

Ethnic faces are biased in the prejudiced mind

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OVERVIEW & CONCLUSIONS

This study tested the hypothesis that highly prejudiced people have more negatively stereotyped mental representations of ethnic faces than less prejudiced people. The current research made use of the category of Moroccans, a highly stigmatized immigrant group in the Netherlands.

Participants first completed a Single Target Implicit Association Test (ST-IAT, 2). Then they constructed faces as proxies for their mental representations of Moroccan faces (A), resulting in average classification images (B). On the basis of participants' ST-IAT scores, their classification images were divided in three groups: low, moderate and high in prejudice. For every group an average classification image was calculated (C).

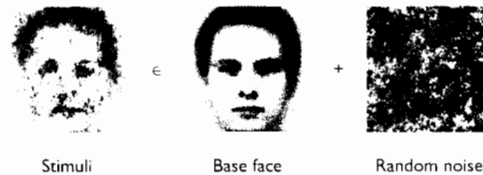
Independent participants rated these three average classification images. Moroccan faces constructed by highly prejudiced participants were rated as more criminal and less trustworthy than faces constructed by less prejudiced participants. (D)

These results suggest that people's representations of ethnic faces are related to their level of prejudice. They also have important implications for whom people identify as members of stigmatized groups, which may influence stereotype maintenance.

If prejudiced people would sooner include a person with a stereotype-confirming face in the category, they risk never encountering people whose facial features may undermine the stereotype, because the latter are simply not identified as part of the stigmatized group.

1. Mangini, M. C., & Biederman, I. (2004). *Cog Sci*, 28, 209-226.
2. Karpinski, A., & Steinman, R. B. (2006). *JPS*, 91, 16-32.

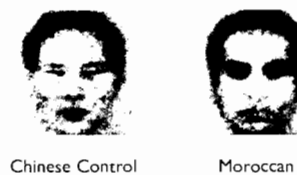
A) Face construction task



Mental representations of Moroccan (target) and Chinese (control) faces are visualized using a reverse correlation image classification task (1).

In 390 trials participants repeatedly chose the most Moroccan (Chinese) looking face from two stimulus faces presented side by side. All stimulus faces consisted of the same base face with random noise superimposed.

B) Constructed ethnic faces



Averaging all stimulus faces a participant chose as most Moroccan resulted in a Moroccan classification image (see above, N = 30).

As control 30 participants got the same task, with the same stimuli, but chose the most Chinese looking face. The resulting classification image is shown above.

C) Constructed Moroccan faces by prejudice level



A Single Target Implicit Association Test (ST-IAT, 2) measured the strength of negative/positive associations with Moroccans.

Participants were divided in three groups based on their ST-IAT score: low, moderate, and high in prejudice. For each of the three prejudice groups separate average classification images were calculated (see above).

D) Results: faces constructed by highly prejudiced people were rated as more criminal and less trustworthy

Independent participants (N = 70) rated the classification images of the low, moderate, and high prejudice groups on the traits *criminal* and *trustworthy*.

Seven point scales ranging from -3 (*not criminal/trustworthy*) to 3 (*very criminal/trustworthy*) were used.

The results are shown in the charts to the right. They indicate that the more prejudiced the group which constructed the classification image, the more criminal and less trustworthy the resulting face was rated.

