verify their racial identities. In contrast, because others' perceptions of monoracial individuals' racial backgrounds are highly predictable, monoracial people should not view race as an aspect of the self requiring verification from others. In Study 1, we examined how multiracial and monoracial individuals react when exposed to a particular individual's accuracy or confusion about their race. We hypothesized that multiracial, but not monoracial, people would show heightened interest in engaging in interactions with an accurate partner. In Study 2, we examined the processes underlying multiracial individuals' reactions to others' accuracy. Specifically, we tested whether multiracial, but not monoracial, individuals perceive partners who are accurate about their race as more likely than partners who are confused about their race to fulfill their self-verification needs.

Study 1

Method

Participants. Eighty undergraduate students (50 female, 30 male) participated to earn course credit. Participants' average age was 19.29 years ($SD = 3.13$). We considered participants to be multiracial if they indicated that they were mixed-race during a previous mass testing session and also confirmed during the experiment that their parents belonged to different races. We excluded one student because she did not meet these criteria. The final sample included 43 multiracial people (11 White/East Asian, 9 White/Black, 2 White/Middle Eastern, 2 White/South Asian, 2 Latin/Middle Eastern, 2 Black/East Asian, 2 White/Latin, 1 East Asian/South Asian, 1 Middle Eastern/South Asian, 1 Black/South Asian). In 10 cases, self-identified multiracial participants indicated that one or both of their parents were multiracial.² Thirty-six participants were monoracial minorities (27 East Asian, 4 South Asian, 2 Black, 2 Latin, 1 Middle Eastern). We did not include White participants in the current experiment because literature suggests that White people are generally unconcerned about race and others' perceptions of their race (Allport, 1954). We examine this issue further in Study 2.

Procedure. The experimenter informed participants that they would trade photos with another student. Participants posed for their photo and then saw the photo of a White male (the fictional partner) whom they expected to later meet. The experimenter instructed participants to indicate their partner's race on a form that listed several ethnic groups. The form also provided a blank space for "comments" (see Appendix). The experimenter then left the testing room to ostensibly retrieve the partner's form.

At this point, participants were randomly assigned to an accurate- or a confused-partner condition. Multiracial participants in the accurate-partner condition saw that the partner completed the form about them by correctly identifying the components of their race in the comments section. Monoracial participants in this condition saw that the partner specified the correct race by circling the appropriate ethnic group. (Responses for the accurate condition were determined by participants' self-identification during pretesting.) Participants in the confused-partner condition saw that the partner wrote in a comments section, "Honestly, I don't know what race this person is." Participants then completed an 8-item scale assessing their interest in the upcoming interaction (e.g., "How well do you expect to get along with this person?" and "How compatible do you expect to be with this person?"; $M = 4.60$, $SD = .67$, $\alpha = .82$). Participants rated these items on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*). In fact, no interaction took place. At the end of the study, participants were fully debriefed. No participants expressed suspicion about the legitimacy of the interaction task.

Results

We conducted a 2 (Participant Race: multiracial or monoracial) \times 2 (Partner Condition: accurate or confused) ANOVA, followed by simple effects tests (Games & Howell, 1976), to test the effects of participant race and partner condition on interaction interest (see Table 1). The results revealed the predicted Participant Race \times Partner Condition interaction on interaction interest, $F(1, 75) = 7.86$,

$p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$. No significant main effects emerged. Multiracial participants expecting to meet an accurate partner ($M = 4.96$, $SD = .73$) anticipated having a more positive interaction with that person than multiracial participants expecting to meet a confused partner ($M = 4.39$, $SD = .54$), $t(75) = 2.18$, $p = .03$, $r = .25$. Monoracial participants' interaction expectations were not affected by the manipulation ($M_{\text{Accurate}} = 4.39$, $SD = .74$; $M_{\text{Confused}} = 4.65$, $SD = .61$), $t(75) = -.92$, $p = .36$ (see Figure 1). The results show that multiracial people, but not monoracial people, report more interest in interacting with accurate partners than in interacting with confused partners.

Discussion

In Study 1, we discovered that multiracial and monoracial individuals react to others' accuracy about race in divergent ways. We observed that others' accuracy about race causes multiracial, but not monoracial, people to report heightened interest in social interactions. This result supports our perspective that multiracial people (but not monoracial people) value others' accuracy about their race. Based on these data, however, the reason why others' accuracy positively affects multiracial people remains unclear. We have suggested that multiracial people are more likely than monoracial people to value accuracy about their race because race is an aspect of the self about which multiracial, but not monoracial, people seek verification from others. Perceivers' reactions to the racial backgrounds of multiracial people tend to be unpredictable, so targets should value accurate judgments (Swann, 1984). In contrast, perceivers rarely make mistakes when judging the races of monoracial targets (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Remedios et al., 2011). Monoracial people, as a result, should not seek verification from others about their race. In Study 2, we explored whether others' accuracy indicates to multiracial people (but not to monoracial people) that multiracial individuals' psychological needs for self-verification will be met during social interactions.

Study 2

As in Study 1, participants in Study 2 were randomly assigned to learn that a future interaction partner was accurate or confused about their racial backgrounds. In addition, we added several new dependent measures to the current study in order to examine the mechanism underlying participants' reactions to the partner's perceptions of their racial backgrounds. First, we measured how surprised participants were by the partner's description of them. We included this measure to examine whether encountering accuracy surprises unsuspecting multiracial individuals who rarely encounter correct others, but confirms the expectations of monoracial individuals who almost always know that others are able to discern their racial backgrounds.

Second, we assessed the amount of negative affect experienced by participants in response to the partner's description of them. Given that encountering confusion from a potential interaction partner is likely a negative experience, we wondered whether

² Multiracial participants who indicated that one or both of their parents were multiracial selected a general "multiracial" option to describe one or both parents. Thus, in these instances, we did not obtain specific information about the racial groups to which participants' parents belonged.

Table 1

Cell Means and Grand Means for Measures Reported in Studies 1 and 2 as a Function of Participant Race and Partner Condition

Measure	Participant race						
	Multiracial participants			Monoracial participants			Total
	Accurate	Confused	Total	Accurate	Confused	Total	
Study 1							
Interaction	4.96 (.73)	4.39 (.54)	4.66 (.69)	4.39 (.74)	4.65 (.61)	4.52 (.68)	4.60 (.68)
Study 2							
Surprise	5.22 (3.41)	4.75 (2.59)	4.97 (2.97)	1.28 (.61)	6.67 (2.08)	3.92 (3.11)	4.38 (3.08)
Negative affect	1.12 (.37)	2.51 (1.26)	1.85 (1.17)	1.38 (.86)	2.98 (1.68)	2.03 (1.39)	2.03 (1.39)
Self-verification	5.44 (1.72)	3.58 (1.58)	4.46 (1.88)	4.02 (2.33)	3.83 (1.78)	3.93 (2.06)	4.16 (1.99)
Interaction	4.90 (.47)	4.43 (.56)	4.65 (.56)	4.59 (.50)	4.62 (.68)	4.61 (.59)	4.63 (.58)

Note. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

multiracial individuals dislike confusion rather than value accuracy. We predicted, in contrast, that encountering accurate partners would be less negative relative to encountering confusion for multiracial and monoracial individuals alike, suggesting that decreased negative affect may not explain the divergent tendencies for multiracial (vs. monoracial) people to show increased interest in interacting with accurate others. Indeed, where we expected multiracial and monoracial individuals to differ was in their perceptions of whether partners would “see” them as they “see” themselves. As such, we expected that perceptions of the partner’s ability to meet participants’ self-verification needs—and not simply negative affect—would explain multiracial and monoracial individuals’ differential reactions to accuracy and confusion.

As a result, we also measured participants’ perceptions of whether the partner would be able to meet their self-verification needs during the upcoming interaction. Ultimately, we aimed to examine whether self-verification needs mediated multiracial individuals’ interest in interacting with accurate (as opposed to confused) others. Given that monoracial people can predict, with an extremely high degree of certainty, how others perceive their race, we did not expect monoracial people to perceive accurate others as likely to meet their self-verification needs. After all, race should not represent an aspect of the self about which monoracial people seek verification. We also did not expect monoracial people to report heightened interest in interacting with accurate others. To test these hypotheses, we examined a moderated mediation model

in which we predicted that the relationship between partner condition (accurate or confused) and participants’ level of interaction interest would be mediated by self-verification for multiracial participants, but not for monoracial participants.

Method

Participants. Participants were 89 undergraduate students (64 female, 25 male) who completed the study in exchange for course credit or \$10 compensation. Participants were considered multiracial if they indicated their mixed race during a previous mass testing session and also confirmed during the experiment that their parents belonged to different races. Thirty-eight of the participants were multiracial (11 White/East Asian, 6 White/Black, 4 White/South Asian, 4 White/Middle Eastern, 2 White/Latin, 2 Middle Eastern/South Asian, 2 East Asian/South Asian, 2 Black/East Asian, 1 White/Pacific Islander, 1 White/Aboriginal, 1 Black/Latin). In two cases, self-identified multiracial participants indicated that one or both of their parents were multiracial. Fifty-one participants were monoracial (25 White, 18 East Asian, 3 Black, 2 South Asian, 1 Middle Eastern, 1 Pacific Islander, and 1 confirmed monoracial who did not disclose her specific race).

In Study 1 we did not include a sample of White monoracial participants because past work suggests that White individuals are generally unconcerned with their race (Allport, 1954). In Study 2, however, we included a sample of White participants in order to test whether monoracial Whites and minorities reacted differently to others’ accuracy about their race (with regard to the outcomes we measured). Participants’ average age was 18.85 years ($SD = 1.09$).

Procedure. The current study adopted the same procedure described in Study 1, with the exception that the sex of the partner was matched to the sex of the participant. Female participants, in other words, expected to meet a White female partner. Male participants expected to meet a White male partner. Next, participants completed the demographics form about their partner (see Appendix) and, subsequently, received the partner’s description of them (accurate or confused). Lastly, participants completed the measures described in the next section. At the end of the study, participants were thoroughly debriefed regarding the experiment’s true purpose. No participants questioned the legitimacy of the interaction task.

Measures. All of the measures in the current study (with the exception of interaction interest) were completed by participants

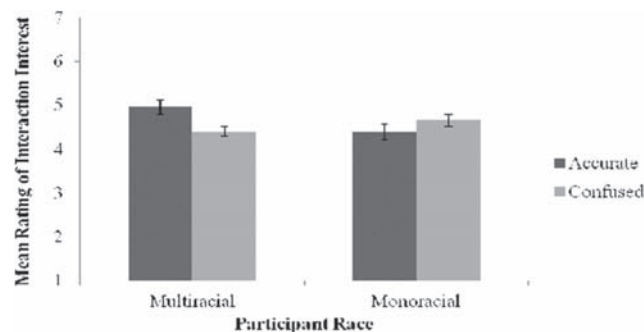


Figure 1. Mean rating of interaction interest by participant race and partner condition in Study 1. Standard errors are represented in the figure by the error bars on each column.

using 9-point rating scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*).

Surprise. The surprise measure consisted of one item: “I am surprised by my partner’s description of me” ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 3.09$).

Negative affect. Participants rated the extent to which they felt troubled, upset, frustrated, bothered, and angered by the partner’s description of them. We averaged responses on these five items to create a measure of negative affect ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 1.40$, $\alpha = .86$).

Self-verification. We measured self-verification with the following 2 items (Swann, Gomez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009): “My partner understands who I am” and “My partner sees me the way I see myself” ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 2.01$, $r = .71$).

Interaction interest. Participants completed the same 8-item scale administered in Study 1 to assess interest for the upcoming interaction (7-point scale, $M = 4.58$, $SD = .65$, $\alpha = .82$).

Results

We conducted a 2 (Participant Race: multiracial or monoracial) \times 2 (Partner Condition: accurate or confused) MANOVA, followed by simple effects tests or planned contrasts, to test our hypotheses. Submitting participants’ responses to a MANOVA allowed us to account for collinearity between the dependent measures.

Exploratory analyses. We eliminated data from two monoracial participants identified in exploratory analyses as having outlying, low levels of interaction interest (i.e., 3.95 and 2.22 standard deviations below the mean of the scale). In the analyses reported here, we examined data from the remaining 87 participants.³ Preliminary analyses also indicated that White and monoracial minority participants did not differ in their responses at the main effect level, nor did the race of monoracial participants (i.e., White vs. non-White) interact with partner condition to predict participants’ responses. As a result, in all primary analyses we compared multiracial participants with a monoracial participant group that includes both White and minority participants (see Table 1).

Primary analyses. The MANOVA revealed significant main effects of partner condition, $F(4, 80) = 14.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .42$, and participant race, $F(4, 80) = 3.03$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .13$. These effects were qualified by a significant Partner Condition \times Participant Race interaction, $F(4, 80) = 10.34$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .34$. To investigate the nature of these effects, we examined the results for each dependent measure.

Surprise. The results revealed a main effect of partner condition, $F(1, 83) = 24.71$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .23$, as well as a main effect of participant race, $F(1, 83) = 4.20$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, on surprise ratings. These effects were qualified, however, by a Partner Condition \times Race of Participant interaction, $F(1, 83) = 35.13$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .30$. We conducted simple effects tests to compare multiracial and monoracial participants’ reactions. Multiracial participants in the accurate partner condition ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 3.41$) did not differ from multiracial participants in the confused partner condition ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 2.59$) in their reports of surprise, $t(83) = .81$, $p = .42$. Monoracial participants in the accurate condition, however, were significantly less surprised by the partner’s description ($M = 1.28$, $SD = .61$) than monoracial participants in the confused condition ($M = 6.67$, $SD = 2.08$), $t(83) =$

-10.77 , $p < .001$. The results clearly indicate that monoracial individuals expect others to have little difficulty determining their race.

Negative affect. The results revealed a main effect of partner condition on participants’ reports of negative affect, $F(1, 83) = 34.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .29$. Participants in the accurate-partner condition ($M = 1.27$, $SD = .71$) reported experiencing less negative affect than participants in the confused-partner condition ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.50$). We did not observe a main effect of participant race, nor did we observe an interaction ($ps > .16$). The finding that multiracial and monoracial people report similar levels of negative affect in response to the partner manipulation suggests that negative affect cannot explain multiracial and monoracial individuals’ divergent perceptions of accurate partners.

Self-verification needs. Next, we examined participants’ reports of whether they felt their partner would be able to meet their self-verification needs. The results revealed a main effect of partner condition, $F(1, 83) = 6.22$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. The main effect of participant race did not reach significance ($p = .16$). We did, however, observe the expected Partner Condition \times Participant Race interaction, $F(1, 83) = 4.17$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Next, we conducted simple effects tests to examine whether others’ accuracy elevated multiracial (but not monoracial) individuals’ expectations for self-verification during the interaction. Consistent with our predictions, multiracial participants in the accurate partner condition expected the partner to be more self-verifying ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.72$) than multiracial participants in the confused partner condition ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.58$), $t(83) = 3.73$, $p < .001$, $r = .38$. Monoracial participants did not show this effect ($M_{\text{Accurate}} = 4.02$, $SD = 2.33$; $M_{\text{Confused}} = 3.83$, $SD = 1.78$), $t(83) = .43$, $p = .67$.

Interaction interest. The analyses did not reveal a main effect of partner condition ($p = .08$) on interaction interest, nor did we find a main effect of participant race ($p = .67$). The expected Partner Condition \times Race of Participant interaction, however, was significant, $F(1, 83) = 4.29$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. We investigated the interaction by conducting planned contrasts to test our a priori prediction that multiracial participants (but not monoracial participants) show heightened interest in interacting with an accurate partner. The multivariate test of the contrast was significant, $F(4, 80) = 8.29$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .29$. In line with our hypothesis and replicating the results of Study 1, multiracial participants reported significantly more interest in interacting with an accurate partner ($M = 4.90$, $SD = .47$) than a confused partner ($M = 4.43$, $SD = .56$), $F(1, 83) = 6.59$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$.⁴ In contrast, monoracial participants expressed similar levels of interaction interest across partner conditions ($M_{\text{Accurate}} = 4.61$, $SD = .59$; $M_{\text{Confused}} = 4.63$, $SD = .68$), $F(1, 83) = .04$, $p = .83$.

³ Analyses including participants with outlying scores revealed similar patterns of results to patterns obtained in analyses excluding outliers, with the exception that the omnibus Partner Condition \times Race of Participant interaction on interaction interest in Study 2 did not reach significance, $F(1, 85) = 1.59$, $p = .21$. Importantly, the critical contrast comparing multiracial participants in the accurate and confused partner conditions remained significant in the analysis including outliers, $F(1, 85) = 5.11$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$.

⁴ Simple effects tests (Games & Howell, 1976) revealed a similar result, however—the comparison testing the difference between multiracial participants in the accurate partner condition and multiracial participants in the confused partner condition—was marginally significant, $t(83) = 1.81$, $p = .07$.

Moderated mediation analysis. Next, we examined whether multiracial, but not monoracial, participants' positive perceptions of the accurate partner were due to expectations that the partner would meet their self-verification needs during an interaction. We expected to find a moderated mediation effect such that the relationship between partner condition and interaction interest would be mediated by self-verification for multiracial participants, but not for monoracial participants. To test this hypothesis, we analyzed the data using a moderated mediation macro created by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007). As reported, we observed significant Partner Condition \times Participant Race interactions on interaction interest and self-verification. Moreover, controlling for self-verification reduced the Partner Condition \times Participant Race interaction on interaction interest: $\beta = -.47$, $SE = .25$, $t(84) = -1.92$, $p = .06$.

We proceeded to test whether the indirect path from partner condition to interaction interest via self-verification differed significantly from zero for multiracial participants (but not for monoracial participants). Following recommendations by Preacher et al. (2007), we used bootstrapping methods to test this hypothesis. For multiracial participants, the bias corrected 95% confidence intervals generated using 5,000 bootstrapping resamples did not include zero, 95% CI $[-0.31, -0.01]$, suggesting that self-verification was a significant mediator of the relationship between partner condition and interaction interest, $p < .05$. For monoracial participants, however, the 95% CI $[-.12, .06]$ contained zero, indicating that the relevant mediation effect was not significant. We concluded that multiracial participants, but not monoracial participants, report heightened interest in interacting with accurate partners because they expect accurate partners to meet their self-verification needs.

General Discussion

The present research examined how multiracial people respond to perceivers who accurately determine their race. The results revealed that multiracial people regard race as an aspect of the self requiring verification from others. Racial cues, like skin color, are often assumed to be visible features that provoke predictable reactions from others (Allport, 1954; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). In contrast, the current studies reveal that some individuals encounter unpredictable reactions from others about their racial backgrounds. Multiracial people expect interactions with people who accurately perceive their racial backgrounds to be positive because multiracial people expect that their self-verification needs will be met during such interactions. Given that multiracial (but not monoracial) participants in the present studies expected accurate partners to be self-verifying, we conclude that multiracial (but not monoracial) people value accurate others because such partners verify that their own self-perceptions are true.

In Studies 1 and 2, multiracial people randomly assigned to meet an accurate partner reported increased interest in interacting with that individual relative to multiracial people assigned to meet a confused partner and to monoracial people in general. Partner accuracy did not affect the interaction expectations of monoracial people, suggesting that monoracial people do not value others' accuracy about their race. Monoracial people may not value others' accuracy about their race because others' reactions to their racial backgrounds tend to be predictable. In line with this con-

clusion, the results of Study 2 showed that monoracial participants were more surprised by a confused partner than an accurate partner. The results of Study 2 also showed that encountering a specific instance of accuracy reduced negative emotions for multiracial and monoracial individuals alike (given that members of both groups showed decreased negative affect when assigned to meet an accurate partner). However, only people who were surprised to encounter accuracy—namely, multiracial people—interpreted accuracy as diagnostic of the partner's ability to meet their self-verification needs. Our findings suggest that accurate partners can be sources of self-verification for multiracial people. In all likelihood, multiracial people who have had positive social interactions are more likely than others to seek out additional interactions, capitalizing on opportunities to teach people about the importance of understanding the nuances of others' racial backgrounds.

It is interesting to consider the possibility that because multiracial people rarely encounter accuracy about their race from others, they view such situations as novel. The novelty of encountering accurate partners may represent a welcome change from the weariness of encountering common questions displaying confusion, such as "what are you?" (Gaskins, 1999).⁵ Thus, in addition to promoting expectations for self-verification, the novelty of others' accuracy may have contributed to multiracial participants' positive outlook on interactions with accurate partners. Additional research is needed to investigate this claim. Beyond the question of how novelty and weariness affects targets, however, looms the question of whether perceivers can ever provide multiracial targets with the accuracy they value. Given that multiracial individuals rarely encounter accuracy from others, do perceivers even have the ability to accurately detect the components of multiracial individuals' backgrounds? It may seem like correctly judging the races of multiracial people is a difficult, if not impossible, task. Research suggests, however, that perceivers can judge seemingly imperceptible target characteristics (like sexual orientation and personality) with some degree of accuracy (Ambady, Hallahan, & Conner, 1999; Blackman & Funder, 1998; Hall, Bernieri, & Carney, 2005). Although past work has examined whether, and when, people categorize multiracial targets as monoracial (Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008) or as minorities (Ho et al., 2011), surprisingly little work has studied perceivers' accuracy for the components of multiracial targets' backgrounds. It will be important for future work to examine perceivers' accuracy, particularly in light of the positive outcomes of accuracy for targets identified in the current studies.

In the present studies, we explored individuals' reactions to others' confusion about their race in addition to individuals' reactions to others' accuracy. To our knowledge, confusion represents an instance of race categorization not previously studied in the literature. Identity denial, in which people encounter incorrect categorizations from others (Cheryan & Monin, 2005), may be similar to encountering confusion about race in that people may experience identity threat when they encounter confused partners and may therefore dislike interacting with confused individuals. The current research, and particularly the results of Study 2, suggest that multiracial individuals react with heightened positiv-

⁵ We thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

ity toward accurate partners rather than with heightened negativity toward confused partners. We expect that experiencing identity denial, however, is qualitatively different from encountering confusion. In the former case, targets are aware that category judgments have been made about them and that stereotypes, despite their inaccuracy, are available to perceivers (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). In addition, multiracial people may be incorrectly categorized in many different ways (e.g., as monoracial, as belonging to multiple incorrect groups). It is unclear whether multiracial people encounter some types of incorrect categorizations more often than others. Future research should further examine the consequences for multiracial people who encounter others who are confused or incorrect about their race.

Lastly, to this point, we have characterized the experience of encountering accuracy about one's race as a largely positive event. There may be situations, however, in which multiracial people experience disadvantages because others can determine their race. For example, research shows that stereotype threat is more likely to affect monoracial minorities than multiracial people (Shih et al., 2007). Stereotype threat describes concerns about confirming the validity of negative stereotypes through one's own behaviors (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Shih et al. (2007) showed that multiracial people are less susceptible to academic failures due to stereotype threat than monoracial minorities because they disregard biological definitions of race. The current work raises the possibility that awareness of others' accuracy may render multiracial people vulnerable to stereotype threat. Although multiracial people hold positive expectations for interactions with accurate others, they may also recognize that accurate perceivers can apply negative stereotypes to them in a uniform way (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007). A fruitful avenue for future research, therefore, will be to clarify whether there are disadvantages for multiracial people who encounter accurate others.

Conclusions

The current work examined multiracial and monoracial individuals' reactions to others who accurately perceive their race. Because multiracial people view racial categories as arbitrary and flexible (Shih et al., 2007), they recognize that the racial labels applied to them by others may be unpredictable. As a result, multiracial people value interaction experiences in which others are accurate about their racial backgrounds. We observed that multiracial people expecting to meet accurate partners anticipated that the interaction would be a positive experience because they expect accurate partners to fulfill their needs for self-verification. The findings suggest that multiracial people regard race as an aspect of the self (like personality traits or values) that must be verified by others. Thus, it will be important for future research to examine whether it is possible for perceivers to provide multiracial targets with the race-related self-verification they seek. Such work will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how to improve the quality of interactions between multiracial and monoracial individuals. Overall, this research highlights the need for greater awareness that accuracy about race is important to multiracial people. The present studies also emphasize the need for additional research examining the perspectives of individuals with complex racial backgrounds.

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Appendix

Participant Demographic Form

Ethnicity of Partner

Please indicate your partner's ethnic origin by choosing one of the seven categories listed below. Ethnic origin refers to the ethnic or cultural group(s) to which your partner's recent ancestors likely belonged.

- 1 -- White (e.g., European, including British Isles)
- 2 -- East and Southeast Asian (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam)
- 3 -- South Asian (e.g., India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka)
- 4 -- Middle Eastern
- 5 -- Black
- 6 -- Latin, Central, and South American
- 7 -- Pacific Islander
- 8 -- Multiracial or Mixed-Race (Please specify:)

Do you have any comments or questions so far?