

Study identifies 'bonus effect' for certain multiracial daters

August 18 2014

While previous research has documented the existence of a racial hierarchy within the dating world with white women and men on top, a new study finds that in certain circumstances multiracial daters are actually seen as more desirable than individuals from all other racial groups, including whites.

"The most interesting and surprising finding from our study is that some white-minority multiracial daters are, in fact, preferred over white and non-white daters," said Celeste Vaughan Curington, a doctoral student in sociology at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and lead author of the study, which she will present at the 109th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. "We call this the multiracial 'bonus effect,' and this is truly unheard of in the existing sociological literature."

The researchers found that three multiracial groups were on the receiving end of the "bonus effect." Asian-white women were viewed more favorably than all other groups by white and Asian men, while Asian-white and Hispanic-white men were also afforded "bonus" status by Asian and Hispanic women respectively.

"Although it may be tempting to try to fit multiracial people into a single position in the existing racial hierarchy of desirability, the 'bonus effect' demonstrates that this is probably not possible," Curington said.

The study relies on 2003-2010 data from one of the largest dating websites in the United States, and focuses on initial messages sent

between heterosexual women and men among the following seven groups: Asian, black, Hispanic, white, Asian-white, black-white, and Hispanic-white. Curington and her co-authors Ken-Hou Lin, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Texas at Austin, and Jennifer Hicke Lundquist, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, analyzed nearly 6.7 million initial messages.

"While scholarly conversation on multiraciality in America has long been dominated by the concept of the 'one drop rule,' meaning that white-minority multiracial people are viewed the same as minorities, our study finds no support for this theory," Curington said.

Rather, overall, the researchers found that white-minority multiracial daters (e.g., black-white daters) are viewed more favorably than their monoracial minority counterparts (e.g., black daters). "We find that 'honorary whiteness,' in the form of what we call 'white equivalence' and 'multiracial inbetweenness,' seems to be the most frequent way that both white men and women and some minority groups generally categorize white-minority [multiracial](#) people," Curington said.

"A preference for multiraciality is closely akin to a preference for lightness or whiteness," Curington explained. "Daters may be influenced by the popular media's representation of mixed-race people as 'exotic' and sexually appealing."

In terms of the study's implications, Curington said, "The findings provide us with a better understanding of the social meaning of multiraciality in the post-civil rights era United States, and of how demographic changes in racial identification operate at the level of everyday interactions."

More information: The paper, "Multiraciality in Cyberspace: Honorary Whiteness, Hypo-descent or Something Else?," will be

presented on Monday, Aug. 18, at 4:30 p.m. PDT in San Francisco at the American Sociological Association's 109th Annual Meeting.

Provided by American Sociological Association

Citation: Study identifies 'bonus effect' for certain multiracial daters (2014, August 18) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-08-bonus-effect-multiracial-daters.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.