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Journal of Consumer Psychology 27, 1 (2017) 84 – 90

JCP JOURNAL OF CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY

Research Report

Activating stereotypes with brand imagery: The role of viewer political identity☆

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Accepted by Amna Kirmani, Editor; Associate Editor, David B. Wooten

Received 4 February 2015; received in revised form 29 March 2016; accepted 30 March 2016
Available online 7 April 2016

Abstract

The use of ethnic imagery in visual identities of brands, such as those used by professional sports franchises, has long been a contentious issue in American society. This research investigates the oft-voiced argument that ethnic brand imagery perpetuates negative stereotypes (a claim that has been subject to very little empirical scrutiny) and identifies conditions under which encountering such brand imagery strengthens both positive and negative implicit stereotypes. Within the context of American Indian brand imagery, two laboratory experiments (Studies 1 and 2) and a quasi-experimental field study (Study 3) revealed that the effects of ethnic brand imagery on stereotypes depend on the viewer's political identity. Exposure to ethnic brand imagery strengthened implicit stereotypes only among more liberal individuals, consistent with the idea that liberals tend to hold more malleable views. These findings demonstrate measurable negative effects of ethnic brand imagery on implicit stereotypes and support the view that the use of such imagery can carry detrimental societal consequences.

Keywords: Ethnic brand imagery; Implicit social cognition; Stereotypes; Political identity

Characters like Ronald McDonald and the Pillsbury Doughboy are frequently used to bring brands to life, imbuing them with personality and desired associations. Although the value of characters and associated imagery in brand development is well understood, significantly less research has considered their broader effects on consumer behaviors and beliefs. Of particular importance is the use of ethnic caricatures (e.g., Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben) and their potential role in stereotype activation and adoption.

Though the use of ethnic imagery in sports branding has received extensive media attention, little research has investigated its effects. The research that does exist has focused largely on the effects of ethnic imagery use on members of the caricaturized ethnic population (Clark & Witko, 2006; Fryberg, Markus, Oyserman, & Stone, 2008; Staurowsky, 1999) with minimal attention to its effects on the attitudes of the broader population. These potential secondary effects are important given the current widespread use of ethnic imagery despite compelling arguments for its cessation (e.g., APA, 2005; Chamberlin, 1999).

To inform this issue, this research measures the effect of ethnic brand imagery exposure on consumer stereotype activation in both field and laboratory settings. We propose that ethnic brand imagery activates stereotypes consistent

☆ The authors would like to thank Juliano Laran, Marcus Cunha, Brent McFerran, Casey Newmeyer and Jenna Drenten for their assistance with data collection. We thank Caroline Graham Austin, Jonathan Schroeder and Americus Reed for their friendly reviews of this work. Finally, we thank Anthony Greenwald for his assistance with concept development.

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2016.03.004
1057-7408/

with the specific ethnic depiction and that this activation is moderated by consumer political identity. Specifically, individuals on the liberal end of the liberal–conservative spectrum will be more prone to stereotype activation due to their greater tendency for attitude malleability. This proposition builds from past research demonstrating that conservative ideologies often increase resistance to change (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008) and thereby make one's stereotype beliefs less malleable (Tausch & Hewstone, 2010) and often more extreme (Ho et al., 2012; Nosek et al., 2007). As a result, exposure to ethnic imagery has greater potential to influence more liberal individuals regardless of the implied stereotype's valence. To more accurately assess such stereotype activation, we examine potential change in *implicit* stereotypes since individuals are loathe to self-report attitudes, stereotypes, or beliefs that are inconsistent with social norms (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). To date, very little research has examined implicit stereotype change.

Ethnic imagery and stereotype activation

Supporting our contention that brand imagery may activate stereotypes, past research has shown that brand exposure non-consciously triggers brand-consistent behaviors (Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, 2008) on both positive and negative dimensions (Brasel & Gips, 2011). Moreover, such influence is especially strong for anthropomorphized brands (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012), similar to those featuring ethnic imagery (e.g., Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben). Lastly, research has found that incidental brand encounters can drive consumer behavior (Ferraro, Bettman, & Chartrand, 2009), especially relevant here as millions of consumers routinely encounter ethnic brand imagery.

Our work advances these findings by directly assessing the effect of ethnic brand imagery exposure on implicit ethnic stereotype activation, an effect consistent with past group perception research. For example, listening to violent rap music heightens negative stereotypical evaluations of Black targets (Johnson, Trawalter, & Dovidio, 2000) and similar effects have been found for gender stereotypical advertisements (Hurtz & Durkin, 2004; Johar, Moreau, & Schwarz, 2003). Importantly, such activation can occur non-consciously after incidental exposure to stereotypes (Banaji, Hardin, & Rothman, 1993), category exemplars (Bargh, 1999; Lepore & Brown, 1997) and symbolic content (Devine, 1989; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 2001; Mai & Hoffmann, 2014).

To date, only two empirical investigations have assessed the role of ethnic brand imagery on stereotype activation. The first revealed that American Indian brand imagery can lead to stereotyping of *different* (i.e., non-American Indian) ethnic groups (Kim-Prieto, Goldstein, Okazaki, & Kirschner, 2010). The second offered preliminary evidence that exposure to the Cleveland Indians' Chief Wahoo logo activated negative implicit American Indian stereotypes as detected by a lexical decision task (Freng & Willis-Esqueda, 2011). Building on these findings, we examine the moderating role of political identity in stereotype activation and investigate whether the stereotype's valence influences response.

Stereotype malleability and political identity

Although implicit stereotypes were once assumed immutable (e.g. Bargh, 1999), current research suggests their malleability (Blair, 2002; Dasgupta, 2009; Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary, 2001). Much of this work has focused on situational or contextual variables that promote stereotype malleability (Dasgupta, 2013; Blair, 2002). For example, Blair, Ma, and Lenton (2001) manipulated gender stereotypes using imagined stereotype-consistent and inconsistent exemplars. Noticeably missing, however, are dispositional characteristics of the perceiver that could influence stereotype malleability. Exploring this possibility, Tausch and Hewstone (2010) found that ideological traits—specifically, social dominance orientation—can moderate response to counterstereotypic information. We build on this possible link between ideology and stereotype malleability, proposing that individual differences in political identity moderate stereotype malleability.

Research on the fundamental differences between liberals and conservatives identifies mental rigidity and resistance to change as hallmarks of conservatism, while liberalism is characterized by more malleable worldviews (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a, 2003b; Jost et al., 2008). Furthermore, liberals generally score higher in openness-to-new-experience (Jost et al., 2003a), suggesting a potential susceptibility to the influence of novel information such as stereotypic brand imagery. Should these dichotomies extend to stereotypes, we expect exposure to stereotypic ethnic brand imagery to more strongly influence liberals, for whom stereotypic associations are less calcified. Although past research has observed a positive relationship between conservatism and stereotype strength (Nosek et al., 2007), we predict that conservatism reduces the influence of stereotypic brand imagery on both positive and negative implicit stereotypes.

Stereotype valence

Although positive stereotypes can carry negative consequences for target group members (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000), a common defense of ethnic brand imagery is that it promotes positive stereotypes such as bravery and nobility in the case of American Indian imagery (Freng & Willis-Esqueda, 2011; Tierney, 2013). This assertion, however, has yet to be empirically tested. Therefore, we explore the potential moderating effect of experimentally manipulated (Study 2) and naturally occurring (Study 3) differences in the stereotype valence of ethnic brand imagery.

Two lab experiments and a multi-city field study tested the prediction that conservatism attenuates the effects of ethnic brand imagery exposure on positive and negative implicit stereotypes. In all three studies, American Indian sports logos were used to operationalize ethnic brand imagery. Study 1 explored the interaction of brand imagery exposure and

political identity on negative implicit stereotypes. Study 2 manipulated the brand imagery's stereotype valence to examine whether similar effects hold for positive stereotypes. Finally, Study 3 investigated whether real-world exposure to brand imagery differing in stereotype valence predicts stereotype activation in the general population.

Study 1

Method

Study 1 investigated the effect of brand imagery exposure on implicit stereotypes and the moderating role of political identity. After viewing an ethnic or neutral (kangaroo) logo, participants completed measures of implicit stereotype activation using the Single Category Implicit Association Test (SC-IAT; Karpinski & Steinman, 2006) followed by an explicit sterotype measure as well as demographic and political identity measures.

Participants

Eighty-one undergraduates (43 females; median age = 20) participated for course credit.

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to view either an unfamiliar American Indian or kangaroo sports team logo for 30 s. Immediately following brand imagery exposure, participants completed an SC-IAT measuring implicit American Indian-warlike associations. The SC-IAT is an adapted version of the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Karpinski & Steinman, 2006; Greenwald et al., 1998), a series of timed categorization tasks. Participants were instructed to press "I" when they saw either an American Indian image or a word representing "warlike" (barbaric, savage, warlike, vicious), or press "E" when they viewed images of European Americans. After several trials, participants completed the same task with the new instructions—press "I" for American Indian images and "E" for European American images or "warlike" words. Ethnicity was represented by ten generic adult facial images, five from each ethnic category. Faster responses when "warlike" words shared a response key with American Indian images versus European American images indicate stronger implicit stereotypes.

Following the SC-IAT, participants rated their agreement with the statement "American Indians are warlike" on a 7-point Likert scale (an explicit stereotype measure). Next, participants completed several items assessing their level of familiarity with and exposure to American Indians and the perceived offensiveness of ethnic logos in general. Finally, participants provided their age, sex, ethnicity, race, political identity (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), current zip code, and hometown zip code (see Methodological Details Appendix for all stimuli and measures).

Results and discussion

SC-IAT data yield a *D*-score ranging from −2 (stronger American Indian-warlike association) to +2 (stronger European American-warlike association), similar to a measure of effect size (Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003). A regression of the *D*-scores on brand imagery (contrast-coded), mean-centered political identity (higher = conservative), their interaction, and perceived offensiveness of American Indian logos—a covariate controlling for any preexisting differences in how liberals and conservatives view such logos—revealed a significant effect of the covariate ($b = .04$, $t = 2.14$, $p < .05$) and a significant brand imagery × political identity interaction ($b = .05$, $t = 2.22$, $p < .05$). Floodlight analysis (Spiller, Fitzsimons, Lynch, & McClelland, 2013) revealed a significant negative effect of ethnic logo exposure on *D*-scores at raw political identity scores below 2.93 out of 7 ($b_{JN} = -.075$, $t = -1.99$, $p = .05$). In other words, ethnic logo exposure strengthened negative stereotypes among more liberal individuals, but not among more conservative individuals. Although ethnic logo exposure appears to weaken negative stereotypes among more conservative individuals, this effect did not reach significance at any level of conservatism. Furthermore, the simple slope of political identity did not reach significance in the control logo condition ($b = -.05$, $t = -1.48$, $p > .10$) or in the ethnic logo condition ($b = .05$, $t = 1.60$, $p > .10$). Fig. 1 summarizes these results. Without the covariate, the interaction was marginally significant ($b = .05$, $t = 1.96$, $p = .05$). Lastly, similar analyses on the explicit stereotype measure revealed that ethnic brand imagery exposure weakened explicit negative stereotypes ($b = -.30$, $t = -2.07$, $p < .05$), but this main effect was not moderated by political identity ($b = -.07$, $t < 1$, NS). Such implicit–explicit dissociation is common in domains where socially desirable responding is especially likely (Greenwald & Nosek, 2008).

These results suggest that, depending on the viewer's political identity, exposure to ethnic brand imagery can activate

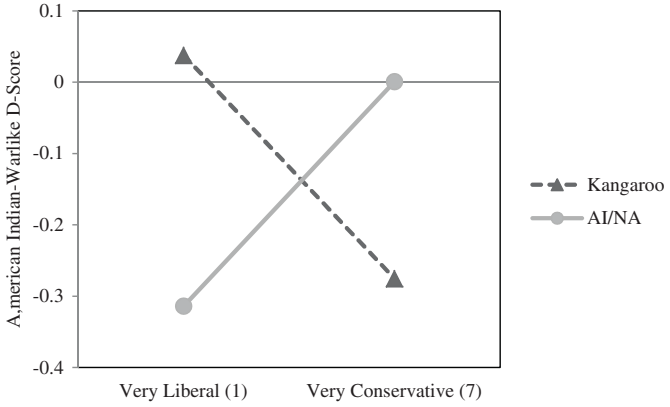

Fig. 1. Study 1: Interactive effect of brand imagery and political identity on negative implicit stereotypes. *Note.* Fig. 1 depicts the predicted values of American Indian-warlike *D*-scores in the different brand imagery conditions at the endpoints of political identity, with the covariate (mascot offensiveness) set to the sample mean ($M = 4.04$). Lower *D*-scores indicate stronger American Indian-warlike associations.

stereotypes. Consistent with the notion that conservatives have more rigid mindsets, viewing an American Indian logo strengthened implicit American Indian-warlike associations among liberals, but not among conservatives. Furthermore, the fact that this effect persisted when controlling for perceived offensiveness of the logos indicates that political identity's moderating effect is not simply due to differences in general perceptions of ethnic logos. However, one alternative explanation is that conservatives in our sample, who held directionally stronger baseline negative stereotype associations, were insensitive to the ethnic logo exposure due to a ceiling effect. To test this possibility, in Study 2, we employ a positive American Indian stereotype (nobility) and manipulate the logos' association with it. Replication of our core Study 1 effect on a positive stereotype would indicate that the effect is due to political identity differences in mental rigidity rather than baseline liberal–conservative differences in stereotype associations. Furthermore, examining positive stereotypes allows us to test the common assertion that ethnic brand imagery actually reinforces positive stereotypes (e.g., Freng & Willis-Esqueda, 2011; Tierney, 2013).

Study 2

Method

Study 2 tested the interactive effects of brand imagery exposure, stereotype valence, and political identity on stereotype activation.

Participants

Four hundred and eleven participants (250 females; median age = 29) from Amazon's Mechanical Turk panel completed this study for $0.50.

Procedure

Study 2 used identical procedures as Study 1, with two modifications. First, to manipulate stereotype valence, half the participants viewed a logo alone or paired with a slogan—"We are Noble, We are Peaceful, We Compete with Honor!"—reflecting the positive American Indian stereotypes of nobility and honor. Second, the SC-IAT measured implicit American Indian–noble associations: four terms representing "noble" (honorable, dignity, noble, grace) replaced the four "warlike" words from Study 1.

Results and discussion

A linear regression of American Indian–noble *D*-scores (lower scores mean stronger American Indian–noble associations) on brand imagery (contrast-coded), stereotype valence contrast-coded), mean-centered political identity, and all interactions revealed a significant main effect of political identity ($b = .03$, $t = 3.56$, $p < .001$)—conservatism was associated with weaker positive stereotypes—and a significant brand imagery × stereotype valence interaction ($b = -.03$, $t = -1.98$, $p < .05$), qualified by a brand imagery × stereotype valence × political identity interaction ($b = .03$, $t = 3.29$, $p = .001$).

Supporting our prediction that conservatism undermines stereotype malleability, floodlight analysis revealed a significant brand imagery × stereotype valence interaction at raw political identity scores below 3.67 out of 7 ($b_{JN} = -.03$, $t = -1.97$, $p = .05$). In other words, ethnic brand imagery exposure and stereotype valence only interacted to influence implicit stereotypes of more liberal individuals. Decomposing the two-way interaction, exposure to the ethnic (vs. control) logo with the noble slogan significantly strengthened implicit positive stereotypes among liberals (i.e., at raw political identity scores below 3.21 out of 7, $b_{JN} = -.05$, $t = -1.97$, $p = .05$). In the no-slogan condition, conceptually replicating Study 1's findings, exposure to the ethnic (vs. control) logo significantly weakened implicit positive stereotypes among liberals (i.e., at raw political identity scores below 3.17 out of 7, $b_{JN} = .05$, $t = 1.97$, $p = .05$). Fig. 2 illustrates these results.

When controlling for perceived offensiveness of American Indian logos as in Study 1, the three-way interaction remained significant ($b = .03$, $t = 3.20$, $p < .01$), but the covariate was nonsignificant ($b = -.01$, $t < 1$, NS). Lastly, a similar three-way interaction did not arise for explicit stereotypes ($b = .03$, $t = 1.03$, NS).

Examining positive stereotypes, Study 2 replicated and extended Study 1's findings. In the no-slogan condition (which paralleled Study 1), ethnic logo exposure weakened the association of American Indian with "noble" for liberals, but not for conservatives. However, when a positive stereotypical slogan accompanied the ethnic logo, logo exposure strengthened liberal participants' association of American Indian with "noble." The absence of any effect of logo exposure on the positive stereotype beliefs of conservative participants suggests that responses of conservatives in Study 1 were not simply due to a ceiling effect. Additionally, these results fail to support the common argument that exposure to ethnic brand imagery automatically improves response to the ethnic group. Although such an effect is possible with sufficient verbal promotion of

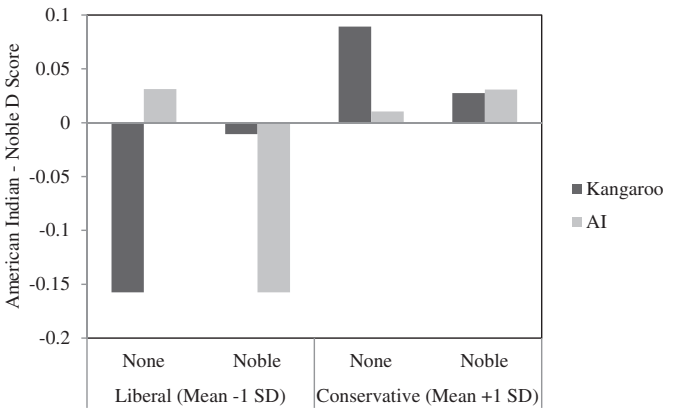

Fig. 2. Study 2: Interactive effect of brand imagery, stereotype valence, and political identity on positive implicit stereotypes. *Note.* Fig. 2 depicts the brand imagery × stereotype valence interaction at one standard deviation below (left) and above (right) the mean of political identity. Lower scores indicate stronger American Indian–noble associations.

the positive stereotype, ethnic logos presented in isolation failed to increase positive ethnic associations among conservatives and actually decreased positive associations among liberals.

To test whether these effects generalize outside the laboratory, Study 3 assessed the effects of everyday exposure to ethnic brand imagery in a quasi-experimental field study. Specifically, we used geographical location as a proxy for both American Indian brand imagery exposure and stereotype valence, comparing negative implicit stereotypes across media markets. Although everyday encounters with such imagery could conceivably activate a variety of positive and negative stereotypes, we focused on American Indian-warlike stereotypes for two reasons. First, warlike is one of the most common attributes associated with American Indians in national newspapers and film (Fryberg, 2004). Second, it is the attribute sports franchises most commonly leverage.

Study 3

Method

Study 3 explored whether ethnic brand imagery exposure, stereotype valence, and political identity have systematic consequences observable in the real world. A multi-city field study used sports media market as a proxy for ethnic brand imagery exposure and stereotype valence, while measuring political identity. Participants were sampled from one sports market with a more negative stereotypical American Indian-themed Major League Baseball franchise and one sports market with a less negative stereotypical American Indian-themed franchise, as well as two media markets with animal-themed franchises for controls.

If exposure to ethnic brand imagery, stereotype valence, and political identity interact to influence implicit stereotypes (as suggested by Study 2), then liberals from a region with a more negative American Indian-themed franchise should exhibit stronger negative stereotypes than liberals from a comparable region without an American Indian-themed franchise. However, this effect should be attenuated among conservatives and in regions with less negative American Indian-themed franchises.

Pretest

Based on a pretest in which 62 participants rated the negativity and offensiveness of nine different professional sports logos on 100-point scales (see Methodological Details Appendix), we sampled participants from Major League Baseball media markets with the most negative stereotypical American Indian logo—Cleveland, Ohio (Indians; $M = 67.22$)—and the least negative stereotypical logo—Atlanta, Georgia (Braves; $M = 25.78$, $t(39) = 5.06$, $p < .001$). As controls from media markets with non-American Indian-themed franchises, we also sampled participants from cities in the same respective geographic regions and division—Detroit, Michigan (Tigers) and Miami, Florida (Marlins).

Participants. A total of 399 (200 female) undergraduates from four universities near Cleveland, Ohio; Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit, Michigan; and Miami, Florida participated in exchange for course credit. The sample included two American Indian participants and two individuals of unreported race who were excluded from all analyses. Including these participants did not change the results.

Procedure

Participants completed a Brief Implicit Association Test (BIAT; Sriram & Greenwald, 2009), a task similar to the SC-IAT used in Study 1, to measure American Indian-warlike stereotypes. Next, they completed parallel explicit measures, rated their exposure to their local team and the other team in their dyad (i.e., Atlanta–Miami and Cleveland–Detroit) on 7-point Likert scales, and completed the same demographic and control measures from Study 2.

Results and discussion

To verify that media market was a reasonable proxy for brand imagery exposure, one-way ANOVAs confirmed that Atlanta (vs. Miami) residents have greater exposure to the Atlanta Braves ($M_{Atl} = 4.99$, $M_{Mia} = 2.29$, $F(1, 190) = 98.48$, $p < .001$), and vice versa for Miami Marlins exposure ($M_{Mia} = 3.37$, $M_{Atl} = 2.65$, $F(1, 190) = 6.57$, $p < .05$). Likewise, Cleveland (vs. Detroit) residents have greater exposure to the Cleveland Indians ($M_{Cle} = 4.27$, $M_{Det} = 2.11$, $F(1, 201) = 51.98$, $p < .001$), and vice versa for Detroit Tigers exposure ($M_{Det} = 4.69$, $M_{Cle} = 2.65$, $F(1, 201) = 37.74$, $p < .001$).

Testing the critical effects, a linear regression of American Indian-warlike *D*-scores (lower scores mean stronger warlike associations) on brand imagery [−1 = animal brand imagery (Miami and Detroit residents); 1 = ethnic brand imagery (Atlanta and Cleveland residents)], stereotype valence [−1 = less negative (Atlanta and Miami residents); 1 = more negative (Cleveland and Detroit residents)], mean-centered political identity, and all interactions revealed a significant stereotype valence × political identity interaction ($b = .04$, $t = 2.87$, $p < .01$), qualified by a brand imagery × stereotype valence × political identity interaction ($b = .03$, $t = 2.13$, $p < .05$).

A floodlight analysis decomposing this interaction revealed a significant brand imagery × stereotype valence interaction at raw political identity scores below 3.44 out of 7 ($b_{JN} = -.05$, $t = -1.97$, $p = .05$). That is, only among liberals did ethnic brand imagery exposure and stereotype valence interact to influence implicit stereotypes. Specifically, exposure to the more negative ethnic logo (i.e., residing in Cleveland vs. Detroit) significantly strengthened implicit negative stereotypes among more liberal individuals (i.e., at raw political identity scores below 3.13 out of 7, $b_{JN} = -.08$, $t = -1.96$, $p = .05$), whereas exposure to the less negative logo (i.e., residing in Atlanta vs. Miami) did not significantly influence negative stereotypes at any level of political identity (see Table 1 for results).

Importantly, the three-way interaction persisted when controlling for potential preexisting differences among the four media markets—gender, race, familiarity with and exposure to American Indians, and fandom of the American

Table 1
Study 3: Effects of brand imagery, stereotype valence, and political identity on negative implicit stereotypes.

Variable	*b*	*t*	95% CI
Constant	−.11***	−4.84	[−.15, −.06]
Brand	−.02	−.82	[−.06, .03]
Valence	.03	1.24	[−.02, .07]
Political identity	−.02	−1.41	[−.05, .01]
Brand × valence	−.03	−1.44	[−.08, .01]
Brand × political identity	.004	.28	[−.02, .03]
Valence × political identity	.04**	2.87	[.01, .07]
Brand × valence × political identity	.03*	2.13	[.002, .06]

Note. All coefficients are unstandardized. Brand is coded as −1 = control, 1 = American Indian. Valence is coded as −1 = less negative, 1 = more negative. Political identity is mean-centered, and higher scores indicate conservatism. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Indian branded team ($b = .03$, $t = 1.93$, $p = .05$)—and none of these covariates were significant (all $ps > .05$; see the Methodological Details Appendix for complete results). Finally, similar analyses on explicit warlike stereotypes revealed no significant effects (all $ps > .05$).

The results of Study 3 corroborated the laboratory findings. Specifically, we found that the effects of ethnic brand imagery exposure and political identity obtained in Studies 1 and 2 arose in the real world: liberal individuals in cities with negatively stereotypical American Indian sports logos demonstrated stronger implicit stereotypes than those in cities without such logos. Admittedly, the study's quasi-experimental design precludes firm causal inference. However, the persistence of this effect when controlling for various potential differences between the cities' residents and the consistency of these results with Studies 1 and 2 lend credence to the idea that ethnic brand imagery exposure, stereotype valence, and political identity can influence implicit stereotyping.

General discussion

Utilizing laboratory and field experiments, we provide one of the first empirical demonstrations of the influence of ethnic brand imagery on both positive and negative stereotypes in the broader population. This work suggests that everyday encounters with ethnic brand imagery can strengthen consumers' implicit stereotypes; however, these effects depend on the political identity of the perceiver. Whereas stereotypical brand imagery activated implicit stereotypes among liberals, this effect was mitigated among conservatives.

These findings are an important first step pointing to several avenues for future research. First, although our findings demonstrated that both positive and negative stereotypes can be activated by ethnic brand imagery exposure, we did not measure both in a single study. Thus, it is unclear whether positive and negative stereotypes compete, and, if so, which will prevail. Though not without methodological challenges, future should examine simultaneous stereotype activation.

Second, although our findings demonstrated the moderating role of political identity in stereotype malleability, further work is required to fully understand the relationship. Although we proposed an account based on differences in mental rigidity, liberals and conservatives also differ in openness to new experience and fear of threat (Jost et al., 2003a), both of which could also influence the observed moderation. Future research should investigate these underlying factors to examine their influence (Nail, McGregor, Drinkwater, Steele, & Thompson, 2009). Additionally, researchers should consider other traits, such as age, ethnicity, or life experience, that might also moderate the malleability of stereotypes activated by ethnic brand imagery.

Third, although we examined ethnic brand imagery varying in stereotype valence, more work is needed to understand precisely what characteristics of the brand image, such as the degree of anthropomorphism, drive the activation. Relatedly, in Study 2, we used a slogan to manipulate stereotype valence, which raises questions about the relative contribution of the image and the slogan in the obtained effect. Thus, future research could explore the differential effect of graphic versus textual information in stereotype activation. Finally, and of particular importance to consumer research, future work should investigate the downstream consequences of brand imagery driven stereotype activation on brand attitudes, perceptions, and purchase intentions. Furthermore, this context provides a useful opportunity to more fully understand the negative effects of positive stereotypes.

This research also has clear substantive implications. Perhaps the most notorious example of ethnic brand imagery in marketing practice is the use of American Indian sports logos. Our findings complement previous demonstrations of adverse effects of American Indian brand imagery within American Indian populations (e.g., Fryberg et al., 2008) by showing that exposure to such imagery can also activate stereotypes in the broader population. Together, this research lends empirical credence to the wealth of compelling social commentary condemning the use of American Indian brand imagery (e.g., Corntassel, 1999). We thus encourage policymakers to join forces with empirical researchers and focus their efforts on documenting measurable outcomes of exposure to stereotypic brand imagery. Despite the marketplace's active promotion of stereotypic representations (e.g., Aunt Jemimah, Uncle Ben), prejudice and discrimination have received surprisingly little attention in consumer behavior. The ongoing debate over ethnic brand imagery provides an exceptional opportunity for consumer researchers to influence an important societal issue. Accordingly, we call on other scholars to continue studying how branding decisions influence intergroup bias.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2016.03.004.

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