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A License to Obliviousness:

Positive Stereotypes Reduce Acknowledgement

of Racial Discrimination

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Management

by

Danqiao Cheng

2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A License to Obliviousness:

Positive Stereotypes Reduce Acknowledgement

of Racial Discrimination

by

Danqiao Cheng

Doctor of Philosophy in Management

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Jennifer A. Whitson, Chair

My dissertation investigates the role of a previously overlooked structural factor, positive stereotypes, in perpetuating racism. Despite salient social norms to appear egalitarian and unbiased, racial discrimination persists in society. I argue that the pressure to conform to egalitarian norms conflicts with the motive to justify the system and rationalize inequality, and hence people may rely on positive stereotypes to neglect egalitarian norms. Specifically, positive stereotypes of racial minorities are frequently seen as complimentary in nature, e.g., Asian people are good at math, Black people are good at sports, offering individuals a moral license to reduce acknowledgement of racial discrimination. Across seven studies, I explore the effects of positive stereotypes of racial minorities, activated either when participants actively write about those stereotypes or are passively presented descriptions of racial minority targets with positive-

stereotype-congruent information. I find that access to positive stereotypes licenses reduced acknowledgement of racial discrimination, which in turn reduces support for pro-equity practices such as allyship intentions. These findings reveal the systemic implications of positive stereotypes in obstructing equity and inclusion of racial minorities, and shed light on the importance of dismantling the often invisible harm done by positive stereotypes in perpetuating an unfair system.

The dissertation of Danqiao Cheng is approved.

Hengchen Dai

Margaret J. Shih

Miguel M. Unzueta

Jennifer A. Whitson, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to everyone who has helped and supported me, directly or indirectly, on this long and sometimes tortuous PhD journey.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Curriculum Vitae of Danqiao Cheng

EDUCATION

University of California, Berkeley, BA, 2018
- *Summa Cum Laude*
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MANUSCRIPTS & PAPERS UNDER REVIEW

Cheng, G. C. & Whitson, J. A. How to Cope with Stigmatizing Slurs: A Comparison between Self-labeling and Label-rejection. Reject and Resubmit at *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

Cheng, G. C., Does, S. R., & Shih, M. Democracy Is in The Eye of The Beholder: Perceived Democracy Hinges on whether Election Winner Is Preferred. In Preparation for *Psychological Science*.

Cheng, G. C. & Bendersky, C. The Effect of Mandatory Gender Quota on Corporate Board on Female Board Directors. In Preparation for *Management Science*.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Cheng, G. C. & Whitson, J. A. (2022, August). How to Cope with Stigmatizing Slurs: A Comparison between Self-labeling and Label-rejection. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management.

Cheng, G. C., Pai, J., & Whitson, J. A. (2022, July). Unique Experience of Being in The Middle: The Effect of Middle Power on Role Ambiguity. Presented at the International Association of Conflict Management.

Cheng, G. C. & Whitson, J. A. (2022, July). Positive Stereotype Can Hurt: The Effect of Positive Stereotypes on Discrimination Legitimacy. Presented at the International Association of Conflict Management.

Cheng, G. C. & Whitson, J. A. (2022, February). Positive Stereotype Can Hurt: The Effect of Positive Stereotypes on Discrimination Legitimacy. Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology.

Cheng, G. C. & Whitson, J. A. (2021, February). How to Cope with Stigmatizing Slurs: A Comparison between Self-labeling and Label-rejection. Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology.

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- UCLA Bedari Kindness Institute Graduate Summer Fellowship Program — 2020
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- Dean's List, UC Berkeley — 2014-2017

A License to Obliviousness: Positive Stereotypes Reduce Acknowledgement of Racial

Discrimination

Since the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited overt forms of discrimination, contemporary

U.S. society has observed a social climate increasingly against expressions of racism. Prejudice

and discrimination against racial minority groups is generally perceived as inegalitarian and

unfair, and elicits strong societal disapproval and backlash (Crandall et al., 2002). For example,

soon after it came to light that Los Angeles Councilwoman Nury Martinez had made racist

remarks during a meeting with other council members, she faced an eruption of public anger and

major consequences for her career (Cowan & Hubler, 2022). Universities and organizations have

implemented a variety of practices such as anti-bias training to combat racism and promote

inclusion of racial minorities. However, despite these stringent norms and taboos placed around

racism, as well as measures taken to prevent its occurrence, racial discrimination is still prevalent

in society. The election of Trump prompted greater tolerance of explicit racial prejudice among

many people; meanwhile, subtler forms of racism that expose racial minorities to chronically

negative interactions, such as microaggressions, continue to cause harm to the work outcomes,

psychological well-being, and physical health of people of color. This dissertation explores an

important factor, that of positive stereotypes, in helping to explain the persistence of racial

discrimination despite strong social norms against it. Integrating research on system justification,

stereotyping, and moral licensing, I examine how positive stereotypes serve as moral licenses to

excuse people from acknowledging discrimination.

According to system justification theory, the rising egalitarian norms in society can

contradict a fundamental human motive to justify the status quo and rationalize inequality, which

makes it psychologically costly to acknowledge discrimination (Jost & Hunyady, 2003). People

must navigate the psychological tension between conforming to egalitarian norms versus defending a discriminatory status quo with racist practices (Monin & Miller, 2001). On the one hand, in fear of social judgments and disapprobation, people are motivated to attribute negative treatment of racial minorities to discrimination. Many also internalize the norms to embrace egalitarian values and desire to appear fair and anti-racist both to others and to themselves (Plant et al., 1998). On the other hand, due to their need to justify the system and maintain control of their environment, people are motivated to avoid attributing negative outcomes or behaviors to discrimination. Faced with these contradictory motives to acknowledge or dismiss, people seek out additional causes that allow them to do one thing or the other. I propose that one way in which individuals seek to reconcile this psychological tension is through using positive stereotypes in society as a form of social moral licenses. Positive stereotypes of racial minorities, commonly seen as innocuous and complimentary, may alleviate the moral burden of appearing egalitarian, thereby reducing acknowledgement of discrimination against racial minorities. Specifically, when people believe society holds generalized positive beliefs about a racial minority group, they as social beings can use these beliefs to experience less of a moral burden to acknowledge discrimination against that group. This reduced acknowledgment of discrimination will further decrease support for pro-equity practices that promote the well-being of racial minorities.

This research unveils a previously overlooked means by which persistent racial discrimination gets perpetuated in the system through social beliefs. By investigating the role of positive stereotypes in licensing reduced discrimination acknowledgement, the work integrates multiple streams of research to examine how people navigate the conflicting psychological motives between egalitarian norms and system justification. Moreover, it highlights that despite

2

(and in some ways, because of) their seemingly benign and flattering nature, positive stereotypes can have insidious effects, and complements past research on the effects of negative stereotypes on discrimination. In doing so, I also provide a new theoretical lens to examine the effects of positive stereotypes as a form of social moral license, wherein individuals' moral burden can be vicariously lifted through widespread positive social beliefs about racial minority groups. As such, my dissertation reveals a previously overlooked dark side of positively-valenced stereotypes and sheds important light on the necessity of elucidating and dismantling the harm positive stereotypes do to racial minorities.

THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

The sections below are organized in the following way: first, I will provide a brief review of egalitarian anti-racist norms as well as persistent racial discrimination in U.S. society, in which context positive stereotypes' effects will be examined. Then, I will discuss the conflicting psychological motives in discrimination acknowledgement, integrate current literatures on positive stereotypes and moral licensing, and theorize positive stereotypes as a form of social moral license. I test the predictions with seven studies, and lastly conclude with a discussion of theoretical and practical implications of the findings.

Salient Egalitarian Norms

In recent decades, there have been increasingly strong social norms against expression of prejudices and racial discrimination (Fiske, 1998; McConahay, 1986). As formal discrimination became prohibited and legislation increasingly protected the equal rights of racial minorities, external pressure increased to conceal negative attitudes towards minority groups and act without prejudice for fear of being seen as racist and drawing social censure. Simultaneously, some individuals internalized anti-racist norms and are motivated to control their prejudice and avoid

behaving in ways that clash with their egalitarian values (Plant et al., 1998). Indeed, racism is considered taboo in contemporary U.S. society; even those who believe some groups do not deserve equal treatment are averse to being labeled racist (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000). People find racists as unfavorable as terrorists and believe it is acceptable to act negatively towards them (Crandall et al., 2002). Due to the unease and anxiety of having to constantly monitor their visible attitudes and behaviors to ensure they are consistent with egalitarian norms, people often worry about appearing racist in interactions with racial minorities, or avoid talking about racism at all by endorsing a colorblind ideology (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Jansen et al., 2016). As a result of the suppression of explicitly prejudicial views deemed socially unacceptable, scores on research measures of explicit racism began to lower. However, recent decades of research have developed more sensitive measures that capture the implicit and more subtle negative attitudes many still hold against racial minorities, such as symbolic racism (Kinder & Sears, 1981), aversive racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986), racial ambivalence (Katz & Hass, 1988), modern racism (McConahay 1983), and more recently, implicit associations (McConnell & Leibold, 2001), selective incivility (Cortina, 2008), and microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007).

Persistent Racial Discrimination

While social norms against racism are salient, abundant research records that they have by no means eliminated racial discrimination. Racism has evolved into different forms and remained an issue in contemporary U.S. society. Overt racial discrimination, defined as unconcealed contempt, endorsement of offensive stereotypes, and support for blatant discrimination based on one's skin color (e.g., the use of racial slurs), has become more frequent in recent years, especially since the election of Donald Trump as U.S. President (Hebl et al.,

4

2020). Researchers found increasing rates of hate crimes against marginalized groups and a tolerance of prejudice against minority groups, particularly those that Donald Trump overtly spoke negatively of, e.g., Latinos (Crandall et al., 2018; Hebl et al., 2020).

Modern racism also manifests in a variety of subtler ways (Brief et al., 2000; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; McConahay, 1986). Hebl et al. (2002) made a distinction between formal and interpersonal discrimination. The former refers to structural discrimination in hiring, promotions, and resource distribution, which is largely considered illegal today. The latter is related to less conspicuous and less detectable day-to-day negative behaviors targeting racial minorities; these tend to occur more in interpersonal contexts. They can be "enacted unconsciously or unintentionally," and can take the shape of "harassment, jokes, incivility, avoidance, and other types of disrespectful treatment" (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011: 1205). Similarly, selective incivility theory suggests that rude and inappropriate work behaviors often target people of color at higher rates than Whites, increasing the chronic intensity at which racial minorities are exposed to uncivil treatment in the workplace (Cortina et al., 2013). The concept of microaggressions has also been coined to capture the negative slights, insults, and subtle acts disproportionately and chronically directed at racial minorities (Lilienfeld, 2017; Lui & Quezada, 2019; Sue et al., 2019). Although each standalone microaggression may be seen as ambiguous regarding whether racial prejudice is a motivating factor, it is the repeated exposure to similar events in the long term that particularly hurts racial minorities. Moreover, simply discussing the various forms of racial biases experienced by people of color has incurred backlash from the dominant group. Many White people perceive "microaggression" to be an overused term that limits their freedom of speech, and the result of hypersensitive claims by minorities seeking to attract undeserved attention; this occurs even though White people who imagine experiencing the

same microaggression behaviors traditionally found to target racial minorities feel equally negative about them (Lilienfeld, 2017; West, 2019).

Both overt and subtle forms of discrimination have pernicious effects on a wide range of minorities' outcomes: at work, they drive decreased organizational commitment, lower job satisfaction, poorer work relationships, and worse performance (Lim et al., 2008; Singletary & Hebl, 2009; Triana et al., 2015). Psychologically, they reduce life quality and increase rates of depression due to decreased self-esteem, self-worth, and psychological well-being (Lim & Cortina, 2005; Utsey et al., 2002). Both forms of discrimination are also linked to deteriorating physical health, such as cardiovascular problems and increased alcohol and drug use (Carter et al., 2019; Lewis et al., 2006).

Positive Stereotypes: System Justification and Moral Licensing

The perpetuation of modern racism in society despite salient egalitarian norms suggests people still find it acceptable to enact racist attitudes and neglect the occurrence of racial discrimination. To the extent that racial discrimination has taken subtler forms, recognizing the existence of present racism in its evolving shapes is a prerequisite for implementing proper measures to reduce or remove it. Recognition is the first step in addressing modern day unfair practices and systemic as well as interpersonal barriers that still prevent racial minorities' access to career opportunities, promotions, and general inclusion and equity.

Previous research has identified individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that enable people to avoid the burden of egalitarian norms and behave discriminatorily or dismiss discrimination. This includes people strategically citing past good deeds they have performed to establish themselves as moral so they are no longer bound by the norm, or holding high social dominance orientation and believing outgroup derogation is reasonable (Ho et al., 2015; Monin

& Miller, 2001). This dissertation aims to go beyond individual-level perceptions and motivations and study the influence of a widely held social belief on discrimination acknowledgement—positive stereotypes. Indeed, researchers (e.g., Hebl et al., 2020) call for more studies of how broader contexts may influence the expression and tolerance of discrimination, to better understand factors enhancing and inhibiting its acknowledgement in organizations. I contribute to this endeavor by proposing a new theoretical lens, examining the justification of racial minorities' unfair treatment through the deeply entrenched social affordance offered by the broader context of American society, i.e., overgeneralized positive attributions to racial minorities. As claimed by Allport (1954), "the rationalizing and justifying function of a stereotype exceeds its function as a reflector of group attributes" (p. 192). As such, the current work aims to reveal positive stereotypes' social function in rationalizing inequality through impacting discrimination acknowledgement.

Specifically, I draw on system justification theory to theorize that people face conflicting psychological motives when they need to determine whether a negative event is discriminatory for racial minorities. I argue that positive stereotypes, by their existence, help resolve this tension by relieving the moral burden of conforming to egalitarian and anti-racist norms, and as a result reduce acknowledgement of discrimination. In the next section, I examine the conflicting psychological motives behind discrimination acknowledgement.

Conflicting Psychological Motives and System Justification

As discussed earlier, people are aware of strong social norms around egalitarianism and feel morally burdened to acknowledge discriminatory behaviors and outcomes. However, this can conflict with a fundamental ideological motive to avoid finding fault with the system. Specifically, system justification theory explores the universal human motivation to see the

world as a just and fair place, a motivation which even occurs even within low-status groups who are socially disadvantaged and underprivileged (Jost et al., 2004; Jost & Burgess, 2000). People have a social and psychological need to defend the status quo, which means maintaining the existing social hierarchy and social order. System justification serves the palliative function of allowing individuals to feel their social context is stable, predictable, meaningful, and just, which can help them cope with stress and increase a sense of control over their environment (Jost & Hunyady, 2003). In addition, system justification tendencies may work congruently with meritocratic ideology by allowing people to believe that with enough effort they have a fair chance to succeed, helping them remain hopeful and positive in their daily lives. A key feature of system justification is rationalization of an unfair status quo and internalization of inequality. Because the concept of discrimination involves some groups consistently suffering from more negative outcomes than others and thus suggests that the current system is unfair and unjust, others in the system may avoid acknowledging this by rationalizing the negative outcomes and attributing them to the targets of discrimination themselves rather than unfair systematic issues, e.g., "you failed to get a job offer not because of your race, but because you are incompetent." Therefore, a discriminatory system with unfair social arrangements can be unacknowledged as such and legitimized. This ideological motivation to justify discrimination then clashes with the socially desirable and normative behavior of acknowledging discrimination and racism in order to appear egalitarian.

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Positive Stereotypes

I argue that one tool individuals might use to navigate these conflicting motives is positive stereotypes, which are widespread, overgeneralized, and positive beliefs about social groups (Czopp et al., 2015). They are deeply entrenched in society and fortified via multiple

avenues like news, media, and daily interactions. A classic and widely studied example of positive stereotypes involves framing Asian Americans as a "model minority" excelling in academic contexts and outperforming all other groups in tests. The concept of "model minority" was first introduced in 1973 by Kitano and Sue, who pointed out how Asian Americans are often perceived as a nonoppressed minority, pitting Asians against other racial minorities in U.S. society by suggesting that other racial groups' lack of resources and opportunities are due to their own faults (Kitano & Sue, 1973). Even though abundant research debunks the stereotype as a myth, Asian Americans are still typically seen as overall intelligent, competitive, hardworking, and successful (Gupta et al., 2011). Such images are reinforced in movies like "Crazy Rich Asians," and Asian American children were even brought onto the stage of the Oscar ceremony to demonstrate how hardworking and conscientious vote counters were (Contrera, 2021). Similarly, African Americans are believed to be "naturally athletic," with a born talent in entertainment and sports. As a result, their success as athletes is often described as a result of innate superior physicality (Czopp & Monteith, 2006, p. 2006; Kay et al., 2013). Such images lead sports commentators to often be hypercritical of the performance of African American athletes (Devine & Elliot, 1995). Below, I detail the harmful effects of positive stereotypes documented in previous research, then review the evidence that in spite of these harmful effects, positive stereotypes are seen by third-party observers as innocuous and inoffensive. I then go on to theorize that the nature of positive stereotypes allows them to act as useful tools that help individuals reconcile motivational conflict and reduce discrimination acknowledgement.

There is abundant research on how being the target of positive stereotypes is costly. Stereotypes, even when positive, by their very nature lump target group members together, minimizing their individuality. Indeed, when positive stereotypes of their groups are explicitly

9

stated, women and racial minorities experience psychological distress, negative emotions, and worse interpersonal interactions (e.g., "Asians are good at math," "women are nurturing"; Czopp, 2008; Gupta, Szymanski, & Leong, 2011; Siy & Cheryan, 2013). Moreover, the experience of being positively stereotyped reminds people that they are also subject to negative stereotypes, which activates the feeling of being the target of prejudice (Kervyn et al., 2012; Siy & Cheryan, 2016). Further, being aware that one's group is positively stereotyped in a domain can lead one to "choke under pressure" (due to perceived high expectations) and perform worse on a task (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). For example, the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans is known to create unrealistic expectations and standards, forcing them to live up to this image (Leong, 2000). If internalized, positive stereotypes can reduce recipients' help-seeking intentions and even willingness to engage in collective action for social change (Becker & Wright, 2011; Gupta et al., 2011). As a result of the model minority stereotype, a lot of Asian American individuals face unique cultural concerns but are reluctant to seek mental counseling services (Leong & Lau, 2001). Minority people can even face constraints in their career choices due to positive stereotypes channeling their will and interest, both through external forces as well as internal pressure to conform, such as Asian Americans directed into STEM-related occupations and Black Americans into sports (Czopp, 2010; Leong & Chou, 1994). In sum, positive stereotypes harm those they target in a multitude of ways, from negative emotions, aversive interpersonal experiences, reduced performance, to limited life choices. In the end, less research focuses on groups especially targeted by positive stereotypes like Asian Americans due to perceived lack of disadvantages, and less policymaking is devoted to their special needs and challenges (Cheng, 1997; Leong, 2000; Wong & Halgin, 2006).

However, despite the pernicious effects positive stereotypes have on minority groups, they are often seen as less harmful and offensive than negative stereotypes. The overgeneralized attribution of positive qualities to minority groups seems benign and applauds these groups' achievements (Czopp & Monteith, 2006). Endorsement of positive stereotypes is viewed not as nearly problematic or inappropriate as that of negative stereotypes, and expressers of positive stereotypes are perceived as more likeable and less prejudiced than those who express negative stereotypes (Devine & Elliot, 1995; Kay et al., 2013; Mae & Carlston, 2005). Because third-party observers see positive stereotypes as less offensive, minority targets are more likely to experience backlash if they push back against them; being aware of this, minority targets also show reduced intent to confront positive stereotypes (Alt et al., 2019; Czopp & Monteith, 2003). People therefore rely on the social acceptability of positive stereotypes and feel a lot more comfortable making jokes based on these stereotypes and claiming they are complimenting the stereotyped groups (Seelye, 2008). I posit that such psychological comfort afforded by positive stereotypes, besides perpetuating the directly harmful effects experienced by racial minorities discussed above, has previously unexamined detrimental implications for discrimination acknowledgement.

According to system justification theory, stereotypes emerge and are maintained in part because they serve ideological functions to justify the exploitation of certain groups and preserve an unequal and unfair status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994). However, past research has focused mostly on how negative stereotypes perpetuate the system. I argue that positive stereotypes, specifically those targeting racial minorities, serve a similar function in legitimizing discrimination; people's sense that positive stereotypes compliment and benefit minority groups may mean that the perpetuation of these positive stereotypes will create the perception that

society holds people of color in a positive light. This in turn may provide people a moral license to disregard anti-racist norms, affording them the justification to reduce acknowledgement of racial minorities' unfair treatment without fear of appearing antiegalitarian. Below, I lay out my theoretical arguments on how access to positive stereotypes can reduce discrimination acknowledgement through social licensing.

Positive Stereotypes as Moral License

Moral licensing theory posits that morally laudable deeds generate moral licenses that, when used, authorize people to behave in ways that would otherwise be morally dubious or unfair. People are motivated to maintain a moral self-image and believe they are fair and moral beings; adhering to social norms, such as that of appearing egalitarian, helps them maintain positive beliefs about themselves (for review, see Effron & Conway, 2015). However, doing so can be burdensome and effortful—norm adherence requires close self-monitoring and is mentally taxing (Fonseca et al., 2013; Jost et al., 2003). As a result, people strategically find and use excuses, in the form of moral licenses, to engage in norm-violating acts. Such licenses are usually acquired by giving oneself the opportunity to consider or show the self as moral and good, i.e., self-licensing. Studies in a wide range of contexts have shown that self-licensing can liberate people to perform future bad deeds (Monin & Miller, 2001). For example, engaging in an altruistic task later licenses people to be more self-indulgent in consumption decisions by choosing more luxury items (Khan & Dhar, 2006). Recalling one's past moral deeds licenses people to be less prosocial towards other groups and more likely to steal or lie (Jordan et al., 2011; Mazar & Zhong, 2010). Moral licensing is also relevant to tolerance and perpetuation of prejudice and discrimination. Performing behaviors that on the surface help people believe that they treat minority groups well, e.g., recalling past positive interactions with racial minorities or

12

hiring an African American candidate who is also the most qualified out of all candidates, licenses people to express more prejudiced beliefs later. Similarly, voicing support for Barack Obama before the 2008 election allowed people to engage in discrimination to a greater degree because the show of support for a Black presidential candidate establishes the credential that they are unprejudiced (Effron et al., 2009). Before voicing opposition to affirmative action, which may be seen as dubious by others, participants can strategically choose to establish their moral license by first describing a relationship with a racial minority friend versus acquaintance (Bradley-Geist et al., 2010).

Importantly, past research suggests that the moral license one uses to license one's own norm-violating behaviors can come from other people as well. Multiple studies found that people may rely on licenses from "vicarious virtues—good deeds performed by ingroup members" to authorize their own transgressions (Effron & Conway, 2015, p. 33). Researchers found that moral licenses derived from the good deeds of ingroup members are equally effective in excusing people's own performance of dubious behaviors, which they explained via social identity theory and expansive self-concept. People tend to expand their self-concept so as to incorporate close others within it—particularly when they see themselves as in the same group with those others—such that the attributes one infers from those others can carry over to inferences made about the self. Therefore, ingroup members who performed laudable behaviors in the past, establishing their credentials as moral, allow others to derive a license from those behaviors and engage in greater discrimination toward racial minorities (Kouchaki, 2011). Similarly, when people learned of ingroup members who acted favorably toward minority groups, e.g., engaging in activism for equal rights, they felt vicariously licensed themselves and judged subtle forms of discrimination as less unfair (Krumm & Corning, 2008).

I extend this notion—that individuals may vicariously gain licenses from the actions of ingroup members—to argue that the creation and perpetuation of social beliefs such as positive stereotypes can also act as a form of vicarious social licensing. While past studies on vicarious moral licensing focus on licenses derived from close others who share similar identities as the self, I propose that people may also derive licenses from their wider social context and widespread social beliefs. Specifically, as most people think of positive stereotypical content as innocuous and flattering instead of harmful and prejudicial, positive stereotypes of a racial minority group can create the perception that society generally holds members of that group in a positive light and compliments them. As such, as people become socialized into a culture that includes social beliefs constituting positive stereotypes of racial minorities, they may derive from the stereotypes a sense that other members of society have created and maintained positive beliefs about racial minority groups and treat them favorably and morally. In the face of the psychologically taxing egalitarian social norms around acknowledging discrimination and rejecting racism, people may unconsciously use their access to positive stereotypes maintained by society as their own moral licenses to lift the psychological burden and reduce their acknowledgement of discrimination; in other words, if one's society has done the work of creating generalized positive social beliefs about a racial group, people can conveniently bask in the light of that work and use it to alleviate the pressure to conform to egalitarian norms. Importantly, because stereotypes are widespread and entrenched in society, I argue that individuals' strategic use of them does not have to involve individual endorsement. In other words, people can derive their own moral licenses from the societal creation and maintenance of positive stereotypes by believing they, as members of the society, can benefit from society's efforts. Therefore, the moral licensing effect of positive stereotypes on reducing discrimination

acknowledgement should not be limited only to individuals who themselves endorse positive stereotypes, but also extend to those who have access to positive stereotypes yet do not necessarily buy into the stereotypes' content. Instead, their knowledge and awareness of the positive stereotypes at a societal level should be sufficient.

Past research shows that positive stereotypes indeed serve a social function in justifying the system at both societal and individual levels. At the societal level, positive stereotypes, such as women's stereotypes of being likeable, warm, and communal, are partially created and maintained to protect existing social orders, e.g., to reinforce the gendered labor division where women take more nurturing roles (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Steffen, 1984, 1986; Eagly & Wood, 1982). At the individual level, people can strategically manipulate the content of stereotypes themselves to justify their group's position in the social hierarchy in a way that rationalizes inequality (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Burgess, 2000). For example, Yale students ascribed stereotypes to fellow students at Yale depending on where their group stood relative to other groups: they attributed positive traits to fellow Yale students if they were told Yale performed better than Stanford, whereas they assigned negative traits to fellow Yale students if they were told Stanford performed better than Yale (Jost & Burgess, 2000). As such, stereotypical traits can be assigned and used (sometimes even unconsciously) to meet the psychological need of system justification and to protect perceived establishment of social roles. I theorize that another effect of positive stereotypes, congruent with the functions laid out above, is that people may derive social licenses from them. The sum of this research implies that people may have the inclination to not only resort to positive stereotypes to justify their perceptions of status differences between groups, even their own group's low status, but also use these stereotypes to license their own behaviors, such as discrimination dismissal, to perpetuate an unfair and unjust system.

In support of the proposed moral licensing view of positive stereotypes functioning to excuse reduced acknowledgement of racial discrimination, past findings do imply that exposure to positive stereotypes may motivate people to increase acceptance of prejudice and discrimination. The stereotype content model illustrates that perceptions of outgroups often comprise both positive and negative evaluative components (Fiske et al., 2002). The stereotypes of many outgroups tend to land high on one dimension and low on the other, meaning that as an outgroup is judged more positively on competence, they are simultaneously judged less positively on warmth (or vice versa) and cannot have both (Fiske et al., 1999). Such see-saw dynamics between negative and positive group stereotypes hints at the possibility that positive stereotypes serve to balance out or compensate for negative stereotypes and make them less salient. Similarly, researchers find that complementary stereotype exemplars, or attributing both positive and negative traits to groups (e.g., poor but happy, incompetent but warm), increase the belief that the world is a just and fair place and facilitate support for the status quo, i.e., perceiving less injustice (Kay et al., 2005; Kay & Jost, 2003). These findings also hint at the possibility of positive stereotypes motivationally ameliorating the negative representations of minority groups in society. In addition, after exposure to positive stereotypes of a minority group, people are more likely to endorse group essentialist beliefs as well as negative stereotypes of that group (Kay et al., 2013). Also, White participants are more likely to discourage excelling Black, but not White, student-athletes who fail academically, from pursuing academic goals, even when controlling for negative racial attitudes (Czopp, 2010), suggesting that when the positive stereotype about a group is activated (Black athlete), the associated negative stereotype (academic failure) is also activated and guides discriminatory attitudes and decision-making. These empirical studies provide indirect evidence in support of the hypothesized effects of

positive stereotypes licensing reduced discrimination acknowledgement, although they manipulated positive stereotypes through confirmation of stereotypical traits and in the local domain, and did not tease apart the effects of stereotype access versus endorsement. Taken together, these findings suggest that access to positive stereotypes in society may indeed make people feel more psychologically reassured to tolerate and perpetuate discrimination.

To summarize, I argue that access to positive stereotypes has the power to reduce acknowledgement of discrimination against racial minorities and neglect their unfair treatment. By enabling people to believe that society holds a particular minority group in positive regard, positive stereotypes allow those exposed to the stereotypes in society to dismiss unfair treatment and discrimination faced by stereotyped minority groups in a number of ways, such as underestimating the frequency of racism and more freely minimizing transgressions against racial minorities. In other words, positive stereotypes can damage racial minorities and perpetuate their lower status in the social hierarchy by allowing people to derive an invisible license from societal creation and maintenance of those stereotypes, and thus to dismiss bias and discrimination against the targeted members. Importantly, I argue that the licensing effects of positive stereotypes on reducing discrimination acknowledgement can move beyond the scope of positive stereotype content. As suggested by the studies on positive stereotypes, they excuse discrimination in the same domain as the stereotypical content, e.g., the positive stereotype of Black people's superior physical capability led to discrimination of Black student-athletes. But at the same time, past literature on moral licensing suggests that good deeds can license norm-violating behaviors across domains as long as the behaviors can still be characterized by moral interests (Effron & Monin, 2010). Individuals who planned to donate blood were more likely to act prejudiced against minorities, and those who purchased environmental-friendly products

were more likely to make unfair resource allocations (Cascio & Plant, 2015; Mazar & Zhong, 2010). Therefore, I expect the licensing effects of positive stereotypes to not be bound by the local stereotype, but rather applicable both to domain-specific (congruent with positive stereotype content) and domain-general (beyond positive stereotype content) discrimination acknowledgement.

Hypothesis 1: Access to positive stereotypes of a racial minority group, as compared to non-positive stereotypes and no stereotypes, reduces acknowledgement of discrimination against that group.

In addition, I propose that the reduced acknowledgement of racial discrimination licensed by positive stereotypes interferes with racial minorities seeking reparation and reduces general support for their equal rights. Past research has shown that when people perceive less discrimination, they are also less likely to help minorities or support practices that reduce bias or promote greater inclusion (e.g., Daumeyer et al., 2019; Kaiser & Miller, 2001). As individual support for pro-equity practices, such as willingness to become an ally to racial minorities, has been identified as an important tool in combating racism and changing the system for the better and fairer, I also examine support for pro-equity practices as the downstream consequence of positive stereotypes' licensing effects in this dissertation.

Hypothesis 2: Access to positive stereotypes of a racial minority group, as compared to non-positive stereotypes and no stereotypes, reduces support for pro-equity practices through reduced acknowledgement of discrimination against that group.

OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

I conducted seven studies to test the hypotheses above, where I examined access to society-level positive stereotypes in a variety of contexts. Study 1 was designed to establish the

phenomenon by testing whether the perception of positive stereotypes of a racial group in society was associated with less acknowledgement of discrimination against that group in the workplace. In Studies 2a-2b, I tested whether positive stereotypes serve as social moral licenses that enable people to report lower levels of perceived discrimination against positively stereotyped minority groups and in turn support the groups to a lesser degree. To do so, I manipulated access to societal-level positive stereotypes (targeting Asian and Black people, respectively) by having participants write about stereotypes of a racial group in U.S. society, then asking their perceptions of how frequently employees from that group experience incivility in the workplace, and moreover, participants' willingness to engage in pro-equity behaviors in support of that group. Study 3 was intended to test whether positive stereotypes also establish moral licenses for people to legitimize a discriminatory organizational culture, as well as to rule out alternative explanations that people reduce discrimination acknowledgement due to positive stereotypes creating impressions that the target minority groups are better off. Here, I examined whether a positive stereotype manipulation reduced preferences for racial minority job candidates. Finally, Studies 4a, 4b, and 5 were conducted to investigate the robustness of the phenomenon with a different manipulation. I tested whether activation of positive stereotypes through simple exposure to racial minorities behaving in congruence with those stereotypes leads to reduced acknowledgment of discrimination against them and thereby reduced pro-equity behaviors in support of them.

In Studies 2-5, as a way to test the moral licensing mechanism driving the effects of positive stereotypes, I always included a manipulation of negative stereotypes as a comparison condition. Negative stereotypes involve negative information by nature and thus should not allow people to derive the sense that society treats racial minorities well or to make positive

inferences about themselves. Therefore, negative stereotypes should not be able to serve as social moral licenses for people and the hypothesized effects should not work for access to negative stereotypes. I examined this claim empirically by testing whether manipulating access to positive stereotypes leads to reduced discrimination acknowledgement as compared to manipulating access to negative stereotypes.

Study 1

I began by testing how access to positive stereotypes in society is related to perceptions of racial discrimination in the workplace. Specifically, I focused on how positive stereotypes associated with certain occupations reduced perceptions of racial discrimination in those same occupations. I also aimed at establishing the generalizability of the effect by examining the relationship between positive stereotypes and discrimination acknowledgement for both Asian and Black people. Specifically, I employed a correlational survey in which participants were asked the extent to which they believe U.S. society held positive stereotypes of a particular racial group with regard to a number of occupations, as well as the extent to which the racial group was discriminated against in those occupations. I then compared perceptions of racial discrimination against Asian and Black people in occupations where U.S. society holds positive stereotypes about them to occupations where U.S. society doesn't hold positive stereotypes.

Methods

Participants and Design

I recruited 501 participants on Amazon Cloud Research (259 men, 241 women, 1 nonbinary person; 401 White or European American, 38 Black or African American, 16 Latinx or Spanish, 22 Asian or Asian American, 4 other race, 19 multiracial; $M_{age} = 42.87$, $SD_{age} = 12.05$).

20

All participants saw all questions; they first shared their perceptions of how much U.S. society holds positive stereotypes about Asian and Black people respectively in 22 occupations, e.g., Agriculture, Arts, Accounting, Military, Retail, Sports. Then, they answered how frequently Asian and Black people experience discrimination in the same list of occupations. The order of questions about Asian and Black people was randomized across participants.

Procedure

Participants first read that there are some positive stereotypes about Asian/Black people that associate them with certain occupations, and were asked, "how much do you think U.S. society holds positive stereotypes about Asian/Black people in the following professions?" (from 1 = Not at all to 7 = Very much), with participants randomized to see either questions on Asian people or Black people first. Participants next rated their perception of the frequency with which Asian/Black people experienced discrimination in the same occupations (from 1 = Not at all to 7 = Very frequently), again randomized such that some participants were first asked about Asian discrimination frequency and others about Black discrimination frequency.

Results

First, for each racial minority group, a grand mean of participants' ratings of perceived positive stereotype in society across all occupations was derived (4.15 for Asian people, and 3.93 for Black people). Occupations were then submitted to t-tests comparing their mean rating of positive stereotyping to the grand mean. Occupations rated significantly higher than the grand mean were categorized as "positively stereotyped" for the group. Occupations not significantly different from the grand mean were categorized as "neutral" for the group. Occupations rated significantly lower than the grand mean were categorized as "not positively stereotyped" for the group.

Following the analytical plan, the occupations participants rated Asian and Black people as positively stereotyped, neutral, and non-positively stereotyped are listed in Table 1.

Next, for each racial minority group, I conducted within-subject multilevel regressions to examine how ratings of discrimination frequency differed by occupational positive stereotyping category (i.e., positive, neutral, non-positive). Because each participant rated perceptions of discrimination for all occupations, the dependent variable of interest was nested within subject, so I added random effects of individual participants in the regression.

Occupations where participants perceived Asian people as positively stereotyped in U.S. society were associated with significantly less perceived frequency of discrimination against Asians as compared to non-positively stereotyped occupations ($B = -0.61$, $SE = 0.021$, $p < .001$), and to neutral occupations ($B = -0.20$, $SE = 0.035$, $p < .001$). Similarly, occupations where participants rated Black people as positively stereotyped were also associated with less perceived frequency of discrimination against Blacks as compared to non-positively stereotyped occupations ($B = -0.63$, $SE = 0.023$, $p < .001$), and to neutral occupations ($B = -0.31$, $SE = 0.032$, $p < .001$).

Thus, access to societal-level positive stereotypes for a particular racial group in a particular occupation, as opposed to neutral and non-positively stereotyped occupations, is associated with reduced acknowledgement of discrimination against that group.

Study 2a

Study 1 indicated that perceiving U.S. society positively stereotyping a minority group in an occupation is associated with reduced perceptions of discrimination against that group in that occupation. However, Study 1 was purely correlational. It is also possible that, although participants were asked about their perceptions of positive stereotypes around different racial

22

groups with regard to occupations, their own personal endorsement of positive stereotypes was the true drivers of the effects. Thus, Study 2a aimed at establishing causality by directly manipulating the type of stereotype participants accessed (without asking about their own agreement); it also aimed to rule out personal endorsement of stereotypes as the underlying mechanism by randomizing participants into conditions.

To test the hypothesis that positive stereotype exposure, and not non-positive stereotype exposure, reduces acknowledgment of discrimination, I conducted an experiment in Study 2a and manipulated access to positive stereotypes of Black people. To do so, I drew on a behavioral paradigm in the moral licensing literature. A well-established way to manipulate activation of moral licenses for the self involves asking people to write about past good deeds they have performed, which can remind people that they are moral and thus alleviate the moral burden to abstain from dubious actions (Merritt et al., 2010). In a similar vein, I modified the original paradigm and asked people to write about the positive stereotypes of a racial minority group in U.S. society, negative stereotypes of the group, or their choice of stereotypes of the group (serving as the baseline condition). Asking people to write about their knowledge of positive stereotypes in society rather than stereotypes they personally believe in should remind people that there are widespread social beliefs that frame racial minorities favorably, from which people can derive social licenses for themselves to reduce the moral burden of conforming to egalitarian norms. All conditions involved stereotypes to ensure that positive stereotypes were the true driver of the effects, and not stereotypes more broadly (i.e., comparing a positive stereotype condition to a condition that did not involve stereotypes at all could produce effects driven not by the positive aspects of stereotypes, but by stereotypes of any valence). I chose writing about any kind of stereotypes as the baseline condition to maintain comparability between conditions while

not specifying valence. With the behavioral paradigm where people actively write about their knowledge of positive stereotypes held by society about Black people, I expect access to positive stereotypes of Black people to be activated and serve as a social moral license.

This study operationalizes discrimination acknowledgement by looking at frequency perceptions of a form of modern discrimination in organizations, selective incivility. Selective incivility has been proposed as a modern manifestation of racial discrimination, defined as rude and inappropriate behaviors often more frequently and more severely targeting racial minorities in the workplace (Cortina, 2008). I argue that writing about positive stereotypes about Black people will reduce estimates of how frequently Black people experience uncivil treatment at work. Here, support for pro-equity practices is operationalized as allyship behaviors, i.e., the extent to which participants are likely to become an ally to racial minorities in their organizations. Allyship is an emerging pro-equity tool that has the potential to significantly increase inclusion of marginalized groups through understanding their experiences, confronting injustice, and advocating for their welfare (Salter & Migliaccio, 2019).

Methods

Participants and Design

I recruited 543 participants on Amazon Cloud Research (257 men, 283 women, 3 nonbinary people; 446 White or European American, 18 Latinx or Spanish, 37 Asian or Asian American, 4 other race, 34 multiracial; M_{age} = 42.67, SD_{age} = 13.06). Participants were randomly assigned within a 3-condition (stereotype: positive, negative, baseline) between-subjects design.

Procedure

Participants were first asked to respond to a prompt. In the *positive stereotype condition*, they were asked to write a few sentences about some positive stereotypes U.S. society holds

about Black people. In the *negative stereotype condition*, they were asked to write a few sentences about some negative stereotypes U.S. society holds about Black people. Finally, in the *baseline condition*, they were asked to write a few sentences about some stereotypes U.S. society holds about Black people, with no specified valence. After the manipulation, participants rated perceived frequency of selective incivility Black people experience in the workplace, as well as allyship behaviors toward Black employees in the workplace.

Measures[1]

      Perceived Frequency of Selective Incivility. I measured perceived frequency of selective incivility with the 12-item scale from Cortina et al. (2013). Participants were asked, "During the past year, to what extent do you think Black employees face situations in which their supervisors…" with a list of situations designed to capture low-intensity deviant behaviors with ambiguous intent which harm a marginalized racial group member. Sample items include, "Pay little attention to Black employees' statements or show little interest in their opinions"; "Interrupt or 'speak over' Black employees" (from 1 = Never to 7 = Many times; $\alpha = 0.98$; Cortina et al., 2013).

      Allyship. I measured participants' likelihood to engage in allyship behaviors for Black employees with the 6-item scale adapted from Wang et al. (2021). Participants were asked to imagine that some Black employees at their company organized a racial equity task force to combat racial discrimination and promote racial diversity, inclusion, and equity within the company. Participants then answered how likely they were to engage in behaviors in support of the task force. Sample items include, "Join the task force"; "Try to recruit others to join the task force;" "Volunteer your efforts to help the task force, even if it means extra work during work for

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[1] I also measured moral self-image, dehumanization, and threatened affect as potential mechanisms, and SDO as a potential moderator. Results are nonsignificant and reported in the Appendix.

you" (from 1 = Very unlikely to 7 = Very likely; α = 0.96). Items were averaged, with higher numbers indicating greater willingness to be an ally to Black employees.

Results

Table 3 presents means, standard deviations, and correlations for the variables used in the analyses. A one-way between-subjects ANOVA showed that, in support of Hypothesis 1, condition significantly predicted perceived frequency of selective incivility ($F(2, 540) = 3.35$, $p = .036$, $\eta^2_p = .012$). Planned contrasts indicated that the positive stereotype condition led to significantly less perceived frequency of selective incivility behaviors targeting Black employees ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.55$) compared to the negative stereotype condition ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.62$; B= -0.43, SE = 0.17, $p = .011$), and marginally less perceived frequency compared to the baseline condition ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 1.55$; B = -0.30, SE = 0.17, $p = .08$). There was no significant difference between negative stereotype condition and baseline condition ($p = .69$).

I went on to examine whether the positive stereotype condition led to less likelihood to engage in allyship behaviors due to less perceived frequency of discrimination. I went on to examine whether the positive stereotype condition led to less likelihood to engage in allyship behaviors due to less perceived frequency of discrimination. As both baseline and negative stereotype conditions led to significantly lower perceptions of incivility frequency, I collapsed the two conditions into one broad baseline condition to compare to the positive stereotype condition in the mediation analysis (Hayes, 2017)[2]. Results with 5,000 bootstraps of the indirect effect indicated that, in support of Hypothesis 2, perceived incivility frequency significantly mediated the relationship between the positive stereotype vs. collapsed baseline condition and likelihood to engage in allyship behaviors (95% CI [-.41, -.05]), suggesting that positive

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[2] Comparing the positive stereotype condition to either negative stereotype or baseline condition alone also yielded significant mediation results.

stereotypes of Black people motivated dismissal of discrimination against the group in organizations and thereby reduced support for pro-equity practices.

Robustness checks

One coder reviewed the content of participants' writing in the manipulation and categorized it in two ways: containing a positive stereotype about Black people or not, and containing a negative stereotype about Black people or not. Chi-squared tests indicated that participants mentioned positive stereotypes significantly more in the positive stereotype condition (93%) than in the other two conditions (baseline: 13.2%, $\chi^2 = 223.98$, $p < .001$; negative: 2%, $\chi^2 = 292.35$, $p < .001$). Also, participants mentioned negative stereotypes significantly more in the negative stereotype condition than in the positive stereotype condition ($\chi^2 = 281.17$, $p < .001$), but not significantly differently from the baseline choice of stereotype condition ($\chi^2 = 0.34$, $p = .56$). The results reported in the main section were robust to excluding participants who wrote about Black people's positive stereotypes in the negative stereotype condition or negative stereotypes in the positive stereotype condition ($F(2, 515) = 4.46$, $p = .012$, $\eta^2_p = .017$).

Study 2b

Study 2b was designed to replicate the effect of positive stereotypes on perceived frequency of selective incivility and allyship with another racial minority group—Asian people. Besides perceived frequency, I also included an additional measure of perceived severity of selective incivility. The effect of positive stereotypes on decreased perceived frequency of discrimination racial minorities experience is open to an alternative explanation, that positive stereotypes, rather than serving as moral licenses, might have simply made people believe a particular racial group is better off and is thus less likely to experience discrimination. However,

the same argument cannot be made for perceived severity of racism—if positive stereotypes only lead people to believe that a group is faring well, they should not change interpretations of a negative event that group experiences, whereas positive stereotypes as moral licenses, by allowing people to establish the credential that they are good and moral, can explain altered construal of seeing negative events as less discriminatory. To better test the moral licensing argument, I asked people to report how negatively they perceive uncivil behaviors targeting Asian people to be.

Methods

Participants and Design

I recruited 581 participants on Amazon Cloud Research (290 men, 289 women, 2 nonbinary people; 449 White or European American, 47 Black or African American, 17 Latinx or Spanish, 30 Asian or Asian American, 7 other race, 28 multiracial; $M_{age} = 42.73$, $SD_{age} = 12.55$).

As in Study 2a, participants were randomly assigned to one of three stereotype conditions. They were also randomly assigned to see either the perceived frequency of selective incivility measure, or the perceived severity of selective incivility measure. All participants saw the allyship measure. Thus, the study design was a 3 (stereotype: positive, negative, baseline) x 2 (incivility measure: frequency, severity) between-subjects design.

Procedure

In the *positive stereotype condition*, participants were asked to write a few sentences about some positive stereotypes U.S. society holds about Asian people. In the *negative stereotype condition*, they were asked to write a few sentences about some negative stereotypes U.S. society holds about Asian people. Finally, in the *baseline condition*, they were asked to write a few sentences about some stereotypes U.S. society holds about Asian people, with no specified

valence. After the manipulation, participants were randomly assigned to rate either perceived

frequency or perceived severity of selective incivility, as well as allyship behaviors toward Asian

employees in the workplace.

Measures[3]

Perceived Frequency of Selective Incivility. Perceived frequency of selective incivility

was measured with the same scale as in Study 2a, with the only change being the replacement of

Black employees with Asian employees ($\alpha = 0.97$; Cortina et al., 2013).

Perceived Severity of Selective Incivility. I measured perceived severity of selective

incivility with the same 12-item scale from Cortina et al. (2013), but with a different question.

Instead of frequency, participants were asked to rate how much they think it is discriminatory

when Asian employees face the situations (from 1 = Not discriminatory at all to 7 = Extremely

discriminatory; $\alpha = 0.96$). Items were averaged, with higher numbers indicating greater

perceptions of incivility severity.

Allyship. Lastly, participants' likelihood to engage in allyship behaviors was also

measured with the same scale as in Study 2a, with the only change being the replacement of

Black employees organizing a racial equity task force with Asian employees in the same context

($\alpha = 0.96$; Wang et al., 2021). Items were averaged, with higher numbers indicating greater

willingness to be an ally to Asian employees.

Results

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[3] I also measured moral credit and moral self-regard as potential mechanisms, and SDO as a potential moderator. Results are not significant and reported in Appendix. Notably, recent research shows that measures of self-concept, including the moral credit, moral credentialing, and moral self-image mediators examined in Studies 2a-2b, do not consistently mediate moral licensing behaviors. I discuss the lack of mediating effects in General Discussion. Given this constraint, I instead sought to establish the moral licensing mechanism by examining outcomes related to discrimination severity that help rule out alternative explanations for the hypothesized effect (Study 3-5).

Table 2 presents means, standard deviations, and correlations for the variables used in the analyses. A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of conditions on the outcome variables. Replicating the effects of Study 2a, stereotype condition significantly predicted perceived frequency of selective incivility ($F(2, 284) = 5.24$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2_p = .036$). More specifically, supporting Hypothesis 1, planned contrasts revealed that the positive stereotype condition led to significantly less perceived frequency of selective incivility behaviors targeting Asian employees ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.32$) compared to both the negative stereotype condition ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.33$; B= -0.44, SE = 0.20, $p = .029$) and the baseline condition where stereotype valence was not specified ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.49$; B = -0.61, SE = 0.19, $p = .002$). There was no significant difference between negative stereotype condition and baseline condition ($p = .70$).

Interestingly, I did not find a significant effect of condition on perceived severity of selective incivility ($F(2, 269) = 0.056$, $p = .95$). There was no difference between the positive stereotype condition and the negative stereotype condition ($p = .92$) nor the baseline condition ($p = .75$).

I went on to examine whether the positive stereotype condition led to less likelihood to engage in allyship behaviors due to less perceived frequency of discrimination. As both baseline and negative stereotype conditions led to significantly lower perceptions of incivility frequency, and did not differ from each other, I collapsed the two conditions into one broad baseline condition to compare to the positive stereotype condition in the mediation analysis (Hayes, 2017)[4]. Results from the mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstraps of the indirect effect indicated that, in support of Hypothesis 2, perceived incivility frequency significantly mediated the

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[4] Comparing the positive stereotype condition to either negative stereotype or baseline condition alone also yielded significant mediation results.

relationship between the positive stereotype vs. contrast condition and likelihood to engage in allyship behaviors (95% CI [-.37, -.05]), as the confidence interval does not contain zero. The results suggest that the positive stereotype condition led to significantly less perceptions of incivility targeting Asian employees, which further reduced intentions to engage in allyship behaviors to support them in the workplace.

Robustness checks

Similar to Study 2a, a coder reviewed the content of participants' writing in the manipulation and categorized it in two ways: containing a positive stereotype about Asian people or not, and containing a negative stereotype about Asian people or not. Chi-squared tests indicated that participants mentioned positive stereotypes significantly more in the positive stereotype condition (99%) than in the other two conditions (baseline: 82%, $\chi^2 = 34.81$, $p < .001$; negative: 29%, $\chi^2 = 210.32$, $p < .001$). Also, participants mentioned negative stereotypes significantly more in the negative stereotype condition as compared to in the positive stereotype condition ($\chi^2 = 279.81$, $p < .001$), as well as to the baseline choice of stereotype condition ($\chi^2 = 28.4$, $p < .001$). The results reported in the main section were robust to excluding participants who wrote about Black people's positive stereotypes in the negative stereotype condition or negative stereotypes in the positive stereotype condition ($F(2, 278) = 5.30$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2_p = .037$).

Discussion

In Studies 2a-b, I found experimental evidence for Hypotheses 1-2 that activating access to positive stereotypes of racial minorities, but not exposure to non-positive stereotypes, licensed people to dismiss the occurrence of discrimination against members of those groups, although surprisingly it did not change interpretation of negative behaviors to become less negative. I suspected this may be due to the structure and formatting of the question to participants. As

discussed earlier, the contemporary norms surrounding expression of prejudice and discrimination have led to heightened sensitivity to relevant questions, so when participants were presented with all incivility behaviors (negative treatment targeting racial minorities) simultaneously in a single matrix and asked how discriminatory they thought the behaviors were, the pressure to answer the questions in a socially desirable way may have been enough to overshadow the effect of the manipulation. I tackle this issue with Study 3, where I presented a less overloaded vignette and framed questions to not be saliently about discrimination.

Study 3

In Studies 2a-2b, I found consistent evidence that writing about positive stereotypes about racial minority groups in society reduced perceived frequency of workplace incivility against these groups. I conducted Study 3 to build on the previous studies in two ways—first, the previous experiments did not establish a completely neutral baseline, i.e., one that does not involve stereotypes. Studies 2a-2b did not find a significant difference between the negative stereotype and choice of stereotype baseline conditions, perhaps due to the fact that participants' responses in the choice of stereotype baseline condition resembled those in the negative stereotype condition. I therefore replaced the choice of stereotype condition with a baseline condition not related to group stereotypes, and aimed at testing how positive and negative stereotype conditions differ from a neutral baseline in this study.

Second, as discussed in Study 2b, I did not find conclusive evidence for whether access to positive stereotypes may also reduce perceived severity of incivility against people of color. One possibility is that any variance driven by access to positive stereotypes versus other stereotypes in the study was suppressed by the demand characteristics generated when participants were presented with a list of undeniably negative behaviors towards racial

minorities. In addition, perceived severity of selective incivility may not be an ideal measure to address the alternative explanation that positive stereotypes simply led people to believe minority groups are faring well, thus unlikely to be discriminated against. It is possible that the perception of minority groups being better off can lead people to perceive the degree of the same uncivil behavior to be less severe. Therefore, in Study 3, I employed a different measure of dismissal of workplace discrimination—in which participants, when presented with a explicitly discriminatory workplace context for Black people, could act in line with that context to maintain it, or not. This is a well-established measure of discrimination tolerance and perpetuation in the moral licensing literature (Monin & Miller, 2001), and provides a singular and more immersive scenario for participants to respond to. If people, after accessing positive stereotypes as opposed to negative stereotypes or a baseline condition, choose to maintain and further unfair practices to a greater extent in an already discriminatory workplace, the finding that positive stereotypes lead individuals to perpetuate a racist system rules out the alternative theory that the effects on perceptions of incivility frequency were solely driven by participants believing that the targets of positive stereotypes are thriving and thus simply experience less discrimination. Therefore, Study 3 allowed for further examination of whether positive stereotypes help establish social moral licenses which in turn authorize people to maintain a discriminatory organizational culture.

Methods

Participants and Design

I recruited 510 participants on Amazon Cloud Research (256 men, 251 women, 3 nonbinary people; 380 White or European American, 42 Black or African American, 16 Latinx or Spanish, 34 Asian or Asian American, 8 other race, 26 multiracial; $M_{age} = 42.82$, $SD_{age} = 12.26$).

Participants were randomly assigned to a 3-condition (stereotype: positive, negative, baseline) between-subjects design, with the same positive and negative stereotype conditions as in Studies 2a-2b, and a new baseline condition.

Procedure

In the *positive stereotype condition*, participants were asked to write a few sentences about some positive stereotypes U.S. society holds about Black people. In the *negative stereotype condition*, they were asked to write a few sentences about some negative stereotypes U.S. society holds about Black people. Unlike in Study 2a-2b, in this *baseline condition*, participants were asked to write a few sentences about their morning routine. After the manipulation, participants were asked to read a scenario wherein they work at a racist police station and need to make a hiring decision.

Specifically, participants were asked to imagine that they were the police chief of a small town in a rural area of the U.S. The rural area has traditionally had negative attitudes towards racial minorities and is primarily composed of White people, which the culture of the police station mirrors. While White officers excel at their jobs, past Black officers have complained of hostile working conditions. Participants read that they have been trying to change attitudes, but their main objective is that the police force do its job and the current system is effective, so they don't want to provoke unrest. For our outcome of interest, participants, in their role as police chiefs, are tasked with recruiting a new officer for the police force. They were asked to indicate whether the position for the new officer is better suited for a Black person or a White person on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = Yes, much better for a Black person to 7 = Yes, much better for a White person). This scenario was designed to provide a more nuanced and textured social situation which provided plausible excuses for choosing to perpetuate the discriminatory culture

of the workplace to circumvent the concerns around social desirability pressures overwhelming the manipulation when answering questions related to explicit discrimination[5]. Higher scores indicate greater willingness to not acknowledge the current discriminatory system and continue perpetuating it.

Results

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA showed that as hypothesized, condition predicted willingness to perpetuate a discriminatory system ($F(2, 507) = 2.50$, $p = .083$, $\eta^2_p = .01$). Planned contrasts indicated that, in support of Hypothesis 1, the positive stereotype condition led to significantly greater willingness to perpetuate anti-Black bias ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.03$) compared to the negative stereotype condition ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.11$; B= -0.26, SE = 0.12, $p = .035$), and marginally more willingness compared to the baseline condition ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.2$; B = -0.21, SE = 0.12, $p = .088$). There was no significant difference between negative stereotype condition and baseline condition ($p = .92$).

Robustness checks

As in Study 2a and 2b, a coder reviewed the content of participants' writing in the manipulation and coded whether the content included a positive stereotype about Black people, a negative stereotype about Black people, or people's morning routine. All participants assigned to the baseline condition correctly wrote about their morning routine. Chi-squared tests indicated that participants mentioned positive stereotypes significantly more in the positive stereotype condition (96%) than in the negative stereotype condition (5%, $\chi^2 = 261.54$, $p < .001$). Also, participants mentioned negative stereotypes significantly more in the negative stereotype condition than in the positive stereotype condition ($\chi^2 = 269.01$, $p < .001$). The results reported in

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[5] The original vignette is provided in the Appendix.

the main section became marginally significant after excluding participants who wrote about Black people's positive stereotypes in the negative stereotype condition or negative stereotypes in the positive stereotype condition ($F(2, 491) = 2.57$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2_p = .01$).

Discussion

In this study, I found supporting evidence that access to positive stereotypes at the societal level licenses the tendency to promote the status quo and perpetuate discrimination. This helped rule out the alternative explanation for findings from Studies 2a-2b that positive stereotypes reduced perceived discrimination because they caused participants to believe that racial minority groups are faring well and thus experience less discrimination. Instead, I established the moral licensing effect of positive stereotypes, illustrating that when positive stereotypes about a racial minority group were made more accessible to participants, they felt licensed and thus more comfortable in perpetuating racial discrimination in hiring even with clear evidence that the organization is already biased against that racial group. This provides further support for the claim that access to positive stereotypes about a racial group leads to reduced acknowledgment of discrimination against that group. However, in the manipulation of Studies 2a-b and 3, asking people to write about their perceptions of positive stereotypes in society might still be confounded with some degree of personal endorsement; it remains unclear the extent to which people hold positive stereotypes themselves and let their personal belief guide their responses. Therefore, in the next three studies, I sought to test robustness of the phenomenon by diversifying the manipulation and having participants access positive stereotypes in a more passive way.

Study 4a

36

Studies 2a, 2b, and 3 consistently manipulated accessibility of positive stereotypes by having participants write about positive stereotypes about particular racial minority groups in U.S. society. To confirm that the effect is generalizable to other methodologies, I employed a different manipulation in this study. Instead of asking participants to actively write about particular positive stereotypes in society, I was interested in examining whether simple exposure to a racial minority group member with traits congruent with a relevant positive stereotype was enough to enable participants to access positive stereotypes' licensing effect. Specifically, I expected that learning about an Asian target with qualities that are a part of the group's positive stereotypes can remind people of the existence of these generalized positive beliefs that society holds about Asian people, which then prime access to positive stereotypes and allow people to mobilize them as licenses to reduce discrimination acknowledgement.

Moreover, I aimed at testing the generalizability of the effect by employing a different measure of discrimination acknowledgment. Following Study 3's use of a contextualized and immersive discriminatory event and a contingent measure of its acknowledgement, I provided participants with a new scenario wherein a racial minority target may be discriminated against, and asked perceptions of the extent to which the perpetrator is racist and should be held accountable. I further operationalized support for pro-equity practices as the degree to which people are willing to punish the perpetrator.

Methods

Participants and Design

I recruited 404 participants on Amazon Cloud Research (178 men, 219 women, 7 nonbinary people; 289 White or European American, 23 Black or African American, 22 Latinx or Spanish, 34 Asian or Asian American, 1 other race, 31 multiracial; $M_{age} = 39.38$, $SD_{age} = 12.15$).

Participants were randomly assigned to a 3-condition (stereotype: positive, negative, baseline) between-subjects design.

Procedure

In all conditions, they were asked to read about an Asian American college student named Sophia. In the *positive stereotype condition*, the college student was described with a series of traits and characteristics that feature Asian positive stereotypes according to past literature (Ho & Jackson, 2001)—confirming the model minority stereotype, the student majors in math, is diligent, hardworking, and bright, and plays the piano in her spare time. In the *negative stereotype condition*, the same student was described with qualities associated with Asian negative stereotypes—confirming the antisocial and nerdy stereotypes, the student does not hang out with friends or join clubs, preferring to focus on studying to pursue her dream of becoming a doctor; in her spare time, she previews next week's classes and organizes notes. Finally, in the *baseline condition*, the student has a neutral description—she hasn't decided on a major yet, lives in the dorm, and bikes to classes regularly.

After the manipulation, participants were asked to read a scenario wherein the student they just read about was treated unfairly by her teaching assistant in a math class. Specifically, the scenario described how the student notices her TA (with a White-passing name, Anna Johnson), has provided less attention and support to her than to others. When she goes to Anna for help, Anna refuses to help, remarking, "I'm sure you're good at math. You can just figure this out on your own." This remark can be considered a particular form of microaggression, overvalidation, in which people dismiss or overburden racial minorities by making positive attributions to them. Members of racial minority groups often experience overvalidation

springing from positive stereotypes, and these can have harmful consequences on their work

outcomes (Kim et al., 2019).[6]

Participants were then asked to indicate the degree to which they believed the teaching

assistant is a racist, whether she should be held accountable for having racial bias against Asian

people, and support for punishment of the teaching assistant.

Measures

Perceived Perpetrator racism. First, I measured perceived racism of the teaching

assistant with the question, "To what extent do you think Anna is a racist?" (from 1 = Not at all

racist to 7 = Very racist).

Perceived Perpetrator Accountability. I measured perceived accountability of the

teaching assistant for her behavior toward the Asian student with the question, "Anna should be

held responsible for her racial biases against Asians" (from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly

agree).

Support for Punishment. I finally measured support for punishment of the teaching

assistant for her behavior toward the Asian student with the question, "To what extent do you

think Anna should be punished for giving less attention to Sophia?" (from 1 = Not at all to 7 =

Very much).

Results

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA showed that as hypothesized, condition

significantly predicted perceived perpetrator racism ($F(2, 401) = 4.30$, $p = .014$, $\eta^2_p = .021$).

Planned contrasts revealed that consistent with Studies 1-3, the positive stereotype condition led

to significantly less perception of racism ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.6$) than the baseline condition ($M =$

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[6] The complete manipulation vignette and discrimination scenario are presented in the Appendix.

4.7, *SD* = 1.4; B= 0.57, SE = 0.20, *p* = .004). The comparison between the positive stereotype

condition and negative stereotype condition (*M* = 4.42, *SD* = 1.49) did not reach statistical

significance (*p* = .10). Condition also significantly predicted perceived perpetrator accountability

(*F*(2, 401) = 5.85, *p* = .003, η^2_p = .028), such that participants reported that the teaching assistant

should be held accountable for her behavior toward the Asian student significantly less in the

positive stereotype condition (*M* = 4.88, *SD* = 1.56) than both the negative stereotype condition

(*M* = 5.25, *SD* = 1.44; B= 0.37, SE = 0.17, *p* = .031) and the baseline condition (*M* = 5.52, *SD* =

1.51; B = 0.64, SE = 0.19, *p* < .001). There was no significant difference between negative

stereotype condition and baseline condition (*p* = .33).

I then conducted a mediation test to examine whether the positive stereotype condition

led to less support for punishing the teaching assistant through less perceived perpetrator

racism[7,8] (Hayes, 2017). Results with 5,000 bootstraps of the indirect effect indicated that

perceived racism significantly mediated the relationship between the positive stereotype vs.

baseline condition (95% CI [-.66, -.14]) and support for punishing the teaching assistant,

suggesting that access to positive stereotypes motivated less support for measures to correct

unfair treatment because of reduced acknowledgement of discrimination.

Study 4b

Study 4b aimed at replicating the effects in Study 4a with a different racial group—Black

people, in a different context. Also, an alternate explanation exists for the findings in Study 4a,

that is, that positive stereotypes led to less perception of perpetrator racism and accountability

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[7] Perceived perpetrator accountability was also a significant mediator in the relationship between positive vs. baseline condition and support for punishment. Results are reported in the Appendix.
[8] The mediation results were insignificant comparing the positive stereotype condition to the negative stereotype condition through perceived perpetrator racism. However, the mediation was significant through perceived perpetrator accountability.

because participants perceived the positively stereotyped student to be more successful and thus less likely to be subject to discrimination. To rule out this alternative explanation, I included two mediators in this study, empathy and competence, which were intended to investigate whether access to positive stereotypes influences care for or positive impressions of the target, which in turn influence discrimination perceptions.

Methods

Participants and Design

I recruited 446 participants on Amazon Cloud Research (195 men, 250 women, 1 nonbinary person; 335 White or European American, 36 Black or African American, 19 Latinx or Spanish, 26 Asian or Asian American, 2 other race, 22 multiracial; mean age = 41.76, SD = 13.46). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (stereotype: positive, negative, baseline) in a between-subjects design.

Procedure

In all conditions, participants were asked to read about a Black American college student athlete named Tyrone. In the *positive stereotype condition*, the student athlete was described with a series of traits and characteristics confirming Black positive stereotypes of being athletic (Czopp, 2010)—the athlete plays in the collegiate basketball team and has strong physical ability and superior strength. In the *negative stereotype condition*, the same athlete was described with qualities associated with Black negative stereotypes of being academically incompetent—the athlete plays in the collegiate basketball team and spends most of his time practicing, so he skips classes, does not turn in assignments, and has failing grades. Finally, in the *baseline condition*, the athlete has a neutral description—he plays in the collegiate badminton team, lives in the dorm, and bikes to campus regularly.

After the manipulation, similar to Study 4a, participants were asked to read a scenario wherein the athlete was treated unfairly by an assistant coach. Specifically, participants read that the assistant coach, Colin, has provided less attention and support to the athlete than to others. When the student goes to Colin for help, Colin refuses, remarking, "I'm sure you're a natural at this, just practice more" (Kim et al., 2019). Once again, this remarks functions as an overvalidating microaggression paired with a refusal to help.

Participants were then asked their empathy for the athlete and their impressions of his competence, before being asked to rate their acknowledgment of discrimination and support for pro-equity practices, operationalized as the extent to which they believed that the assistant coach is a racist, whether he should be held accountable for having racial bias against Black people, and support for punishing the assistant coach.

Measures

Empathy. I used an established five-item scale to measure empathy toward the Black student athlete (Batson et al., 2002). Participants were asked the degree to which they felt a series of emotions toward the athlete; sample items are "sympathetic," "compassionate," and "softhearted" (from 1 = Not at all to 7 = Extremely, $\alpha = 0.97$). Items were averaged, with higher numbers indicating greater feelings of empathy.

Perceived Competence. I used an adapted three-item scale to measure perceived competence of the Black student athlete (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2008). Participants were asked, "To what extent do you think Tyrone is a good athlete?" "To what extent do you think Tyrone is a productive contributor in the team?" and "To what extent do you think Tyrone is qualified as an athlete?" (From 1 = Not at all to 7 = Extremely, $\alpha = 0.92$). Items were averaged, with higher numbers indicating greater perceptions of competence.

Perceived Perpetrator Racism. The same question was used to measure racism as in Study 4a, with the perpetrator name replaced with Colin.

Perceived Perpetrator Accountability. The same question was used to measure perpetrator accountability as in Study 4a, with the target name replaced with Tyrone, perpetrator name replaced with Colin, and Asian replaced with Black.

Support for Punishment. The same question was used to measure support for punishment as in Study 4a, with the target name replaced with Tyrone, and perpetrator name replaced with Colin.

Results

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA showed that, consistent with Study 4a, condition marginally significantly predicted perceived perpetrator racism ($F(2, 443) = 2.84$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2_p = .013$) and significantly predicted perceived perpetrator accountability ($F(2, 443) = 3.13$, $p = .045$, $\eta^2_p = .014$). Planned contrasts revealed that participants perceived significantly less racism in the positive stereotype condition ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.65$) than the baseline condition ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.68$; B = 0.45, SE = 0.19, $p = .019$), and held the assistant coach less accountable in the positive stereotype condition (M = 4, $SD = 1.71$) than in the baseline condition ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.81$; B = 0.52, SE = 0.21, $p = .013$). However, interestingly, for both perceptions of perpetrator racism and accountability, the negative stereotype condition fell in between the baseline and positive stereotype conditions (racism: $M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.68$; accountability: $M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.86$) and was not significantly different from either ($ps > .21$).

I then did a similar mediation test to examine whether the positive stereotype condition led to less intention to punish the assistant coach through less perceived perpetrator racism.

43

(Hayes, 2017)[9]. Results with 5,000 bootstraps of the indirect effect indicated that perceived racism significantly mediated the relationship between the positive stereotype vs. baseline condition and support for punishing the assistant coach (95% CI [-.58, -.06]), suggesting that exposure to positive stereotype confirmation reduced support for pro-equity practices through decreased acknowledgment of racism.

Exploratory Mediators

Finally, to examine the alternate explanation that the effect of positive stereotypes is due to participants' beliefs that the target is better off and thus less likely to become a target of discrimination, I tested the impact of condition on the two exploratory mediators, i.e., empathy and competence. The positive stereotype condition ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.28$) led to more feelings of empathy than the negative stereotype condition ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.54$; B = -0.87, SE = 0.16, $p < .001$), but did not differ from the baseline condition ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 1.37$; B = 0.20, SE = 0.16, $p = .22$). Unsurprisingly, I found that the positive stereotype condition led to significantly greater perceptions of target competence ($M = 6.43$, $SD = 0.68$) as compared to both the negative stereotype condition ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.04$; B = -0.87, SE = 0.10, $p < .001$) and the baseline condition ($M = 5.89$, $SD = 0.84$; B = -0.54, SE = 0.10, $p < .001$).

I conducted mediation analyses to test whether the positive stereotype condition, as compared to the baseline condition, led to decreased perceptions of perpetrator racism or accountability through more perceptions of competence and empathy (Hayes, 2017). Interestingly, 5,000 bootstraps of the indirect effect showed that in direct contrast to the direct

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[9] As in Study 4a, perceived perpetrator accountability also significantly mediated the relationship between positive stereotype condition vs. the other two conditions and support for punishment, in the same pattern as perceived perpetrator racism. Results are reported in the Appendix.

effect, the positive stereotype condition *increased* perceptions of accountability as compared to the baseline condition via increased perceptions of target competence (95% CI [.02, .36]).

Discussion

The results of Study 4b provide evidence that positive stereotypes' negative direct effect on perceived racism and accountability cannot be attributed to the perception that the target is successful and thus unlikely to be subject to racism. Instead, I found that perceiving the target as more competent and feeling more empathy towards them actually accomplished the reverse, increasing perceptions of racism against the target. Therefore, the finding that positive stereotypes reduce perceived racism as compared to the baseline lends further support to the licensing theory, wherein people with access to positive stereotypes use them to license less acknowledgement of discrimination.

However, Studies 4a-4b may be subject to another critique; it is unclear whether it was access to any positive traits assigned to a racial minority group that licensed participants to reduce discrimination acknowledgement, or specifically access to that group's positive stereotypical traits. Given our theory that positive stereotypes serve as social licenses and thus reduce discrimination perceptions, then pairing the positive stereotypical traits of one racial minority group with another racial minority group should not have the same licensing effect. Study 5 was conducted to test this claim.

Study 5

To rule out the alternative explanation that the effects found in Study 4a and 4b could be the result of any positive traits associated with a racial minority group, Study 5 was designed to test whether the effects are driven by traits associated with group-specific positive stereotypes, and not association with any positive traits. To wit, Study 5 took a set of positive traits that were

45

congruent with the positive stereotype for one racial minority group (Asian people) but not another (Black people), then presented participants with a scenario in which a target was either an Asian person or a Black person and either possessed those positive traits or did not. This allowed a test of whether any positive traits in a target compared to neutral traits always reduce perceptions of discrimination, or if, in alignment with my hypotheses, exposure to a target with positive stereotype-congruent traits versus neutral traits reduces perceptions of discrimination more than exposure to a target with positive non-stereotype-congruent traits versus neutral traits.

Thus, in Study 5 participants read a scenario which involved either an Asian student or a Black student. In half of the conditions, the Asian or Black student had neutral traits. In the other half of the conditions, the Asian or Black student was described as having traits strongly associated with positive traits derived from positive stereotypes of Asian people (e.g., hard-working, smart). The expectation was that observing negative treatment of the Asian student with positive stereotype-congruent traits as compared to the Asian student with neutral traits would reduce acknowledgement that the student was discriminated against, but observing negative treatment of the Black student with positive non-stereotype-congruent traits would not reduce discrimination acknowledgment as compared to the Black student with neutral traits.

Methods

Participants and Design

I recruited 430 participants on Amazon Cloud Research (178 men, 243 women, 9 nonbinary people; 303 White or European American, 36 Black or African American, 23 Latinx or Spanish, 24 Asian or Asian American, 2 other race, 35 multiracial; $M_{age} = 41$, $SD_{age} = 13.87$). Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (target traits: Asian positive stereotypical traits, baseline) x 2 (target race: Asian, Black) between-subjects design.

Procedure

In Asian target conditions, participants read about an Asian American college student, and the manipulation of positive stereotypical vs. baseline traits was the same as the manipulation used in Study 4a. In Black target conditions, participants read about a Black American college student. The target was described with exactly the same qualities as in the Asian target conditions, with the only change of the Asian name being replaced by a Black name. As the Asian positive stereotypical traits were non-stereotypical for the Black target, I expected that the positive Black target condition (as compared to the baseline condition) would not license discrimination acknowledgement as much as the positive Asian target condition.

Participants were then exposed to the same discrimination scenario as in Study 4a, with the same student they read about in the manipulation. Finally, they answered questions about perceived perpetrator racism, accountability, and support for punishment.

Measures

Perceived Perpetrator Racism. The same question was used to measure racism as in Study 4a.

Perceived Perpetrator Accountability. To increased construct validity, I used a three-item scale to measure perceived perpetrator accountability. Participants indicated their agreement to each of the following statements: "I blame Anna's comment to [target name] on her racial bias;" "Anna should be held responsible for her racial biases against [target race];" "Anna should be condemned for her racial biases against [target race]." (From 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree, α = 0.95).

Support for Punishment. The same question was used to measure support for punishing the perpetrator as in Study 4a.

47

Results

   A factorial between-subjects ANOVA showed that positive trait vs. baseline condition marginally interacted with target race to predict perceived perpetrator racism ($F(1, 426) = 3.02$, $p = .083$, $\eta^2_p = .007$) and perceived perpetrator accountability ($F(1, 426) = 2.76$, $p = .098$, $\eta^2_p = .006$), such that the differences in outcomes between positive trait vs. baseline conditions were greater for Asian target than for Black target. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons with Tukey adjustment indicated that consistent with previous studies, perceived racism was marginally lower in the Asian positive stereotype condition ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.62$) than the Asian baseline condition ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.74$, $p = .08$). Importantly, perceived racism was not significantly different in the Black positive trait condition ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.71$) from the Black baseline condition ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.72$, $p = 1.00$). I observed the same pattern in post-hoc comparisons with perceived perpetrator accountability: Asian positive stereotype condition ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 1.65$) led to a significantly lower tendency to hold the perpetrator accountable than the Asian baseline condition ($M = 5$, $SD = 1.52$, $p = .02$), but the Black positive trait condition ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.66$) was no different from the Black baseline condition ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.79$, $p = .95$).

   Finally, I conducted a moderated mediation to examine whether the positive trait condition led to less support for punishing the perpetrator through less perceived racism for the Asian target but not for the Black target (Hayes, 2017)[10]. Results with 5,000 bootstraps of the indirect effect revealed that the index of moderated mediation predicting support for punishment from an interaction of target race and condition with perceived racism as the mediator was not significant (95% CI [-.88, .06]). Despite an insignificant index, in partial support of our

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[10] Perceived accountability of perpetrator was also a significant mediator in the relationship between positive stereotype vs. other conditions and support for punishment. The patterns of results are the same as perceived racism and reported in the Appendix.

prediction, perceived racism significantly mediated the relationship between the positive stereotype vs. baseline condition and support for punishing the perpetrator of microaggressions for the Asian target (95% CI [-.71, -.07]), but *not* for the Black target (95% CI [-.32, .36]).

Discussion

Study 5 confirmed that it is access to positive stereotypes, rather than any positive traits, that licenses reduced discrimination acknowledgement, reduced likelihood to hold perpetrators accountable, and furthermore less support for punishment of the perpetrator. Together with Studies 4a-4b, I showed that not only can access to positive stereotypes be activated through writing about them, but people can also be reminded of these stereotypes when racial minorities behave in a stereotype-congruent way. Therefore, racial minority group members may be especially penalized when they succeed in domains that they are positively stereotyped in, because the unfair treatment targeting them in those domains may be disproportionately overlooked.

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GENERAL DISCUSSION

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In my dissertation, I sought to understand how positive stereotypes may help to perpetuate a problematic status quo by licensing reduced acknowledgment of discrimination. I integrated past research on stereotyping and discrimination, system justification, and moral licensing, to identify the psychological tension underlying discrimination acknowledgement. Then, I proposed that access to positive stereotypes, as they are social beliefs conveying the sense that society holds racial minorities in a positive light, may serve as a form of social moral license used to reconcile this tension by alleviating the moral burden which prevents them from neglecting egalitarian and anti-racist social norms against prejudice. This reduced acknowledgement of discrimination in turn drives reduced support for pro-equity practices.

Across seven studies with multiple racial groups (both Black and Asian), various methodologies (correlational surveys and experiments with different manipulations of access to stereotypes), and diverse contexts (in occupations, workplaces, and universities), I found converging evidence that positive stereotypes, whether measured or manipulated, led to reduced acknowledgment of discrimination against racial minorities, which further reduced support for pro-equity practices. The effects were robust and unique to positive stereotypes: Studies 2a-2b suggested that general stereotypes or negative stereotypes did not have the same negative impact of licensing discrimination as positive stereotypes. Study 3 confirmed that the influence of positive stereotypes was more negative than a neutral baseline. Study 5 further indicated that the effects are not driven by any positive traits associated with racial minorities but rather positive stereotypical traits specific to racial minority groups.

Importantly, I showed that the effects of positive stereotypes did not have to involve personal endorsement of the stereotypes, but rather access to them at a societal level. Moreover, such access can be activated both actively and passively; I established the robustness of the effects by showing that positive stereotypes can be used as moral licenses not only when people consciously wrote about their knowledge of the stereotypes for a racial minority group in the United States (Studies 2-3), but also when people were merely exposed to racial minority individuals behaving in ways congruent with the group's positive stereotypes (Studies 4-5). As such, the research demonstrated the pervasive and insidious power of positive stereotypes—the long-term perpetuation of positive stereotypes in U.S. society reinforces the lower status of racial minorities by reducing acknowledgement of discrimination against them even when racial minorities succeed in certain fields (and, perhaps, especially when racial minorities succeed in certain fields).

Lastly, the studies provided evidence that positive stereotypes' negative impact on discrimination acknowledgement can manifest in various ways. Study 1 showed that for occupations in which a racial group is positively stereotyped, people tend to perceive less discrimination against that group. Studies 2a-2b showed that access to positive stereotypes of a target racial group can lead people to perceive reduced frequency of discrimination against that group, which then decreases their willingness to engage in workplace allyship. Study 3 illustrated the power of positive stereotypes in licensing behaviors that perpetuate an already discriminatory workplace culture. Studies 4-5 further found that positive stereotypes can change construal of the negative treatment racial minorities undergo such that it is perceived as less severe, making participants less likely to see the perpetrator as discriminatory or hold the perpetrator accountable, which in turn reduces support for punishing the perpetrator. Taken together, my dissertation found that access to positive stereotypes of a racial group can decrease acknowledgement of discrimination against the group in both frequency and severity beyond the scope of the positive stereotypes themselves. The fact that access to positive stereotypes alters perceived severity of discrimination against racial minorities further helped strengthen the moral licensing argument, as moral licenses have been shown to change construal of negative events to allow people to see them as less severe (Krumm & Corning, 2008; Monin & Miller, 2001). This has important downstream consequences for combatting biases and promoting a fair and just system as reduced discrimination acknowledgement leads to overall less support for inclusive and equitable treatment for racial minorities.

Theoretical Implications

This research theoretically contributes to the literatures of racial discrimination, stereotyping, and moral licensing. First, I propose and empirically examine a previously

understudied system-level factor in the perpetuation of racial discrimination. Past literature has identified the persistence of racial discrimination as its manifestations in U.S. society evolve (M. Hebl et al., 2020). Modern racism has become more and more subtle, taking the form of everyday racism, selective incivility, and microaggressions, theories around which capture the day-to-day chronic exposure to negative interactions racial minorities disproportionately experience (Cortina, 2008; Essed, 2008; Sue et al., 2007). These subtler forms of discrimination are harder to identify and detect because, when observed as standalone incidents, they are oftentimes ambiguous in nature; this has in turn spurred calls for more attention and careful examination of how racial minorities are disadvantaged in daily life (Sue et al., 2019; West, 2019). This dissertation reveals the role of a widespread social belief deeply entrenched in society in further freeing people from the need to acknowledge modern racial discrimination—I show that it is not only explicit racist or sexist attitudes, but also simple access to seemingly complimentary positive stereotypes that can perpetuate racial minorities' derogation and lower status.

Second, I contribute to the literature on positive stereotypes by demonstrating how they may drive broader systemic effects. Past research on positive stereotypes has primarily focused on how they negatively impact minority targets at individual and interpersonal levels. Individual minority targets experience depersonalization, anger and annoyance, pressure from high expectations, worse task performance, reduced help-seeking intentions, dislike of their relationships, and fear of being negatively stereotyped by interaction partners when they are reminded that they are positively stereotyped (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Czopp, 2008; Czopp et al., 2015; Gupta et al., 2011; Siy & Cheryan, 2016). The existing research on the systemic effects of positive stereotypes focuses largely on the consequences of personal

stereotype endorsement, e.g., men who strongly endorse stereotypes around Black people's athleticism are more likely to prioritize athletics over academics for Black students but vice versa for White students, which is likely to undermine Black students' success (Czopp, 2010). Many studies also indirectly examine the role of positive stereotypes in a gender context by testing the effects of benevolent sexism on women's outcomes, e.g., endorsement of benevolent sexism leads to more sexist reactions (victim-blaming) for acquaintance rapes, and reduces support for women's collective action (Becker & Wright, 2011; Viki & Abrams, 2002). However, little research has investigated empirically how positive stereotypes may systemically impact racial discrimination beyond personal endorsement. Just as the perpetuation of negative stereotypes influence normative expectations and thereby lay the foundation for discrimination, so too does the perpetuation of positive stereotypes (considered innocuous and even flattering by third-party observers) serve certain social functions that excuse discrimination. My dissertation has important implications for racial minorities' well-being and tackling of modern racism. I shed light on how positive stereotypes serve a social licensing role in increasing people's psychological comfort in dismissing racism, and illustrate that this effect is not limited to those who personally endorse positive stereotypes nor to those who endorse group inequality and hierarchy to begin with (as the effects were not moderated by social dominance orientation; Ho et al., 2015). As such, I contribute to the literature of positive stereotypes by providing a more complete theoretical picture of the systemic implications positive stereotypes have on licensing a problematic status quo.

Lastly, I contribute to the moral licensing literature by illustrating how widespread social beliefs may also serve as moral licenses. Previous research on moral licensing has demonstrated that people can use their past moral behaviors to self-license dubious actions, or rely on ingroup

members' good deeds to vicariously license themselves to violate norms they would otherwise abide by. My dissertation found that positive stereotypes, or entrenched positive social beliefs about groups, can be a form of social license operating in similar fashion as vicarious licenses from close others to excuse immoral behaviors one would normally be hesitant to engage in. Specifically, building on past literatures on the social functions of stereotyping on system justification, I showed that people can unconsciously infer from their access to societal positive stereotypes that they, as members of a society that holds racial minorities in positive regard, are less obligated to adhere to egalitarian norms, which license them to reduce acknowledgement of racial discrimination and in turn reduce support for pro-equity practices to promote racial minorities' welfare.

Practical Implications

This research has important practical implications. The studies revealed that positive stereotypes can lead to consequences just as problematic and serious as negative stereotypes, while seeming much more palatable to perpetuate. As compared to negative stereotypes, which are more widely recognized as harmful to spread, people feel more comfortable making jokes grounded in positive stereotypes and perpetuating these positive stereotypes in media. President Obama made an offhand joke as a presidential candidate that he would have to investigate Bill Clinton's dancing abilities before he could accurately judge whether Clinton was Black (Seelye, 2008). Chris Rock, host of the 2016 Oscar ceremony where diversity was a central topic, brought out three Asian children in suits and introduced them as the most dedicated, accurate, and hard-working accountants at the firm tabulating the Oscar votes (Contrera, 2021). Movies with titles like "Crazy Rich Asians" and books with titles like "Why Black Athletes Are Better and Why We're Afraid to Talk about It" are released, providing more confirmation of positive stereotypes'

persistence. The lack of recognition positive stereotypes enjoy make the negative consequences uncovered by this research all the more harmful, because the systemic harm done by positive stereotypes is likely to remain invisible, especially as compared to the more explicit forms of bias. Moreover, hate crimes against racial minorities have multiplied alarmingly in recent years: 2020 observed a 49% increase in hate crimes targeting African American, and a 77% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes (*2020 FBI Hate Crimes Statistics*, 2021; Gover et al., 2020). This research points out one previously unidentified source that may have contributed to the perpetuation of these discriminatory events, and a subsequent neglect in coverage of and response to them, i.e., access to these minority groups' positive stereotypes could have made people less attentive to how frequently minority individuals were experiencing racism, and moreover made people interpret negative treatment targeting these individuals as less problematic or deserving of systemic solutions, due to reduced attributions of the treatment to external discrimination.

My dissertation shows that, in certain contexts, the effects of positive stereotypes are even more harmful than negative stereotypes in their licensing of discrimination dismissal. In light of the implications that positive stereotypes can harm racial minorities but remain invisible, this research encourages more comprehensive consideration of how each minority group may have been systematically disadvantaged by positive stereotypes. The model minority myth may help people overlook the fact that Asian Americans became the most economically divided group in 2018, with those at the top of the income distribution earning 10.7 times as much as those at the bottom (Kochhar & Cilluffo, 2018). The superior athleticism stereotype may restrict Black athletes from receiving support and being taken seriously when they face discrimination or seek to push back against such injustices. Moreover, one implication from this research is that even racial minority groups with positive stereotypes in one domain, e.g., Black people in sports, can

suffer from spillover consequences from the local domain to overall perceptions of discrimination, as suggested by Study 2a, wherein writing about positive stereotypes about Black people reduced overall perceived frequency of uncivil treatment Black employees experience in the workplace. While not studied explicitly here, these effects may even extend beyond positive stereotypes targeting racial groups to those which, for example, target women. For example, believing that mothers are naturally more nurturing may help people rationalize or overlook the suffering of working mothers. At the same time, even people with egalitarian motives, low prejudice, or low endorsement of positive stereotypes should be aware that, because it is nonetheless taxing to acknowledge racism and people will employ moral licenses to avoid such mental burdens, they may unconsciously or strategically employ positive stereotypes to license dismissal of discrimination (Jost & Hunyady, 2003; Jost & Banaji, 1994).

As organizations seek to conform to egalitarian social norms, improve their diversity, equity, and inclusion, and enhance diverse workforces' organizational commitment, engagement, and performance, it is important to take action to help reduce the insidious effects of positive stereotypes on their employees. In bias trainings that aim to reduce racial biases in hiring and promotion decisions, work behaviors, and interactions, an important element is increasing awareness of how one may be biased and its impact. The most effective training involves teaching attendees to manage their biases and change their behaviors (Gino & Coffman, 2021). This research highlights the importance of preparing people to recognize biases originating from access to positive stereotypes as well, and to educate managers on how access to positive stereotypes may have led them to dismiss negative treatment experienced by their minority subordinates and as a result provide less support to those who need more help. Similar takeaways

can be applied to professors, teachers, and educators to build a more inclusive environment for their minority students.

More broadly, as media has played a key role in reinforcing positive stereotypes, this research suggests the media industry can also be more cautious about whether they are conveying stereotypical information, even when it is positively valenced. Members of the media may seriously consider their role in combatting myths based in positive stereotypes and clarifying the relationship between positive stereotypes and the justification of a discriminatory system. This may further inspire more conversations about how to make the public more mindful of how people may be less likely to acknowledge discrimination against minority groups under positive stereotypes' licensing effect, and thus how they can provide more support to such minority group members.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current research is not without limitations. First, the studies did not explicitly test personal endorsement of stereotypes. Although I expect the moral licensing effects of positive stereotypes should hold regardless of one's own belief in positive stereotypes, I relied on both active and passive manipulation of access to positive stereotypes to argue that moral licenses are derived from awareness of societal-level positive stereotypes. Future studies should test how personal endorsement of positive stereotypes relate to the moral licensing effect, in order to further clarify whether the moral licensing effect of positive stereotypes establishes even for individuals who outright reject the content of minority groups' positive stereotypes.

Second, I did not identify any direct mediators underlying the relationship between positive stereotypes and discrimination acknowledgement. I did not find supportive evidence for boosted moral self-concept (seeing oneself as more moral and fairer) as a significant mediator;

however, this should not rule out moral licensing as the mechanism of positive stereotypes'
effects on reduced discrimination acknowledgement. The moral licensing literature has provided
inconsistent evidence regarding whether self-report of moral self-concept underlies the use of
moral licenses. Some studies found that good deeds led to higher self-concept (Cornelissen et al.,
2013; Kouchaki, 2011), some other studies found that bad deeds led to higher self-concept
(Jordan et al., 2011), and a great proportion of studies never examined self-concept as a mediator.
Therefore, clear and consistent support for moral self-concept as a mediator is lacking, and
recent replication studies showed that while the main effects of moral licenses on excusing norm-
violating behaviors remained, none of the previously identified measures related to moral self-
concept mediators were significant (Robitaille, 2014). Hence, the lack of support for moral
identity mediators in this dissertation emerges as a persistent problem shared within the broader
arena of moral licensing research; as a result, I turned to establishing the mechanism by adapting
behavioral paradigms in traditional moral licensing literature and ruling out alternative
hypotheses that might otherwise account for the findings. Past literature on moral licensing
employed a manipulation in which participants established self-licenses via writing about their
good deeds. In a similar vein, I showed asking people to write about positive stereotypes in U.S.
society licensed reduced discrimination acknowledgement. These effects could not be explained
by the simple perception that the positively stereotyped groups or individuals are better off (as
shown in Study 3 and 4b), nor by any positive traits that are not stereotypical of a racial minority
group (as shown in Study 5). Future research should continue to explore specific measures
mechanisms which drive the phenomenon of moral licensing.

Third, future research should examine more behavioral consequences associated with
positive stereotypes' licensing effects, especially how moral licensing may have a direct impact

on behavioral support such as helping behaviors. This research did not find a main effect of access to positive stereotypes on support for minority members, but rather a mediated effect through discrimination dismissal (see Figures 2-11). I suspect that this lack of main effect of positive stereotypes on support for pro-equity behaviors may be due to the way the measure was operationalized. In the studies, I measured support with allyship intentions and support for punishment of perpetrator. However, both measures are perceptual and ask for people's intentions rather than actual behaviors. Although agreeing to be an ally or punish the perpetrator should be mentally taxing because they require adherence to the egalitarian norm, agreeing to help others on the surface may not be as burdening as people do not have to actually implement the help. As a result, agreeing to provide help may not be as psychologically uncomfortable to do as acknowledging discrimination and an unfair system, thus reducing the need to rely on a moral license. As such, it is possible that the moral licensing effect of positive stereotypes did not directly impact intentions of support because people's responses were not only driven by acknowledgement of racial discrimination but also the social desirability gained by ostensibly endorsing helping others. Therefore, it will be meaningful for future research to investigate how reduced discrimination acknowledgement manifests in real life behaviors, e.g., reduced helping behaviors directed towards positively stereotyped individuals in need, which will require actual effort and may pose a greater need for moral licensing. Additionally, it can be insightful to study the various ways through which positive stereotypes can be accessed and activated as social licenses. For example, does reading news articles discussing the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans activate such access, making people less likely to perceive discrimination against the group? Understanding the scope of influence of positive stereotypes can inspire intervention-focused research to combat the harm of positive stereotypes on minority groups.

Lastly, this research established the effects of positive stereotypes with regard to racial discrimination but did not examine the effects of positive stereotypes on other dimensions, such as gender, sexual orientation, intersectional groups, and others. Future research should explore whether access to positive stereotypes of women and members of the LGBTQ+ community similarly license reduced acknowledgement of discrimination against these groups. Although the positive stereotypes should behave as social licenses similarly for all minority groups and thus the phenomenon should replicate, it may be that some component common to the positive stereotypes of racial minorities examined in this dissertation is necessary for the phenomenon, but absent in positive stereotypes targeting certain other groups. For example, the content of positive stereotypes for both racial minorities examined in this dissertation are more competence-based, whereas positive stereotypes for other minority groups can be more warmth-based and thus may elicit different reactions. Moreover, it would be interesting to examine the implications of positive stereotypes for intersectional groups, and whether access to positive stereotypes of one minority identity influence perceptions of discrimination against individuals with multiple minority identities.

CONCLUSION

Dismantling the systemically detrimental power of positive stereotypes should start with recognizing it. In this dissertation, I propose and examine the role of widespread and overgeneralized positive social beliefs in driving the perpetuation of discrimination against racial minorities. Integrating multiple streams of research, I show that, as compared to both negative and general stereotypes, positive stereotypes have a more detrimental impact on legitimizing racial discrimination in the workplace and educational contexts by serving as social forms of moral licenses, which in turn further reduce people's support for racial minorities' inclusion and

60

equity. The current work suggests that the distribution and reinforcement of positive stereotypes in society carries with it hard to detect structural costs that include the justification and perpetuation of a racist system; a phenomenon made all the worse by misguided perceptions that positive stereotypes are innocuous and less harmful in nature. As such, this research sheds light on the importance of a more systematic examination of how to debunk positive stereotypes, elucidate their negative consequences, and promote more equitable treatment of racial minorities.

List of Figures and Tables

Table 1. Occupational Stereotypes, Study 1

Race	Stereotype	Occupation
Asian	Positive (above average)	Accounting, Business Management and Administration, Education, Finance, Medicine, Information Technology (IT), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)
Asian	Non-Positive (below average)	Agriculture, Construction, Arts, Entertainment, Government, Hospitality, Policing, Military, Manufacturing, Retail, Social Sciences, Sports
Asian	Neutral (no different from average)	Consulting, Legal, Marketing/Sales
Black	Positive (above average)	Construction, Arts, Entertainment, Military, Sports
Black	Non-Positive (below average)	Accounting, Agriculture, Business Management and Administration, Consulting, Education, Finance, Government, Medicine, Information Technology (IT), Legal, Marketing/Sale, Policing, Social Sciences, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)
Black	Neutral (no different from average)	Hospitality, Manufacturing, Retail

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Study 2a

Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Perceived Frequency of Selective Incivility	3.77	1.58					
2. Allyship	3.82	1.92	.49** [.42, .55]				
3. Moral Self-image	4.97	1.06	-.14** [-.22, -.05]	.06 [-.03, .14]			
4. Mechanistic Dehumanization	7.56	1.80	.28** [.20, .36]	.47** [.41, .54]	-.01 [-.09, .07]		
5. Animalistic Dehumanization	7.51	2.27	.31** [.23, .38]	.52** [.45, .58]	.03 [-.05, .12]	.80** [.77, .83]	
6. Threatened Affect	2.01	1.29	-.40** [-.47, -.33]	-.49** [-.55, -.42]	.12** [.04, .21]	-.57** [-.63, -.52]	-.62** [-.67, -.56]

Note. M and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. The confidence interval is a plausible range of population correlations that could have caused the sample correlation (Cumming, 2014). * indicates *p* < .05. ** indicates *p* < .01.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics, Study 2b

Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Perceived Frequency of Selective Incivility	3.15	1.40				
2. Allyship	4.13	1.87	.25** [.13, .36]			
3. Moral Credit	4.37	1.53	-.03 [-.14, .09]	.20** [.12, .28]		
4. Moral Self-regard	5.69	0.95	.01 [-.11, .13]	.35** [.27, .42]	.39** [.31, .46]	
5. SDO	2.37	1.45	-.11 [-.23, .00]	-.45** [-.52, -.38]	-.00 [-.09, .08]	-.20** [-.28, -.12]

Note. M and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. The confidence interval is a plausible range of population correlations that could have caused the sample correlation (Cumming, 2014). * indicates *p* < .05. ** indicates *p* < .01.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics, Study 4a

Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

| Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2
1. Perceived Perpetrator Accountability	5.18	1.52		
2. Perceived Perpetrator Racism	4.39	1.52	.71** [.66, .76]	
3. Support for Punishment	4.64	1.50	.55** [.48, .61]	.69** [.63, .74]

Note. M and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. The confidence interval is a plausible range of population correlations that could have caused the sample correlation (Cumming, 2014). * indicates *p* < .05. ** indicates *p* < .01.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics, Study 4b

Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. Perceived Perpetrator Accountability	4.25	1.80				
2. Perceived Perpetrator Racism	3.79	1.68	.76** [.72, .80]			
3. Support for Punishment	4.28	1.73	.64** [.58, .69]	.71** [.66, .75]		
4. Empathy	4.72	1.47	.38** [.29, .45]	.35** [.27, .43]	.40** [.32, .48]	
5. Perceived Target Competence	5.97	0.93	.13** [.04, .22]	.11* [.02, .20]	.20** [.10, .28]	.43** [.35, .51]

Note. M and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. The confidence interval is a plausible range of population correlations that could have caused the sample correlation (Cumming, 2014). * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics, Study 5

Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2
1. Perceived Perpetrator Accountability	4.13	1.74		
2. Perceived Perpetrator Racism	3.70	1.75	.84**	
			[.81, .87]	
3. Support for Punishment	4.09	1.81	.65**	.69**
			[.60, .70]	[.64, .74]

Note. M and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. The confidence interval is a plausible range of population correlations that could have caused the sample correlation (Cumming, 2014). * indicates *p* < .05. ** indicates *p* < .01.
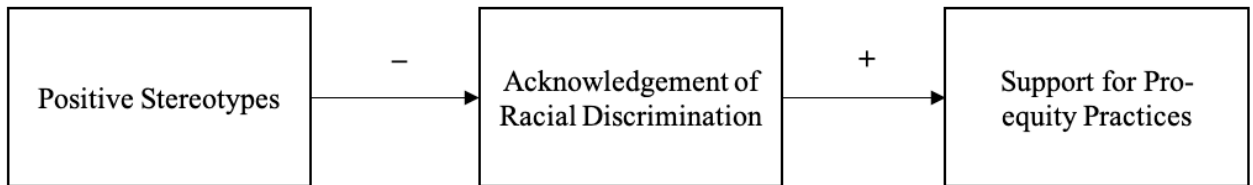
Figure 1. Theoretical Model
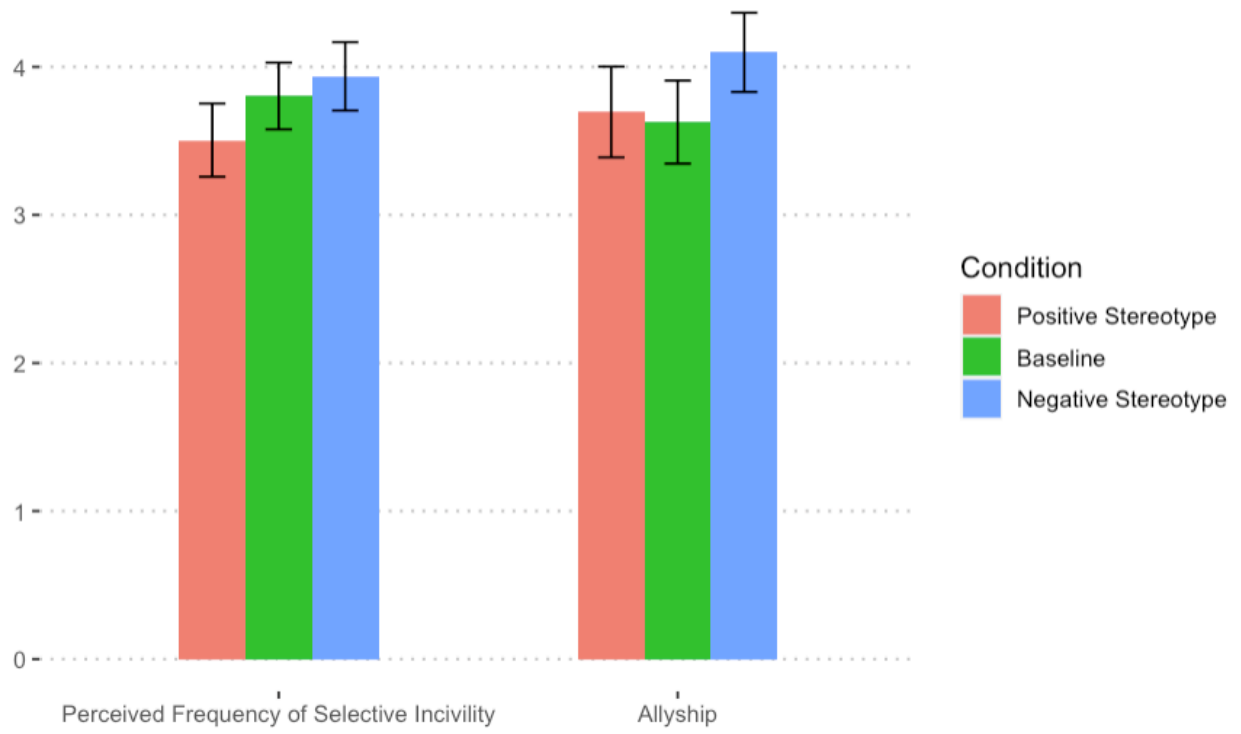
Figure 2. Mean Differences on Perceived Frequency of Selective Incivility and Allyship, Study

2a
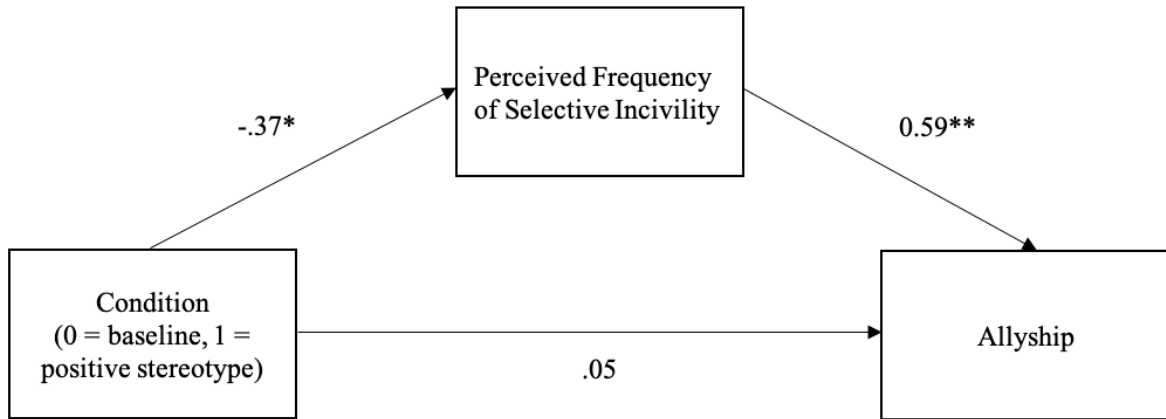
Figure 3. Mediation Model, Study 2a
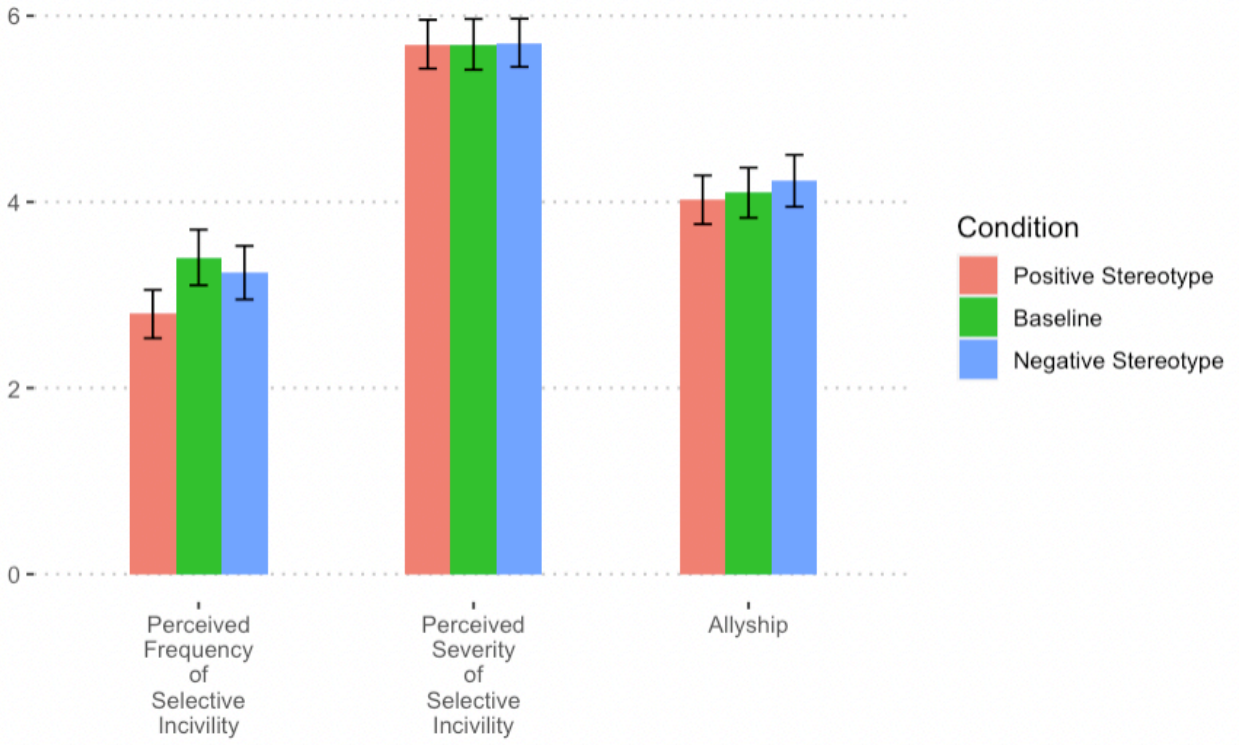
Figure 4. Mean Differences on Perceived Frequency of Selective Incivility, Perceived Severity of
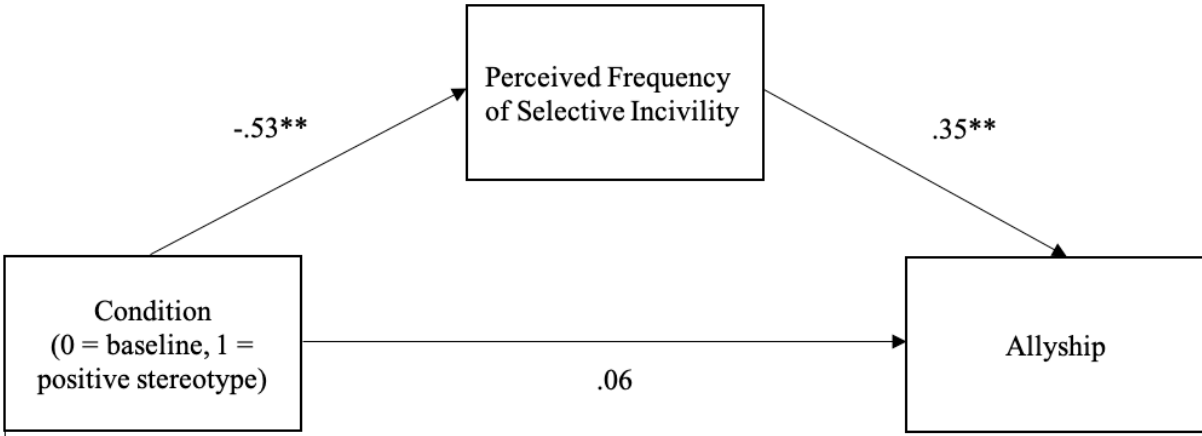
Selective Incivility, and Allyship, Study 2b
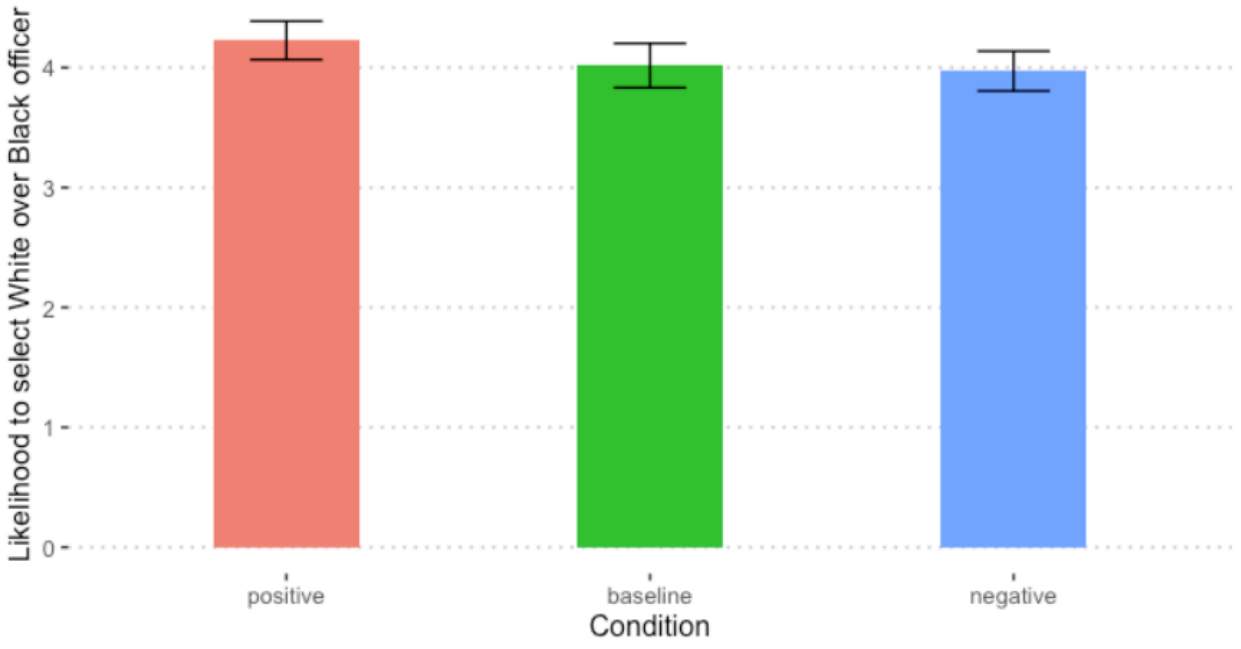
Figure 5. Mediation Model, Study 2b

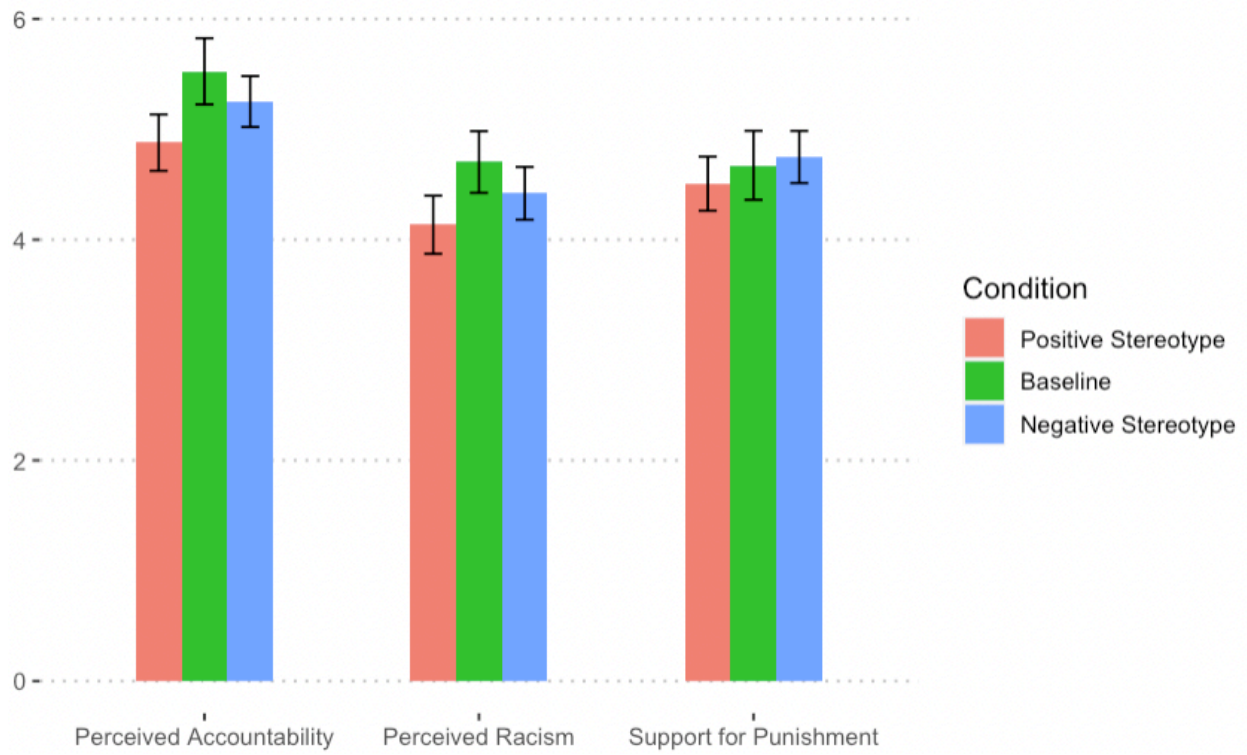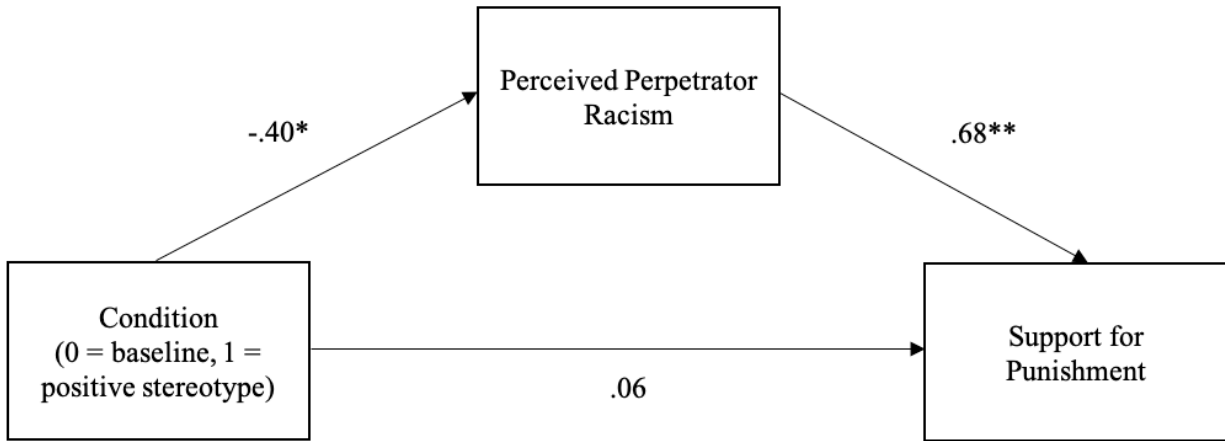*Figure 6.* Mean Differences on Likelihood to Select White over Black Job Candidate, Study 3

Figure 7. Mean Differences on Perceived Accountability, Perceived Racism, and Support for

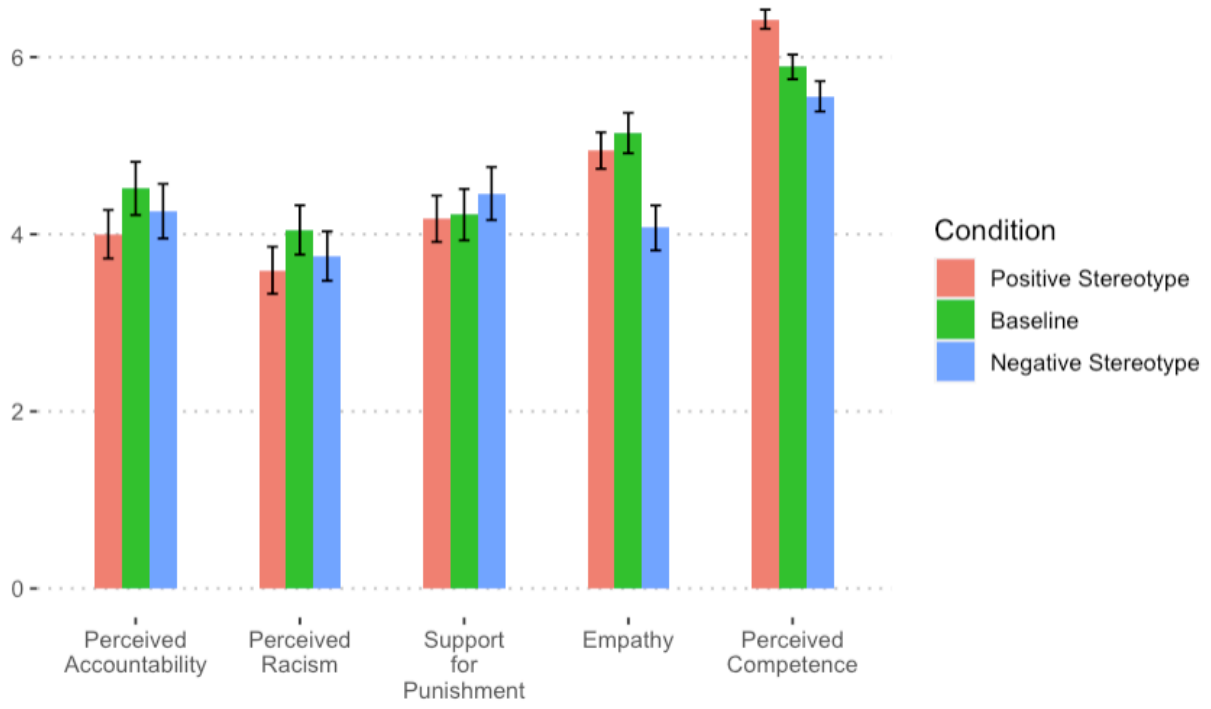Punishment, Study 4a

Figure 8. Mediation Model, Study 4a

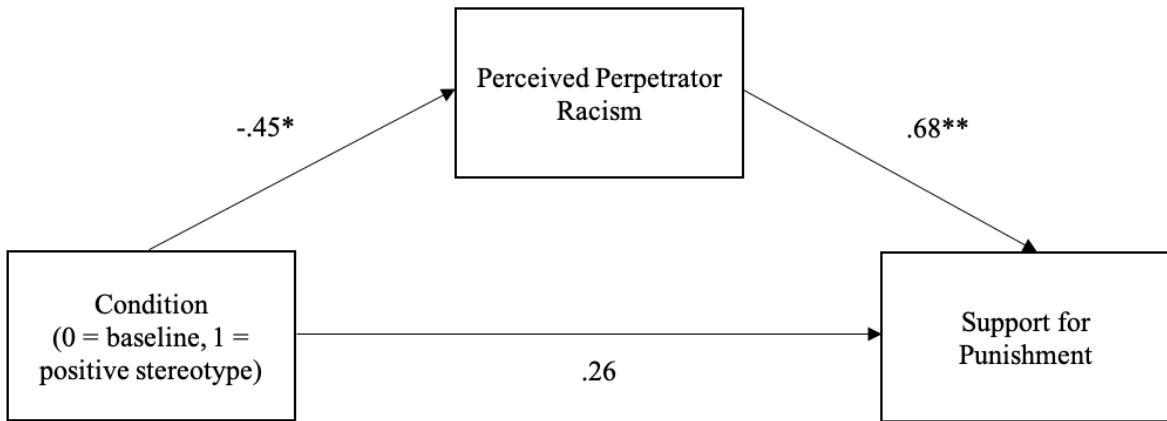*Figure 9*. Mean Differences on Measures, Study 4b

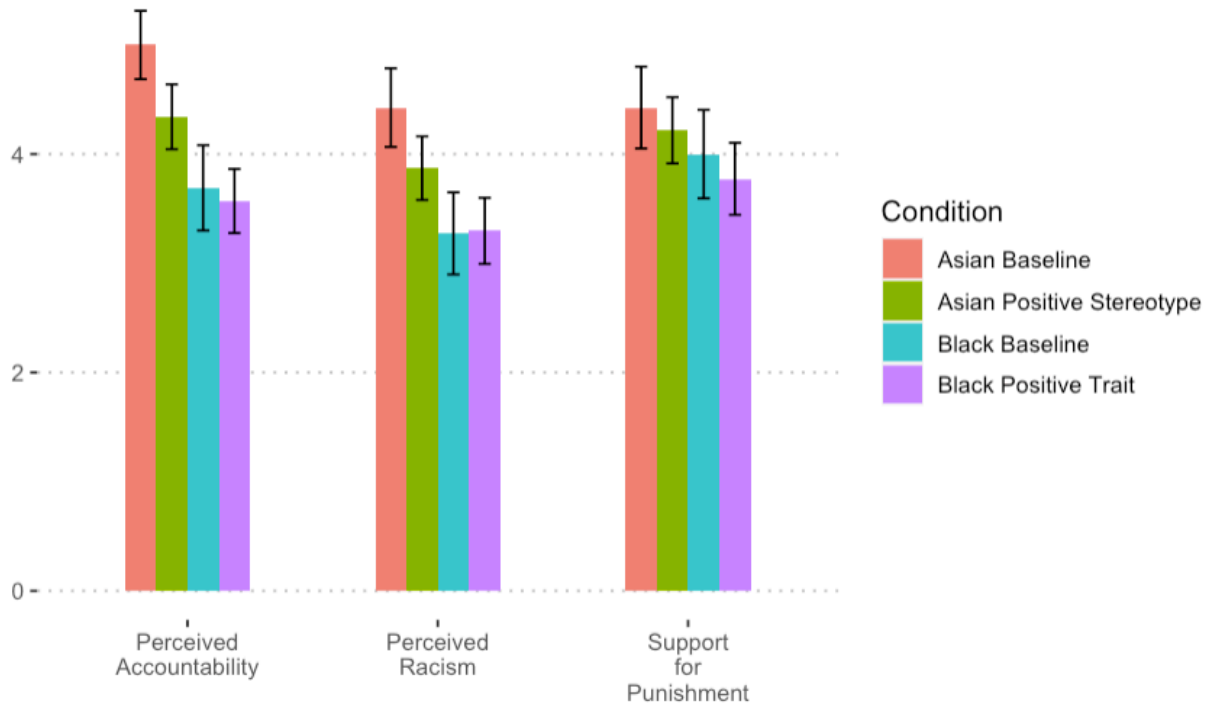*Figure 10*. Mediation Model, Study 4b
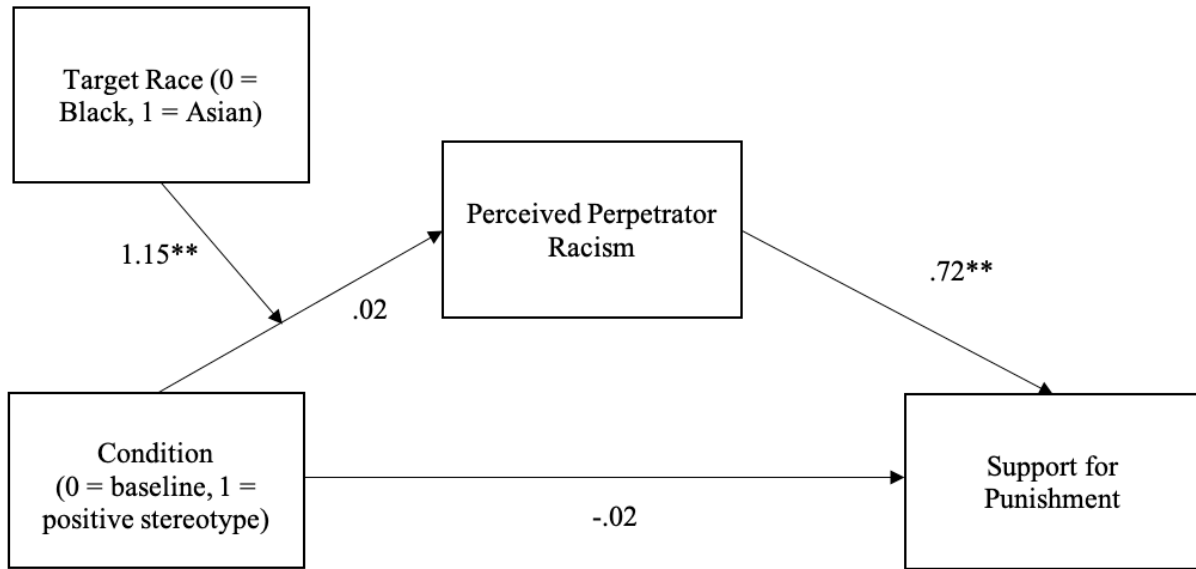
Figure 11. Mean Differences on Measures, Study 5

Figure 12. Moderated Mediation Model, Study 5

Appendix A: Study 2a Supplementary Analyses

I tested four additional measures in Study 2a. First, I sought to test the moral licensing mechanism by measuring whether people had boosted moral self-image, i.e., perceiving themselves as more moral after manipulation. Also, I aimed to rule out alternative explanations by measuring dehumanization and threat. The measures and results are reported below. Lastly, I tested social dominance orientation, a construct capturing people's endorsement of group hierarchy and inequality, as an exploratory moderator.

Additional Measures

Moral Self-image. I measured moral self-image with the 9-item scale from Aquino and Reed (2002). Participants were presented with a list of traits prototypical of a moral person, and were asked where they stand relative to their ideal self on each trait. Example traits include fair, honest, generous, compassionate (from 1 = Much less [trait] than the person I want to be, to 9 = Much more [trait] than the person I want to be; α = 0.89).

Animalistic dehumanization. To measure animalistic dehumanization, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they think Black people are 5 pairs of traits taken from Haslam (2006) on a 10-point bipolar scale. The items include uncivilized-civilized, amoral-morally sensible, irrational-rational, childish-mature, coarse-refined ($\alpha = 0.97$).

Mechanistic dehumanization. To measure mechanistic dehumanization, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they think Black people are another 5 pairs of traits taken from Haslam (2006) on a 10-point bipolar scale. The items include cold-interpersonally warm, rigid-cognitively open, passive-agentic, superficial-have depth, inert-emotionally responsive ($\alpha = 0.90$).

Threatened Affect. I measured threatened affect with 6 items used in Kaiser and colleagues (2006), where participants rated the extent to which they felt threatened, angry, bothered, agitated, annoyed, and irritated after the manipulation ($\alpha = .95$; from $1 =$ not at all to $7 =$ extremely).

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). I measured SDO with the 8-item scale from Ho and colleagues (2015). Participants were asked the extent to which they favor or oppose a list of statements about group hierarchy and inequality. Example items include "An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom," "Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups," "Group equality should not be our primary goal" (from $1 =$ Strongly Oppose to $7 =$ Strongly Favor; $\alpha = 0.93$).

Results

Moral Self-image. A one-way ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in ratings of moral self-image across conditions ($F(2, 540) = 0.02$, $p = .98$). Post-hoc analyses revealed that there was no significant pairwise comparison ($ps > .97$).

Animalistic dehumanization. A one-way ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in ratings of moral self-image across conditions ($F(2, 540) = 0.22$, $p = .22$). Post-hoc analyses revealed that there was no significant pairwise comparison ($ps > .19$), suggesting that the effects of access to positive stereotypes on reduced discrimination acknowledgement was not due to changes in perceptions of Black people as animal-like.

Mechanistic dehumanization. A one-way ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in mechanistic dehumanization of Black people across conditions (F(2, 540) = 1.32, p = .27). Post-hoc analyses revealed that there was no significant pairwise comparison ($ps > .25$), suggesting that the effects of access to positive stereotypes on reduced

discrimination acknowledgement was not due to changes in perceptions of Black people as robot-like.

Threatened Affect. A one-way ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in mechanistic dehumanization of Black people across conditions ($F(2, 540) = 1.58$, $p = .21$). Post-hoc analyses revealed that there was no significant pairwise comparison (*ps* > .17), suggesting that the effects of access to positive stereotypes on reduced discrimination acknowledgement was not due to changes in perceived threat.

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). I regressed the key outcome, perceived frequency of selective incivility, on an interaction between SDO and condition. There was no significant interaction between the positive stereotype condition vs. negative stereotype or baseline condition and SDO (*ps* > .14), suggesting that individual differences in how much people personally endorse group hierarchy and inequality did not influence the impact of positive stereotypes on discrimination acknowledgement.

Appendix B: Study 2b Supplementary Analyses

In Study 2b, I measured moral credits and moral credentials, two ways through which people may feel morally licensed to reduce discrimination acknowledgement, as exploratory mechanisms. Similar to the construct of moral self-image, they tap into respectively how much people feel like they have earned credits to perform transgressions or have increased perceptions that they are moral.

Additional Measures

Moral Credits. I measured moral credits with the 5-item scale from Lin and colleagues (2016). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with a list of statements about their sense of having earned moral credits. Example traits include "I earned credit for performing a morally laudable behavior," "My previous good deeds earned me credit as a moral person" (from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree; $\alpha = 0.97$).

Moral Self-regard. I measured moral self-image with the 7-item scale from Lin and colleagues (2016). Participants were asked to rate how much they see themselves as a list of traits prototypical of a moral person. The items include caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind (from 1 = Not at all to 7 = Very; $\alpha = 0.90$).

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). The same measure from Study 2a was used ($\alpha = 0.93$).

Results

Moral Credits. A one-way ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in ratings of moral self-image across conditions ($F(2, 578) = 0.16$, $p = .86$). Post-hoc analyses revealed that there was no significant pairwise comparison ($ps > .86$).

Moral Self-regard. A one-way ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in ratings of moral self-image across conditions ($F(2, 578) = 0.21$, $p = .81$). Post-hoc analyses revealed that there was no significant pairwise comparison ($ps > .83$).

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). I regressed the key outcome, perceived frequency of selective incivility, on an interaction between SDO and condition. There was no significant interaction between the positive stereotype condition vs. negative stereotype or baseline condition and SDO ($ps > .19$), suggesting that individual differences in how much people personally endorse group hierarchy and inequality did not influence the impact of positive stereotypes on discrimination acknowledgement.

Appendix C: Study 3 Vignettes

Discrimination Measure

Imagine that you are the police chief of a small town in a rural area of the U.S. Historically the population of the town has been exclusively White, and attitudes towards other ethnicities tend to be unfavorable. As much as you regret it, you know this is especially the case within your unit. You couldn't help overhearing racist jokes coming from people you otherwise consider excellent officers. In fact, a couple of years ago an African American patrolman joined your unit, and within a year he quit, complaining about hostile working conditions. You are doing what you can to change attitudes, but your main objective is that the police force should do its job, and so far it has been rather effective so you do not want to provoke any major unrest within the ranks. The time has come to recruit a new officer. As a general rule, officers need to be responsible and trustworthy, show quick intelligence enabling them to make split-second decisions in crisis situations. Recent scandals have also highlighted the need for a high level of integrity, resistance to corruption, mild manners, and a calm temper. You have just received applications from the new graduates of the local Police Academy. You wonder whether ethnicity should be a factor in your choice. Do you feel that this specific position (described above) is better suited for any one ethnicity? (From 1 = Yes, much better for a Black person to 7 = Yes, much better for a White person)

Appendix D: Study 4a Vignettes and Supplementary Analyses

Vignettes

Positive Stereotype Condition

Sophia Meng is an Asian American college student majoring in mathematics. She is very diligent, studying both alone and with several study groups as she pursues her dream of becoming a doctor. Some of her classmates think she is a really bright student with sharp understanding and quick absorption of knowledge. By her third year, she has successfully maintained a GPA of 4.0. In her spare time, she plays the piano.

Baseline Condition

Sophia Meng is an Asian American college student who hasn't decided on her major yet. She lives in the dorms and bikes to her classes regularly. By her third year, she has moved into a co-op near campus. In her spare time, she likes cooking and going to the gym.

Negative Stereotype Condition

Sophia Meng is an Asian American college student majoring in mathematics. Her family immigrated to the U.S. when she was four. She wants to be a doctor, so she spends all her energy on earning good grades, and does not hang out with friends a lot. Some of her classmates think she doesn't like socializing and prefers spending time by herself. By her third year, she hasn't joined any clubs yet. In her spare time, she previews the next week's class slides and organizes her class notes.

Discrimination Scenario

Recently, in a mathematics class Sophia is taking, Sophia notices that her teaching assistant Anna Johnson, a doctoral student in the department, has continued to direct less attention and provide less support to her. In the lab, Anna prioritizes answering other students'

questions. When Sophia goes to Anna for help, Anna says, "I'm sure you're good at math. You can just figure this out on your own."

<center>**Supplementary Analyses**</center>

Mediation Analyses

I report here analyses of perceived perpetrator accountability as a mediator in the relationship between positive stereotype vs. baseline (and negative stereotype) and support for punishment (Hayes, 2017). Results with 5,000 bootstraps of the indirect effect indicated that perceived accountability significantly mediated the relationship between the positive stereotype vs. baseline condition (95% CI [-.51, -.03]) or vs. negative condition (95% CI [-.38, -.02]) and support for punishing the teaching assistant, suggesting that access to positive stereotypes motivated less support for measures to correct unfair treatment because of decreased perception that the perpetrator should held accountable.

Vignettes

Positive Stereotype Condition

Tyrone Jones was an African American college student who played for his college basketball team. As one of the most talented players on the team, he had superior physical ability with high strength, power, and agility. He was a great passer, a tough defender, and a big time shot maker with an intimidating style. He helped bring his team to the national championship.

Baseline Condition

Tyrone Jones was an African American college student who majored in physical education. He lived in a co-op and enjoyed watching sports games with friends on the weekends. He volunteered in an afterschool program in his free time.

Negative Stereotype Condition

Tyrone Jones is an African American college student. He is an athlete who plays for the college basketball team. He spends most of his time practicing and skips classes in order to attend training sessions and games. He does not always turn assignments in on time and does not engage much academically. By his third year, Tyrone's GPA is too low, and he is asked to work with an academic coach to maintain his grades.

Discrimination Scenario

In recent training sessions, Tyrone notices that the recently hired assistant coach Colin, who is responsible for practice supervision and instruction, directs less attention and provides less support to him. Colin prioritizes working with other players and pointing out where they can improve. When Tyrone goes to Colin for guidance, Colin says, "I'm sure you're a natural at this, just practice more."

Supplementary Analyses

Mediation Analyses

I report here analyses of perceived perpetrator accountability as a mediator in the relationship between positive stereotype vs. baseline and support for punishment (Hayes, 2017). Results with 5,000 bootstraps of the indirect effect indicated that perceived accountability significantly mediated the relationship between the positive stereotype vs. baseline condition and support for punishing the assistant coach (95% CI [-.56, -.06]), suggesting that exposure to positive stereotype confirmation reduced support for pro-equity practices through decreased perception that the perpetrator should held accountable.

Appendix F: Study 5 Supplementary Analyses

Moderated Mediation Analyses

I report here the moderated mediation analyses with perceived perpetrator accountability as a mediator in the relationship between positive trait vs. baseline condition and support for punishment for Asian but not Black target (Hayes, 2017). Results with 5,000 bootstraps of the indirect effect revealed that the index of moderated mediation predicting support for punishment from an interaction of target race and condition with perceived accountability as the mediator was not significant (95% CI [-.80, .07]). Despite an insignificant index, in partial support of our prediction, perceived racism significantly mediated the relationship between the positive stereotype vs. baseline condition and support for punishing the perpetrator of microaggressions for the Asian target (95% CI [-.75, -.15]), but *not* for the Black target (95% CI [-.40, .24]).

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