


# Prejudice Masquerading as Praise: The Negative Echo of Positive Stereotypes

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## Abstract

Five studies demonstrate the powerful connection between being the target of a positive stereotype and expecting that one is also being ascribed negative stereotypes. In Study 1, women who heard a man state a positive stereotype were more likely to believe that he held negative stereotypes of them than women who heard no stereotype. Beliefs about being negatively stereotyped mediated the relationship between hearing a positive stereotype and believing that the stereotyper was prejudiced. Studies 2 to 4 extended these results to Asian Americans and accounted for alternative explanations (e.g., categorization threat). In Study 5, the same positive stereotype (e.g., good at math) was directed to Asian American men's racial or gender identity. Their perceptions about whether negative racial or gender stereotypes were being applied to them depended on the identity referenced by the positive stereotype. Positive stereotypes signal a latent negativity about one's group, thereby explaining why they can feel like prejudice.

## Keywords

positive stereotypes, prejudice, identity, race, gender

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Imagine the following: A journalist asks a U.S. Senator for his opinion on who is most suited to become the next president of the United States. He responds, “This is a time for a woman to run . . . women have qualities that we’ve been lacking in America for a long time to be the leader of the country. Women are much more patient.” How might women respond to this seemingly positive characterization of their group? This statement was made by U.S. Senator Harry Reid when asked by a *New York Times* journalist for his opinion on Hillary Clinton’s chances of winning the 2016 presidential election (Nagourney, 2015). In response, female journalists accused Senator Reid of “soft sexism” (McDonough, 2015), arguing that his statement could be construed as “gently worded negative stereotypes” (Bovy, 2015). On their surface, positive stereotypes may seem like praise, but they may signal to targets an underlying negativity toward their group.

In the current work, we investigate whether hearing a positive stereotype (e.g., women are “nurturing”) can cause targets to assume that the stereotyper also holds negative stereotypes of their group (e.g., women are “fussy”). We further examine whether our *latent negative stereotype theory* can explain the perplexing disjunction between the positive valence of positive stereotypes and targets’ feelings that the person “complimenting” their group is prejudiced.

## Positive Stereotypes and Prejudice

Positive stereotypes are defined as positively valenced traits that describe social groups (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Ho & Jackson, 2001). In contrast, prejudice is commonly defined as a *negative* evaluation directed toward an individual or a social group (Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014). Because positive stereotypes are positive in valence, they appear to be outside of what is commonly considered prejudice. For instance, increasing norms against the expression of prejudice over the past decades have led to decreased expression of negative stereotypes (McConahay, 1986), but positive stereotypes have largely been excluded from this shift in norms (Bergsieker, Leslie, Constantine, & Fiske, 2012; Czopp, Kay, & Cheryan, 2015). Positive stereotypes may still be considered appropriate to state because they are seen as a form of praise and appreciation (Kay, Day, Zanna, & Nussbaum, 2013; Mae & Carlston, 2005).

Yet, a body of accumulating evidence across a range of groups suggests that hearing a positive stereotype in an intergroup interaction is not received as praise and, to the contrary,

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causes targets to believe that the stereotyper is prejudiced against their group (Czopp, 2008; Garcia, Miller, Smith, & Mackie, 2006). Whites who stereotyped African Americans as “natural athletes” were rated by African Americans as more prejudiced than Whites who did not state a positive stereotype (Czopp, 2008). A man who believed that women were “better judges in matters of culture and taste” was evaluated more negatively by women than a man who did not hold such beliefs (Kilianski & Rudman, 1998). Why might such “compliments” feel like prejudice?

## Sense of Being Depersonalized and Negative Stereotypes

Positive stereotypes evoke in targets a sense that they are being depersonalized or seen in terms of their group membership rather than as unique individuals (Siy & Cheryan, 2013; Tajfel, 1978). Being depersonalized by a positive stereotype is incompatible with the dominant model of self in the United States that places value on being recognized as an individual above and beyond one’s group memberships (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). As a result of this cultural incompatibility, positive stereotypes are particularly likely to evoke negativity in American cultural contexts (Siy & Cheryan, 2013).

In the current work, we introduce a novel and complementary mechanism stemming from the sense of being depersonalized that explains why positive stereotypes can evoke negativity among targets. Positive stereotypes may feel like prejudice because they cause targets to assume that the stereotyper is also applying negative stereotypes of their group to them. Assumptions about being ascribed negative stereotypes may result in part from targets’ sense of being depersonalized by the outgroup member (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Vorauer, Hunter, Main, & Roy, 2000). However, being the target of a positive stereotype may feel like a more extreme form of depersonalization than simply being seen as a member of a group because positive stereotypes reduce targets to a single attribute of their group.

## Current Work

We test the latent negative stereotype theory on three different identities and six different stereotypes in U.S. society. In the first two studies, we investigate whether being the target of a positive stereotype causes women (Study 1) and Asian Americans (Study 2) to perceive that the positive stereotyper is prejudiced because targets believe that unstated negative stereotypes are also being ascribed to them. We further examine whether greater beliefs about being ascribed negative stereotypes upon being the target of a positive stereotype are mediated by a sense of being depersonalized by the stereotyper. In Study 3, Asian Americans hear a White person endorse positive stereotypes of their group, and we manipulate whether or not the White person also explicitly rejects negative Asian American stereotypes. This manipulation allows us

to demonstrate that negative stereotype beliefs cause targets of positive stereotypes to perceive the stereotyper as more prejudiced. In Study 4, in a live interaction context, we investigate whether positive stereotypes constitute a more extreme form of depersonalization that evokes greater negative stereotype beliefs than simply being categorized as a group member. In Study 5, we examine whether the latent negative stereotype hypothesis is driven by a sense of being depersonalized to a specific identity as opposed to a more general process. Along the way, we address other alternative explanations that may account for the relationship between positive and negative stereotypes (e.g., compensatory nature of warmth and competence dimensions). Across all studies, we hypothesize that positive stereotypes invoked in an intergroup interaction will be perceived as prejudice because targets see positive stereotypes as a signal of unstated negativity toward their group.

## Study 1: Do Positive Stereotypes Cause Women to Feel Negatively Stereotyped?

Study 1 examines whether being the target of a positive stereotype causes women to assume that negative stereotypes are also being ascribed to them. Women are stereotyped both positively (e.g., nurturing, gentle) and negatively (e.g., spineless, fussy; Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). In the current study, women imagine being on the receiving end of one of two positive stereotypes: nurturing and gentle (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). In addition to testing the main hypothesis, we examine the underlying process by examining sense of being depersonalized as a mediator of the relationship between positive stereotypes and negative stereotype beliefs, and negative stereotype beliefs as a mediator between positive stereotypes and prejudice perceptions.

## Method

**Participants.** Eighty-two women (35 White, 27 Asian, nine mixed race, six Latino, two African American, and three did not indicate their race) were recruited on campus.

**Procedure.** Participants were randomly assigned to imagine being the target of a positive stereotype, no stereotype, or a you-statement. In the positive stereotype condition, participants read one of the following two scenarios:

Imagine walking to your next class when you are met by a classmate who is handing out flyers at the entrance to the lecture hall. As you approach the entrance, he turns to you, hands you a flyer and says, “I’m recruiting students who would like to volunteer their time at the Children’s Hospital. Women are really nurturing. We’d love to have you volunteer.”

Imagine you are at the zoo with your friends. While walking around, you decide to go to the petting zoo. When you reach the

area, you are stopped by a zookeeper who has you read a sign that lists instructions on how to interact with the animals. You read the list and tell him you are ready to head in. He looks at you and says, "I know women are really gentle. These animals will love you. Have a good time!"

In the no stereotype condition, participants received the same scenarios with the following sentences removed: "Women are really nurturing" (first scenario)/"I know women are really gentle" (second scenario). In the you-statement condition, the positive stereotype was directed to participants' individual identity (e.g., "You are nurturing").<sup>1</sup>

After reading the scenario, participants were asked, "How much do you think this person also thinks you are [trait]?" Negative stereotypes were taken from Eagly and Mladinic (1989), and included being subservient, spineless, gullible, whiny, fussy, servile, and emotional. We averaged across these stereotypes to form a measure of negative stereotype beliefs ( $\alpha = .85$ ; Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). These traits were intermixed with 20 filler traits (e.g., creative), and responses were recorded on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Perceptions of prejudice were measured with the question "How sexist is this person?" Sense of being depersonalized was measured using four questions (e.g., "To what extent does this person see you only for your gender group"; Siy & Cheryan, 2013;  $\alpha = .71$ ). Responses were on 7-point scales such that higher scores corresponded to greater negative stereotype beliefs, greater perceptions of sexism, and a greater sense of being depersonalized. As a check to ensure that participants were equally likely to imagine interacting with a man across conditions, participants were asked for the gender of the person making the comment in an open-ended question. Demographics were assessed at the end.

## Results

**Collapsing across vignette.** A 3 (condition: positive stereotype vs. no stereotype vs. you-statement)  $\times$  2 (scenario: hospital vs. zoo) between-subjects ANOVA revealed no main effects or interactions of scenario on any dependent measures. Analyses were collapsed across scenarios.

**Perceived gender of speaker.** Among participants who indicated imagining a single gender for the speaker, a Fisher's exact test revealed no relationship between condition and perceived gender of speaker,  $p = .21$ . Positively stereotyped women imagined interacting with a man with similar frequency (96%) as women who were the target of no stereotype (92%) or women who were the target of a you-statement (80%). This analysis and the percentages excluded participants who did not indicate a gender or indicated both genders.

**Negative stereotype beliefs.** A one-way between-subjects ANOVA with three levels (condition: positive stereotype vs.

no stereotype vs. you-statement) on negative stereotype beliefs revealed a main effect of Condition,  $F(2, 79) = 11.78$ ,  $p < .001$ . As hypothesized, women who heard the positive stereotype were more likely to believe that the stereotyper held negative stereotypes of them ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ) than women who heard no stereotype ( $M = 2.34$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ),  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.22$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [0.75, 1.81].

**Perceptions of prejudice.** Performing the same analysis as above on perceptions of prejudice revealed a main effect of Condition,  $F(2, 77) = 29.69$ ,  $p < .001$ . Positively stereotyped women believed that the stereotyper was more sexist ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ) than women who did not hear a stereotype ( $M = 1.50$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ),  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.18$ , 95% CI = [1.98, 3.39].

**Sense of being depersonalized.** Performing the same analysis as above on sense of being depersonalized revealed a main effect of Condition,  $F(2, 79) = 32.56$ ,  $p < .001$ . Women who were the target of a positive stereotype felt a greater sense of being depersonalized ( $M = 5.51$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) than women who were the target of no stereotype ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ),  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.17$ , 95% CI = [1.53, 2.62].

**Sense of being depersonalized mediates the relationship between positive stereotypes and negative stereotype beliefs.** We used the SPSS macro for simple mediation by Preacher and Hayes (2004) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples to test whether a sense of being depersonalized mediates the relationship between being the target of a positive stereotype and believing that one was also being negatively stereotyped. In Steps 1 and 2, positive stereotypes caused greater negative stereotype beliefs,  $b = 1.28$ ,  $SE = .28$ ,  $p < .001$ , and a greater sense of being depersonalized,  $b = 2.07$ ,  $SE = .26$ ,  $p < .001$ . In Step 3, sense of being depersonalized predicted greater negative stereotype beliefs upon controlling for being a target of a positive stereotype,  $b = 0.41$ ,  $SE = .14$ ,  $p = .006$ . In Step 4, being positively stereotyped was unrelated to negative stereotype beliefs,  $b = 0.44$ ,  $SE = .40$ ,  $p = .28$ . Sense of being depersonalized mediated greater negative stereotype beliefs upon being the target of a positive stereotype, Sobel  $Z = 2.70$ ,  $p = .007$ , 95% CI = [0.29, 1.53].

**Negative stereotype beliefs mediate the relationship between positive stereotypes and perceptions of prejudice.** Using the same procedures outlined above, we tested whether negative stereotype beliefs mediate women's greater perception of prejudice upon being the target of a positive stereotype (see Table 1 for correlations between variables). In Steps 1 and 2, women perceived the positive stereotyper as more prejudiced,  $b = 2.69$ ,  $SE = .34$ ,  $p < .001$ , and were more likely to believe that he held negative stereotypes of them,  $b = 1.32$ ,  $SE = .28$ ,  $p < .001$ . In Step 3, negative stereotype beliefs predicted perceptions of prejudice upon controlling for being a target of a positive stereotype,  $b = 0.46$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,

**Table 1.** Correlations Between Negative Stereotype Beliefs and Prejudice Perceptions in Studies 1, 2, and 4.

	Condition	
	Positive stereotype	No stereotype
Study 1	.46**	.33 <sup>†</sup>
Study 2	.56***	.51***
Study 4	.19	.42**

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

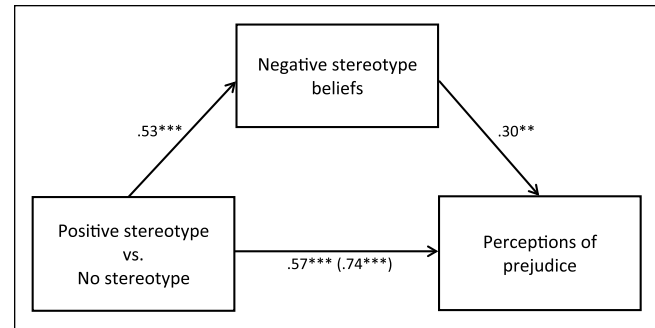
$p < .006$ . In Step 4, being positively stereotyped remained related to perceptions of prejudice,  $b = 2.08$ ,  $SE = .38$ ,  $p < .001$ . Negative stereotype beliefs mediated women's greater perceptions of prejudice upon being the target of a positive stereotype (see Figure 1), Sobel  $Z = 2.42$ ,  $p = .02$ , 95% CI = [0.10, 1.24].

We also tested the reverse mediation model, in which prejudice perceptions mediate the relationship between positive stereotypes and negative stereotype beliefs. Consistent with Steps 1 and 2 outlined above, women perceived the positive stereotyper as more prejudiced and were more likely to believe that he also held negative stereotypes of them. In Step 3, prejudice perceptions predicted negative stereotype beliefs upon controlling for being a target of a positive stereotype,  $b = 0.31$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $p = .01$ . In Step 4, being positively stereotyped was unrelated to negative stereotype beliefs,  $b = 0.48$ ,  $SE = .39$ ,  $p = .23$ . The reverse mediation model was statistically significant, Sobel  $Z = 2.69$ ,  $p = .007$ , 95% CI = [0.12, 1.74].

## Discussion

Women who heard a man state a positive stereotype of women as nurturing or gentle were more likely to believe that he was also ascribing negative stereotypes (e.g., fussy) to them than women who heard no stereotype. Nurturing and gentle are both considered desirable traits for women to have (Prentice & Carranza, 2002), and positive stereotypes are perceived as relatively appropriate to state (Bergsieker et al., 2012). Yet when women were labeled with these traits by an outgroup member, they responded by believing that they were also being negatively stereotyped.

Women also concluded that a man who stated a positive stereotype was more sexist than a man who did not state a positive stereotype, and this was mediated by the belief that a man who states a positive stereotype endorsed negative stereotypes about women. However, the reverse mediation pathway was also statistically significant, which highlights a limitation of cross-section mediation for establishing causality (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005). We address this concern in Study 3 by manipulating negative stereotype endorsement in the presence of a positive stereotype and examining its effects on perceptions of prejudice.



**Figure 1.** Women's negative stereotype beliefs mediated the relationship between being the target of a positive stereotype and perceptions of prejudice in Study 1.

Note. Values in the model represent standardized coefficients of the relationships. Value inside the parentheses represents the coefficient of the relationship without controlling for negative stereotype beliefs. Values outside of the parentheses represent coefficients controlling for negative stereotype beliefs.

\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## Study 2: Do Positive Stereotypes Cause Asian Americans to Feel Negatively Stereotyped?

Study 2 investigates the reliability and generalizability of our effects by examining Asian Americans' responses to positive stereotypes. Asian Americans are stereotyped as good at math, ambitious, hardworking, and intelligent (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Maddux, Galinsky, Cuddy, & Polifroni, 2008). They are also negatively stereotyped, for instance, as cold and as bad drivers (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997; Sue, Bucceri, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). Investigating Asian Americans' responses to positive stereotypes not only affords generalizability, but it also allows us to examine whether effects extend to positive stereotypes that are different in content (i.e., competence-based instead of warmth-based; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002).

In the present study, Asian Americans imagine being the target of one of four positive stereotypes of Asian Americans (good at math, hardworking, ambitious, intelligent; Ho & Jackson, 2001) or no stereotype. In addition to testing the central hypothesis, we test whether the relationship between positive stereotypes and negative stereotypes is mediated by a sense of being depersonalized, and whether negative stereotype beliefs mediate the relationship between positive stereotypes and prejudice.

This study also investigates an alternative explanation for the relationship between positive and negative stereotypes: the compensatory nature of competence and warmth dimensions (e.g., Kervyn, Bergsieker, & Fiske, 2012). More specifically, competence-based positive stereotypes (e.g., being good at math) could trigger assumptions about being seen as less warm (e.g., cold). To address this, we omit warmth-based negative stereotypes and examine whether the relationship between positive and negative stereotypes remains.

## Method

**Participants.** Asian Americans ( $N = 206$ ; 116 female) participated in a mass testing session. There were no effects of gender in this study except that women felt a greater sense of being depersonalized ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) than men ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ),  $p = .01$ ,  $d = 0.36$ . There were no Gender  $\times$  Condition interactions on our dependent measures,  $F_s < .83$ ,  $p_s > .52$ .

**Procedure.** Participants were randomly assigned to imagine themselves in a situation where they were the target of one of four positive stereotypes of Asian Americans (i.e., ambitious, hardworking, good at math, or intelligent; Ho & Jackson, 2001), no stereotype, or one of four you-statements (see Note 1). For example, in one version of the positive stereotype condition, participants read the following:

Imagine you are at the local café studying for an upcoming math final. While you are studying, you are approached by a classmate who says: "Can you help me with these two problems? I know Asians are typically good at this stuff."

Participants in the control condition read the same scenario without the last sentence (see Siy & Cheryan, 2013, for the other scenarios). In the you-statement condition, participants saw the same stereotype directed to their individual identity (see Note 1).

Negative stereotype beliefs were measured in a manner consistent with Study 1. The following negative stereotypes of Asian Americans were included: cheap, cold, bad drivers, narrow-minded, antisocial, and bad at English (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997; Sue et al., 2007;  $\alpha = .87$ ). Five research assistants categorized these traits as either warmth or competence related. Stereotypes were categorized by their most frequent rating. Sense of being depersonalized was measured using the four-item measure from Study 1 modified for race ( $\alpha = .70$ ). Perceptions of prejudice were measured with the question "How racist is this person?" on a scale from 1 (*not at all racist*) to 7 (*very racist*). To check that participants were equally likely to imagine interacting with someone from the outgroup across conditions, we included an open-ended question asking participants for the race of the person they imagined. Demographics were assessed at the end.

## Results

**Collapsing across vignettes.** A 3 (condition: positive stereotype vs. no stereotype vs. you-statement)  $\times$  4 (scenario) between-subjects ANOVA revealed no theoretically relevant main effects or interactions of scenario on any of our dependent measures. The only significant effect was a main effect of scenario on sense of being depersonalized,  $F(3, 194) = 3.05$ ,  $p = .03$ . Asian Americans felt a greater sense of being depersonalized in the math scenario ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ) than in the ambitious scenario ( $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ),

$F(3, 194) = 3.05$ ,  $p = .03$ . However, there was no interaction of Condition  $\times$  Scenario on sense of being depersonalized,  $F(6, 194) = 0.58$ ,  $p = .74$ .

**Perceived race of speaker.** Among participants who indicated imagining a single race for the speaker, a Fisher's exact test revealed no relationship between condition and perceived race of speaker,  $p = .21$ . Positively stereotyped Asian Americans reported a similar likelihood of imagining the person was a racial outgroup member (96%) as Asian Americans who were the target of no stereotype (89%) or Asian Americans who were the target of a you-statement (85%).

**Negative stereotype beliefs.** A one-way between-subjects ANOVA with three levels (condition: positive stereotype vs. no stereotype vs. you-statement) on negative stereotype beliefs revealed a main effect of Condition,  $F(2, 202) = 23.86$ ,  $p < .001$ . Asian Americans who were the target of a positive stereotype were more likely to believe that the outgroup member held negative stereotypes of them ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ) than Asian Americans who heard no stereotype ( $M = 2.37$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ),  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.19$ , 95% CI = [0.87, 1.84].

To ensure that results were not solely driven by the compensatory nature of the competence-warmth dimensions, we removed the negative warmth-related stereotypes (i.e., anti-social, narrow-minded, and cold;  $\alpha = .76$ ) and reran the previous analyses. The main effect of condition remained,  $F(2, 202) = 24.71$ ,  $p < .001$ . Positively stereotyped Asian Americans were more likely to believe that the outgroup member held negative stereotypes of them ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) than Asian Americans who heard no stereotype ( $M = 2.49$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ),  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.22$ , 95% CI = [1.02, 2.14].

**Perceptions of prejudice.** Performing the same analysis as above on perceptions of prejudice revealed a main effect of Condition,  $F(2, 199) = 51.62$ ,  $p < .001$ . Positively stereotyped Asian Americans were more likely to believe that the person was racist ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ) than Asian Americans who were the target no stereotype ( $M = 1.97$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ),  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.73$ , 95% CI = [1.70, 2.85].

**Sense of being depersonalized.** Performing the same analysis as above on sense of being depersonalized revealed a main effect of Condition,  $F(2, 203) = 69.59$ ,  $p < .001$ . Asian Americans who were the target of a positive stereotype felt a greater sense of being depersonalized ( $M = 5.17$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) than Asian Americans who heard no stereotype ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ),  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.78$ , 95% CI = [1.48, 2.34].

**Mediation analyses.** Using the same mediational procedures as Study 1 revealed that a sense of being depersonalized was a significant mediator of the relationship between positive stereotypes and negative stereotype beliefs (Step 1:  $b = 1.35$ ,  $SE = .19$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Step 2:  $b = 1.90$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Step

3:  $b = 0.34$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and Step 4:  $b = 0.71$ ,  $SE = .25$ ,  $p = .004$ ), Sobel  $Z = 3.62$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = [0.30, 1.02].

Negative stereotype beliefs mediated the relationship between being the target of a positive stereotype and believing that the stereotyper is racist (Step 1:  $b = 2.26$ ,  $SE = .23$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Step 2:  $b = 1.41$ ,  $SE = .19$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Step 3:  $b = 0.63$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and Step 4:  $b = 1.38$ ,  $SE = .23$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Sobel  $Z = 5.09$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = [0.56, 1.22].

The reverse mediation was also plausible. Prejudice perceptions mediated the relationship between being positively stereotyped and expecting to be the target of negative stereotypes (Step 1:  $b = 1.41$ ,  $SE = .19$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Step 2:  $b = 2.26$ ,  $SE = .23$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Step 3:  $b = 0.46$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and Step 4:  $b = 0.37$ ,  $SE = .22$ ,  $p = .09$ ), Sobel  $Z = 5.83$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = [0.68, 1.45].

## Discussion

Asian Americans who heard a positive stereotype about their group believed that negative stereotypes were also being ascribed to them. Removing the warmth-related stereotypes did not eliminate the relationship, revealing that these effects are not attributable to the compensatory nature of the warmth–competence dimensions. Once again, negative stereotype beliefs mediated the relationship between hearing a positive stereotype and believing that one was the target of prejudice. However, the reverse mediation was also statistically supported. To establish the causal relationship between negative stereotype beliefs and prejudice perceptions, we experimentally manipulate negative stereotype beliefs in the next study in line with recommended procedures for demonstrating underlying psychological processes (i.e., *experimental-causal-chain* designs; Spencer et al., 2005).

## Study 3: Do Negative Stereotype Beliefs Drive Perceptions of Prejudice?

In the current study, Asian Americans are asked to form an impression of a White person based on his ostensible responses to a questionnaire about Asian Americans. The fictitious White person endorses positive stereotypes of Asian Americans on the questionnaire, and we manipulate whether he also rejects negative stereotypes of Asian Americans or says nothing about the negative stereotypes. If, as we hypothesized, positive stereotypes cause Asian Americans to assume that negative stereotypes are being ascribed to them, then they should perceive that positive stereotypers are less prejudiced when stereotypers explicitly reject negative stereotypes of their group.

## Method

**Participants.** Asian Americans ( $N = 116$ ; 73 female) were recruited on campus and through the university's online subject pool.

**Procedure.** Asian American participants were asked to form an impression of a White person based on viewing the person's ostensible responses to a fictitious questionnaire. The fictitious questionnaire indicated the respondent's race as White. Three questions asked how much Asian Americans are good at math, intelligent, and hardworking (Ho & Jackson, 2001). The respondent endorsed these positive stereotypes in both conditions by circling answers on the high end of the scale (see Figure 2). In the reject negative stereotypes condition, participants saw three questions before the positive stereotypes questions about how much Asian Americans are bad at English, bad drivers, and antisocial (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997; Sue et al., 2007). The respondent did not endorse these negative stereotypes by circling answers on the low end of the scale. In the control condition, questions about negative stereotypes were omitted.

After viewing survey responses, participants were asked to evaluate how much they perceived the respondent to be prejudiced. Perceptions of prejudice were measured using three items ( $\alpha = .88$ ): "How racist is this person," "How prejudiced is this person," and "How insensitive is this person." As a manipulation check, we also included a measure of negative stereotype beliefs ( $\alpha = .93$ ), "How much does this person think Asian Americans are [trait]," and included the traits bad driver, bad at English, and antisocial. All responses were on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very*).

## Results

**Manipulation check.** Asian Americans who saw the White respondent reject negative stereotypes of Asian Americans were less likely to believe that he held negative stereotypes of Asian Americans ( $M = 1.36$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) than Asian Americans who received no information about his negative stereotype endorsement ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ),  $t(112) = 6.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.13$ , 95% CI = [0.91, 1.80].

**Perceptions of prejudice.** Asian Americans who saw the White respondent reject negative stereotypes of their group believed that the White respondent was less prejudiced ( $M = 2.06$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) than Asian Americans who received no information about his negative stereotype endorsement ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ),  $t(113) = 5.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.07$ , 95% CI = [0.90, 1.85].

## Discussion

Asian Americans characterized a White person who endorsed positive stereotypes of Asian Americans as less prejudiced when that White person explicitly rejected negative stereotypes of Asian Americans. Experimentally manipulating the mediator revealed a causal relationship between outgroup members' rejection of negative stereotypes and ingroup members' beliefs that outgroup members are less prejudiced.

### Reject negative stereotypes condition

**Demographic information**

Please indicate your race (select all that apply):

Black / African American     Asian / Asian American

Latino / Hispanic     Native American / American Indian

White     Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

How old are you: 19

**Instructions:** We are interested in your beliefs about Asian Americans. Please answer the questions below.

How much do you think Asian Americans are **bad at English**?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very

How much do you think Asian Americans are **bad drivers**?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very

How much do you think Asian Americans are **anti-social**?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very

How much do you think Asian Americans are **good at math**?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very

How much do you think Asian Americans are **intelligent**?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very

How much do you think Asian Americans are **hardworking**?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very

### Control condition

**Demographic information**

Please indicate your race (select all that apply):

Black / African American     Asian / Asian American

Latino / Hispanic     Native American / American Indian

White     Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

How old are you: 19

**Instructions:** We are interested in your beliefs about Asian Americans. Please answer the questions below.

How much do you think Asian Americans are **good at math**?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very

How much do you think Asian Americans are **intelligent**?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very

How much do you think Asian Americans are **hardworking**?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very

**Figure 2.** Asian American participants were randomly assigned to view one of two sets of fictitious responses to a survey about Asian Americans in Study 3. In the reject negative stereotypes condition, participants saw three additional responses to questions that indicated that the White person did not explicitly endorse negative stereotypes of Asian Americans. In the control condition, participants saw a questionnaire omitting these three questions.

In the absence of explicit information countering negative stereotypes, positive stereotypes cause targets to assume that the stereotyper also holds negative stereotypes of their group and is therefore prejudiced.

Does that mean that people who state positive stereotypes can avoid negative judgment if they claim to not endorse negative stereotypes? There are two reasons we would not recommend this strategy. First, targets may interpret such statements made by outgroup members as strategic attempts to appear nonprejudiced instead of statements that convey egalitarian attitudes (Plant & Devine, 1998). Second, signaling that one does not endorse negative stereotypes may be seen as a type of disclaimer that actually indicates to targets the opposite (Wout, Murphy, & Barnett, 2014). A better strategy may be to avoid reducing people to a stereotype, whether negative or positive, in the first place (Zou & Cheryan, 2015).

### Study 4: Do Positive Stereotypes Evoke More Negative Stereotypes Than Categorization?

Study 4 examines whether being the target of a positive stereotype causes greater beliefs about being ascribed negative

stereotypes than simply being categorized as a member of a group because positive stereotypes constitute a more extreme form of being depersonalized. This question is important for two reasons. First, we can identify whether effects are due to being the target of a positive stereotype instead of a more general process of being externally categorized by an outgroup member. Second, this study investigates whether making a positively valenced race-related comment in an interracial interaction is actually more problematic than a race-related comment that is neutral in valence.

In the present study, Asian Americans are either the target of a positive stereotype or racially categorized by their White partner. Although simply being categorized can elicit a sense of being evaluated through the lens of one's identity (Steele & Aronson, 1995), we hypothesize that being positively stereotyped will result in an even stronger belief that one is being negatively stereotyped. We test for these effects in a live interaction context.

### Method

**Participants.** Asian Americans ( $N = 99$ ; 61 female) participated in exchange for subject pool credit. Data from two participants

were excluded from analysis because one prevented himself from being positively stereotyped or categorized by skipping the initial demographic profile and one participant's data did not record due to a computer malfunction.

There were no Gender  $\times$  Condition interactions on our dependent measures,  $F_s < .89$ ,  $p_s > .34$ . However, women felt a greater sense of being depersonalized ( $M = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ) than men did ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ),  $p = .03$ ,  $d = 0.40$ , 95% CI = [0.05, 0.91]. Women also held stronger beliefs that their partner was prejudiced ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = 1.60$ ) than men did ( $M = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ),  $p = .01$ ,  $d = 0.44$ , 95% CI = [0.18, 1.15].

**Procedure.** Participants were paired with one of two White student confederates and brought into lab to participate in a study ostensibly about work styles. One male ( $n = 60$ ) and one female ( $n = 37$ ) were used as confederates.<sup>2</sup> Experimenters began by instructing participant–confederate pairs to complete a handwritten demographic profile about themselves. Before beginning the profile, experimenters conducted a rigged drawing that always assigned confederates the job of filling out the demographic profile and dividing up the packets.

The demographic profile asked for each person's year in school and gender. For year in school, confederates answered the question out loud for themselves, then asked the same question of participants (i.e., "I'm a junior, you are?"), and then checked the appropriate box on the form. For gender, confederates answered the question out loud for themselves, also answered for the participant (i.e., "I'm male, and you're [participant's gender]"), and then checked the appropriate box on the form. In the categorization condition (but not the positive stereotype condition to avoid double categorization), the demographic profile additionally asked for race. When answering this question, confederates answered out loud for themselves, also answered for the participant (i.e., "I'm White, and you're Asian"), and then checked the appropriate boxes on the form. No participants disagreed with this categorization.

Confederates then assigned all participants the task of completing the math problems. In the categorization condition, confederates looked at participants and said, "How about you take this packet. I'll work on this one." In the positive stereotype condition, confederates looked at participants and said, "I know all Asians are good at math. How about you take this math packet. I'll work on this one" (adapted from Siy & Cheryan, 2013). Participants and confederates were given 5 min to work on the packets. After 5 min, participants and confederates were separated, and participants answered questions about the process and their partner. Beliefs about their partner's negative stereotypes were measured in a manner similar to Study 2 with six negative Asian American stereotypes ( $\alpha = .70$ ) intermixed and randomly presented with 15 filler traits (e.g., noble). Sense of being depersonalized was measured using the same items in Study 2 ( $\alpha = .77$ ). This measure was intermixed with questions about being

depersonalized to other identities (e.g., college major) to avoid raising suspicion. Perceptions of prejudice were assessed by asking how prejudiced and insensitive their partner was,  $r(97) = .60$ ,  $p < .001$ . As a manipulation check, participants indicated how much they believed that their partner thought they were good at math on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). Demographics were collected at the end.

## Results

**Manipulation check.** Asian Americans who were the target of a positive stereotype were more likely to believe that their partner thought they were good at math ( $M = 5.85$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ) than Asian Americans who were racially categorized by their partner ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ),  $t(95) = 5.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.18$ , 95% CI = [1.17, 2.37].

**Negative stereotype beliefs.** Positively stereotyped Asian Americans were more likely to believe that their partner also held negative stereotypes of them ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ) than Asian Americans who were racially categorized ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ),  $t(95) = 2.83$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $d = 0.57$ , 95% CI = [0.15, 0.83].

**Perceptions of prejudice.** Asian Americans who were the target of a positive stereotype were more likely to believe that their partner was prejudiced ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ) than Asian Americans who were racially categorized ( $M = 2.03$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ),  $t(95) = 8.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.74$ , 95% CI = [1.61, 2.58].

**Sense of being depersonalized.** Asian Americans who were the target of a positive stereotype felt a greater sense of being depersonalized to their identity by their partner ( $M = 5.33$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) than Asian Americans who were racially categorized ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ),  $t(94) = 6.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.38$ , 95% CI = [1.02, 1.87].

**Mediation analyses.** Sense of being depersonalized was a marginally significant mediator of the relationship between positive stereotypes and negative stereotype beliefs (Step 1:  $b = 0.51$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p = .004$ ; Step 2:  $b = 1.45$ ,  $SE = .21$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Step 3:  $b = 0.14$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $p = .09$ ; and Step 4:  $b = 0.30$ ,  $SE = .21$ ,  $p = .16$ ), Sobel  $Z = 1.66$ ,  $p = .10$ , 95% CI = [−0.05, 0.51].

Negative stereotype beliefs mediated the relationship between being the target of a positive stereotype and believing that their partner was prejudiced (Step 1:  $b = 2.10$ ,  $SE = .24$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Step 2:  $b = 0.49$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p = .01$ ; Step 3:  $b = 0.39$ ,  $SE = .14$ ,  $p = .01$ ; and Step 4:  $b = 1.91$ ,  $SE = .24$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Sobel  $Z = 1.93$ ,  $p = .05$ , 95% CI = [0.02, 0.37].

The reverse mediation was also significant. Prejudice perceptions mediated the relationship between being positively stereotyped and expecting to be the target of negative stereotypes (Step 1:  $b = 0.49$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p = .006$ ; Step 2:  $b = 2.10$ ,  $SE = .24$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Step 3:  $b = 0.19$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .006$ ; and Step 4:  $b = 0.08$ ,  $SE = .22$ ,  $p = .73$ ), Sobel  $Z = 2.64$ ,  $p = .008$ , 95% CI = [0.05, 0.82].



## Discussion

Asian Americans who heard their White partner state that Asians are good at math were more likely to believe that this person also held negative stereotypes of them than Asian Americans who were racially categorized by their White partner. Asian Americans who heard the positive stereotype were also more likely to feel that their partner was prejudiced than those who were merely categorized. This is not to say that all categorization situations evoke less prejudice than being positively stereotyped. Categorizations that are inappropriate (e.g., asking someone to be a representative of their race) can be threatening (Crosby, King, & Savitsky, 2014). Mentioning a group identity in a way that does not deny the other person's individuality (e.g., as an appropriate and seemingly necessary part of the situation) may be less likely to trigger negative stereotype beliefs.

In the final study, we experimentally manipulate the identity referenced by the positive stereotype to test whether negative stereotype beliefs depend on being depersonalized to a particular identity. If positive and negative stereotypes are linked in the targets' minds through their identity, as we suggest, then their assumptions about which negative stereotypes are being applied to them should depend on the identity mentioned.

## Study 5: Same Positive Stereotype, Different Identities

Study 5 examines whether targets' assumptions about which negative stereotypes are being ascribed to them depend on the identity referenced by the positive stereotype. Specifically, we investigate whether a positive stereotype directed at one's race triggers a different set of negative stereotype beliefs compared with the same positive stereotype directed to one's gender. We use Asian American men as participants because their race and gender share similar positive stereotypes (e.g., good at math, ambitious) yet diverge on negative stereotypes (e.g., Asians are stereotyped as bad at English, men are stereotyped as aggressive; Bem, 1974; Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Ho & Jackson, 2001). We hypothesize that Asian American men who are the target of a positive racial stereotype will believe that they are being seen through the lens of negative Asian American stereotypes, and Asian American men who hear a positive gender stereotype will believe that they are being seen through the lens of negative male stereotypes.

This study also rules out two remaining alternative explanations for the relationship between positive and negative stereotypes. First, positive and negative traits may be associated more generally in society, irrespective of identity. For instance, there may be a perceived association between being good at math and being cold that is not driven by assumptions about being seen through the lens of one's Asian American identity. Second, people who state positive stereotypes may be perceived as the kind of people who think

negative things about others. In both cases, targets should think that the person who states a positive stereotype believes the same negative traits about them, regardless of which identity the positive stereotype references. To rule out these alternatives, we examine whether the negative stereotype content depends on the identity referenced by the positive stereotype.

## Method

**Participants.** Asian American men ( $N = 106$ ) were recruited on campus.

**Pretest to identify positive and negative stereotypes.** To identify a set of overlapping positive and nonoverlapping negative stereotypes of Asian Americans and men, we had a separate sample of 28 participants (15 male; 16 White, nine Asian, one Latino, and two who identified as mixed race) rate 34 traits for how much they were stereotypical of Asian Americans and men (order counterbalanced). Traits included the four positive stereotypes of Asian Americans from Study 2 (e.g., good at math; Ho & Jackson, 2001), six previously validated negative stereotypes of Asian Americans (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997; Sue et al., 2007), 12 previously validated negative stereotypes of men (Bem, 1974; Eagly & Mladinic, 1989), and 12 filler traits (e.g., "adaptable"). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which being [trait] is stereotypically associated with Asians/men. Responses were recorded on a scale from 1 (*counterstereotypical*) to 4 (*unrelated*) to 7 (*stereotypical*).

A one-sample  $t$  test comparing participants' responses with the midpoint (i.e., 4) found that both Asian Americans and men were positively stereotyped as good at math, hard-working, ambitious, and intelligent (see Table 2 for statistics). For negative stereotypes, a one-sample  $t$  test found that Asian Americans were stereotyped as bad at English, bad at driving, antisocial, and cold. These same traits were considered either unrelated or counterstereotypical of men. A one-sample  $t$  test found that men were stereotyped as forceful, aggressive, boastful, arrogant, egotistical, dominant, hostile, dictatorial, unreliable, conceited, cynical, and cheap. These same traits were considered unrelated or counterstereotypical of Asian Americans. Competitive, narrow-minded, and greedy were considered stereotypical of both groups and therefore were not included in either measure.

**Procedure.** Participants were randomly assigned to imagine themselves in one of four scenarios in which they were the target of a positive stereotype. The same scenarios as Study 2 were used. For each scenario, we manipulated whether the positive stereotype was directed at participants' racial or gender identity (e.g., "Asians are ambitious" vs. "men are ambitious").

Participants indicated how much they believed that negative stereotypes were being ascribed to them with the same

**Table 2.** Stereotypicality Trait Ratings for Asian Americans and Men in Study 5.

Stereotypes	Asian Americans			Men		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i> value	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i> value
Overlapping positive stereotypes						
Good at math	6.89	0.42	<.001	4.89	0.96	<.001
Intelligent	6.64	0.56	<.001	4.29	0.90	.10
Hardworking	6.64	0.73	<.001	5.04	1.32	<.001
Ambitious	6.00	1.56	<.001	5.46	1.00	<.001
Negative stereotypes of Asian Americans						
Bad at English	6.04	1.04	<.001	3.43	1.17	.02
Bad at driving	5.89	1.55	<.001	2.57	1.60	<.001
Antisocial	5.07	1.41	<.001	3.61	1.34	.13
Cold	4.68	1.31	.01	3.93	1.56	.81
Negative stereotypes of men						
Dictatorial	4.07	1.44	.8	5.46	0.88	<.001
Cynical	4.32	1.61	.3	4.41	0.93	.03
Cheap	4.39	1.75	.25	4.39	0.92	.03
Egotistical	3.57	1.40	.12	5.89	0.96	<.001
Boastful	3.50	1.60	.11	5.79	0.79	<.001
Conceited	4.46	1.48	.11	5.11	1.01	<.001
Arrogant	3.39	1.55	.05	5.86	0.93	<.001
Dominant	3.36	1.55	.04	6.14	1.11	<.001
Unreliable	3.39	1.34	.02	5.36	1.06	<.001
Hostile	3.39	1.23	.01	5.46	0.84	<.001
Forceful	3.07	1.51	.003	6.00	0.77	<.001
Aggressive	3.00	1.47	.001	6.00	0.86	<.001
Overlapping negative stereotypes						
Competitive	5.61	1.50	<.001	6.29	0.66	<.001
Narrow-minded	4.75	1.21	.003	5.07	1.02	<.001
Greedy	4.93	1.44	.002	5.21	0.96	<.001

Note. Results are from a one-sample *t* test comparing responses with the midpoint (i.e., 4). Responses were on a scale from 1 (counterstereotypical) to 4 (unrelated) to 7 (stereotypical).

question as the previous study. We included the four negative Asian American stereotypes ( $\alpha = .79$ ) and 12 negative male stereotypes ( $\alpha = .88$ ) identified in the pretest above. Intermixed among these traits were 14 filler traits (e.g., truthful). Perceptions of sexism were measured by asking, "How sexist is this person?" and perceptions of racism were measured by asking, "How racist is this person?" All responses were on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). We asked participants to indicate the race and gender of the person they imagined in the same manner described in Studies 1 and 2. Demographics were collected at the end.

## Results

**Scenario differences.** A 2 (condition: positive gender stereotype vs. positive racial stereotype; between)  $\times$  4 (scenario; between)  $\times$  2 (identity: gender vs. race; within) mixed-model ANOVA on negative stereotype beliefs revealed no main effect of Scenario,  $F(3, 98) = 0.63, p = .60$ ; no Scenario  $\times$  Condition interaction,  $F(3, 98) = 1.40, p = .25$ ; no Scenario  $\times$  Identity

interaction,  $F(3, 98) = 1.89, p = .14$ ; and no Condition  $\times$  Scenario  $\times$  Identity interaction,  $F(3, 98) = 0.30, p = .82$ .

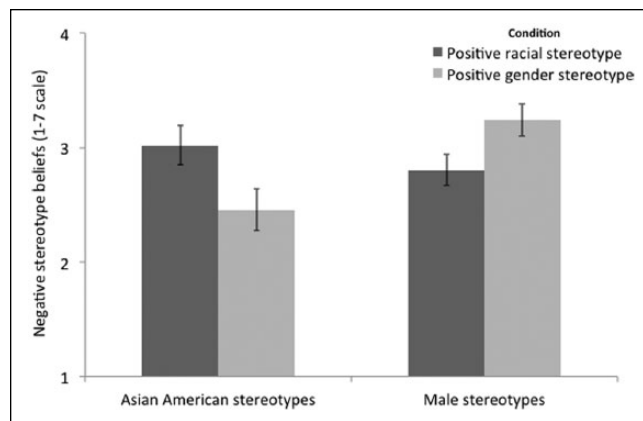
A 2 (condition: positive gender stereotype vs. positive racial stereotype; between)  $\times$  4 (scenario; between)  $\times$  2 (identity: gender vs. race; within) mixed-model ANOVA on prejudice perceptions revealed no main effect of Scenario,  $F(3, 97) = 1.83, p = .15$ , and no Scenario  $\times$  Condition interaction,  $F(3, 97) = 1.68, p = .18$ . However, this analysis did reveal a significant Scenario  $\times$  Identity interaction,  $F(3, 97) = 3.90, p = .01$ , and a significant Identity  $\times$  Condition  $\times$  Scenario interaction,  $F(3, 97) = 7.58, p < .001$ . To examine this three-way interaction, we conducted 2 (condition)  $\times$  2 (scenario) ANOVAs separately on perceptions of racism and perceptions of sexism. A 2 (condition)  $\times$  2 (scenario) between-subjects ANOVA on perceptions of racism revealed no main effects of scenario,  $F(3, 97) = 2.41, p = .07$ , and no Scenario  $\times$  Condition interaction,  $F(3, 97) = 1.10, p = .35$ . A 2 (condition)  $\times$  4 (scenario) ANOVA on perceptions of sexism revealed a main effect of scenario,  $F(3, 97) = 5.70, p = .001$ , that was qualified by a Scenario  $\times$  Condition interaction,  $F(3, 97) = 10.34, p < .001$ . Participants' perceptions of sexism were significantly higher

in the positive gender stereotype condition for the good at math and hardworking scenarios, but the intelligent and ambitious scenarios did not achieve significance (though means were in the predicted direction).

**Perceived gender and race of speaker.** All Asian American men who were the target of a positive racial stereotype imagined interacting with someone from a racial outgroup, and the majority (60%) of Asian American men who were the target of a positive gender stereotype imagined interacting with a woman. Although the tendency to imagine an outgroup member more in one condition presents a potential confound in this study, it would not explain the current pattern of results (i.e., negative gender stereotype beliefs were greater than negative racial stereotype beliefs when Asian American men were the target of a positive gender stereotype).

**Negative stereotype beliefs.** A 2 (condition: positive gender stereotype vs. positive racial stereotype; between)  $\times$  2 (identity: gender vs. race; within) mixed-model ANOVA on negative stereotype beliefs revealed a main effect of Identity,  $F(1, 104) = 6.83, p = .01$ , that was qualified by a significant Condition  $\times$  Identity interaction,  $F(1, 104) = 21.80, p < .001$ . Asian American men who were the target of a positive gender stereotype were more likely to believe that negative gender stereotypes were being ascribed to them ( $M = 3.24, SD = 1.02$ ) than Asian Americans who were the target of a positive racial stereotype ( $M = 2.80, SD = 0.99$ ),  $p = .03, d = 0.44, 95\% CI = [0.05, 0.83]$ . Similarly, Asian American men who were the target of a positive racial stereotype were more likely to believe that negative racial stereotypes were also being ascribed to them ( $M = 3.02, SD = 1.45$ ) than Asian American men who were the target of a positive gender stereotype ( $M = 2.46, SD = 1.04$ ),  $p = .03, d = 0.45, 95\% CI = [0.07, 1.06]$ . This analysis also allowed us to compare negative gender and racial stereotype beliefs with one another. Asian American men who were the target of a positive gender stereotype were more likely to believe that the stereotyper held negative gender than racial stereotypes,  $p < .001, d = 0.76, 95\% CI = [0.47, 1.10]$ . Asian Americans who were the target of a positive racial stereotype did not differ, but means were in the predicted direction,  $p = .14, d = 0.18, 95\% CI = [-0.07, 0.52]$ <sup>3</sup> (see Figure 3).

**Sexist and racist perceptions.** A 2 (condition: positive gender stereotype vs. positive racial stereotype; between)  $\times$  2 (Identity: gender vs. race; within) mixed-model ANOVA on prejudice perceptions revealed a significant Condition  $\times$  Identity interaction,  $F(1, 103) = 81.33, p < .001$ . Asian American men who were the target of a race-based positive stereotype were more likely to believe that the stereotyper was racist ( $M = 4.02, SD = 1.62$ ) than those who were the target of a positive stereotype directed at their gender ( $M = 2.35, SD = 1.49$ ),  $p < .001, d = 1.07, 95\% CI = [1.06, 2.28]$ . Similarly, Asian American men who were the target of a gender-based positive



**Figure 3.** Asian American men's beliefs about which negative stereotypes were being applied to them depended on whether the positive stereotype was directed at their racial or gender identity in Study 5.

Note. Error bars represent standard errors.

stereotype were more likely to believe that the stereotyper was sexist ( $M = 3.96, SD = 2.06$ ) than those who were the target of the same positive stereotype directed at their race ( $M = 2.27, SD = 1.24$ ),  $p < .001, d = 0.99, 95\% CI = [1.04, 2.34]$ . This analysis once again allowed us to compare perceptions of sexism and racism with one another. Asian American men who were the target of a positive gender stereotype were more likely to believe that the stereotyper was sexist than racist,  $p < .001, d = 0.76, 95\% CI = [1.07, 2.15]$ . Asian Americans who were the target of a positive racial stereotype were more likely to believe that the stereotyper was racist than sexist,  $p < .001, d = 1.21, 95\% CI = [1.25, 2.26]$ .

## Discussion

Negative stereotypes evoked by being the target of a positive stereotype depended on the identity referenced by the positive stereotype. When a positive stereotype was directed at Asian American men's racial identity, they believed that the stereotyper applied negative stereotypes of Asians to them. In contrast, when the positive stereotype was directed at Asian American men's gender identity, they believed that the stereotyper applied negative gender stereotypes to them. Varying the identity referenced demonstrated that effects were due to targets' assumptions about how that particular identity was perceived by the stereotyper, rather than due to a more diffuse process. Moreover, this study demonstrated that men—a high-status group in society—are not exempt from believing that they are being negatively stereotyped when they hear a positive stereotype of their group.

## General Discussion

The current work brings together distinct research on positive and negative stereotypes by showing that positive stereotypes

arouse suspicion in targets' minds that they are also being negatively stereotyped. Across three social identities (i.e., women, Asian Americans, and men) and six different stereotypes, we consistently found that encountering someone who states a positive stereotype about one's group triggers in the minds of targets the belief that this outgroup member is likely to apply negative stereotypes to them as well. These negative stereotype beliefs then cause targets to perceive outgroup members who endorse positive stereotypes as more prejudiced. Positive stereotypes constitute a form of prejudice in targets' minds because they raise in targets the expectation that negative stereotypes are also being applied to them.<sup>4</sup>

Targets of positive stereotypes believed that they were being depersonalized to an identity, thus providing an explanation for why positive stereotypes evoke negative stereotype beliefs. Positive stereotypes were even more likely to evoke this sense of being depersonalized and corresponding negative stereotypes than simply being categorized as a group member. Our final study further revealed that the negative stereotypes depended on the identity referenced. When Asian American men heard a positive stereotype directed to their race, they believed that a different set of negative stereotypes were being applied to them than when stereotypes were directed to their gender. This work thus sheds light on the types of situations that may trigger beliefs about being ascribed negative stereotypes. That is, stating the target's group identity in ways that cause people to believe that they are being seen solely through the lens of their group may also cause targets to assume that negative stereotypes are also being ascribed to them. When those experiences are depersonalizing because they reduce group members to a single attribute, even a positive one, targets may respond even more negatively. When targets' identity is invoked by an outgroup member in a way that is consistent with how they want to be seen, they may be less likely to assume that the outgroup member also holds negative stereotypes of their group and is prejudiced (Zou & Cheryan, 2015).

By establishing that positive stereotypes cause targets to assume that negative stereotypes are also being ascribed to them, this work resolves a seeming inconsistency between positive stereotypes and traditional definitions of prejudice. Because prejudice is commonly defined as a negative attitude or evaluation (Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014), it may be surprising that targets find stating positive stereotypes to be prejudicial because such positive stereotypes are, by definition, positively valenced. However, this work shows that positive stereotypes stated in intergroup interactions signal to targets an underlying negativity that indicates the outgroup member's prejudice.

The present research makes two novel contributions to the current literature. First, this work illuminates a new pathway that explains the relationship between positive stereotypes and negative outcomes. Previous work showed that positive stereotypes are threatening in American contexts because they cause targets to feel that their individuality is being

usurped by the stereotype (Siy & Cheryan, 2013). In this article, we show that the relationship between positive stereotypes and prejudice is driven through beliefs about being negatively stereotyped. This new pathway is important because it suggests that being the target of a positive stereotype can be a negative experience even for people for whom having their individual identities recognized is not a central goal (e.g., those outside of the middle-class American context; Stephens, Markus, & Townsend, 2007). Second, the current work expands on the existing body of literature on meta-stereotypes that has focused predominantly on how groups ascribed higher status expect to be viewed by groups ascribed lower status (Vorauer et al., 2000; Vorauer et al., 1998). The current work reverses this focus and examines how groups ascribed lower status (i.e., Asian Americans, women) think they are viewed by groups ascribed higher status (i.e., White men). By doing so, we address multiple calls in the intergroup literature to take a more relational approach to studying intergroup contact (Shelton & Richeson, 2006) and to examine minorities' responses to being the target of prejudice (Vorauer, 2006; see also Shelton, 2000).

Alternative relationships between constructs in our model remain to be tested. First, positive stereotypes may cause targets to assume that negative stereotypes are being applied to them because they believe that the stereotyper is prejudiced. This pathway seems plausible as demonstrated by the significant reverse mediations in our studies. Future work should test this causal direction and the contexts that make one pathway more salient than the other. Second, being the target of a negative stereotype may cause targets to feel depersonalized (Steele & Aronson, 1995) and therefore positively stereotyped. Although this may be the case, the negativity involved in hearing a negative stereotype (Garcia et al., 2006), especially from an outgroup member (Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002), could alternatively overpower targets' assumption about any latent positivity.

The latent negative stereotype theory opens up many avenues of research. For instance, hearing a positive stereotype may be an indirect way of evoking stereotype threat or the fear of confirming a negative stereotype about one's group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). African Americans who hear a positive stereotype of their group (e.g., athleticism) might be susceptible to underperforming in an academic context because the positive stereotype activates negative stereotypes about their group's academic abilities. Groups that have few negative stereotypes may be less susceptible to these effects than members of a group for whom the negative stereotypes are stronger and more consequential.

Taken together, this work suggests that positive stereotypes delivered in an intergroup interaction should not be considered a positive experience for their targets, in part because they signal that the outgroup member endorses latent negative stereotypes about their group. Although positive stereotypes may seem like well-intentioned compliments that should be received positively, they may have

more in common with negative stereotypes than is first apparent. Positive stereotypes may signal to targets that negative stereotypes are not far behind.

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### Notes

1. The you-statement condition was interesting to us but not directly relevant to current hypotheses. In line with recommendations (Funder et al., 2013), we include this condition in all analyses. See Table 1 of Supplementary Analyses comparing the results of the you-statement condition with the other two conditions.
2. We had an additional female confederate ( $n = 21$ ) but discovered that she was stating the positive stereotyping in a joking manner that indicated to participants that she did not endorse it. Because this study is supposed to examine what targets infer about people who endorse positive stereotypes, we excluded her data from analyses. Including her data generates similar results but weakens effects: negative stereotype beliefs:  $t(115) = 1.96$ ,  $p = .05$ ; depersonalization:  $t(114) = 5.89$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and perceptions of prejudice:  $t(115) = 7.95$ ,  $p < .001$ .
3. It may not be appropriate to compare gender and racial stereotypes because they differ in content, so we also present MANOVA results. A 2 (condition: positive gender stereotype vs. positive race stereotype) MANOVA on negative gender and racial stereotypes produced similar results. There was a main effect of condition,  $F(2, 103) = 11.08$ ,  $p < .001$ . Asian American men who were the target of a race-based positive stereotype were more likely to believe that the stereotyper held negative Asian American stereotypes of them than those who were the target of a positive stereotype directed at their gender,  $p = .03$ ,  $d = 0.45$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) = [0.07, 1.06]. Similarly, Asian American men who were the target of a gender-based positive stereotype were more likely to believe that the stereotyper held negative stereotypes of them as men than those who were the target of the same positive stereotype directed at their race,  $p = .03$ ,  $d = 0.44$ , 95% CI = [0.05, 0.83].
4. Effect sizes ranged from medium to large in all studies, attesting to the reliability and strength of our findings. Sample sizes ranged from an average of 27 per cell in Study 1 to 69 per cell in Study 2 (Study 3 = 58/cell, Study 4 = 49/cell, and Study 5 = 53/cell).

### Supplemental Material

The online supplemental material is available at <http://pspb.sagepub.com/supplemental>.

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