



The insidious (and ironic) effects of positive stereotypes

Aaron C. Kay^{a,*}, Martin V. Day^b, Mark P. Zanna^c, A. David Nussbaum^d

^a Duke University, USA

^b Princeton University, USA

^c University of Waterloo, Canada

^d University of Chicago, USA

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Positive stereotypes are especially detrimental to egalitarian social perception.
- ▶ Exposure to a positive stereotype led to increased essentialism.
- ▶ Exposure to a positive stereotype led to increased application of prejudicial beliefs.
- ▶ These results were relative to baseline and negative stereotype exposure conditions.

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ABSTRACT

The present research demonstrates that positive stereotypes – though often treated as harmless, flattering and innocuous – may represent an especially insidious means of promoting antiquated beliefs about social groups. Specifically, across four studies (and one replication), the authors demonstrate that exposure to positive stereotypes towards African Americans (i.e., they are superior athletes) are at once both especially *unlikely* to arouse skepticism and emotional vigilance while also especially *likely* to produce antiquated and harmful beliefs towards members of the target group (compared to both baseline conditions and exposure to negative stereotypes), including beliefs in the biological (or “natural”) underpinnings of group differences and, ironically, the application of negative stereotypes.

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Introduction

In the heat of the 2008 primaries, Barack Obama was asked to comment on Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison's declaration that former president Clinton was the first “Black president... blacker than any other actual Black person who could be elected during our children's lifetime.” After a measured and unsurprisingly evasive response, Obama concluded his remarks by quipping that he would have to more carefully investigate “Bill's dancing abilities and some of this other stuff before I accurately judge whether he was actually a brother.” The crowd erupted with laughter and everyone moved on.

But imagine, for a moment, if rather than claiming he needed to see President Clinton's dancing skills in order to assess his “Blackness,” Obama asked to see Clinton's IQ score or his criminal record. Would people still have viewed his remarks with such side-splitting humor? Unlikely. Instead, his joke certainly would have been seen for what it actually was: an example (albeit one offered in jest) of social stereotyping, one that almost assuredly would have been decried as shocking, inappropriate and racist.

This (hypothetical) asymmetry in the public response to positive relative to negative stereotypical remarks may seem reasonable, insofar as expressed negative stereotypes can be assumed to be much more likely to negatively impact broad social beliefs – for example, capable of breeding prejudiced and antiquated beliefs about a group's inferiority. We suggest, however, that in contemporary contexts the relative ease with which positive stereotypes can “fly under the radar” and evade red flags may, ironically, make them more damaging to general egalitarian social beliefs than not only the absence of any stereotypic information but negative stereotypes, too.

Most research on positive stereotypes has focused on how exposure to and awareness of them impacts stereotyped group members. For example, positive stereotypes have been shown to: hinder performance in the stereotyped domain (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000), lead stereotyped group members to dislike those who utter these stereotypes (Czopp, 2008), increase the likelihood that positively stereotyped group members will be pigeonholed into certain career and intellectual tracks (Czopp, 2010), and cause targets of the positive stereotype to be held to unfairly high expectations within the stereotyped domain (Ho, Driscoll, & Loosbrock, 1998).

The focus of the present investigation, however, is not on the behavioral, emotional, or cognitive reactions of the targets of positive stereotypes. Nor is it on the implications of positive stereotypes for

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: aaron.kay@duke.edu (A.C. Kay).

behavior, perceptions, or expectations relevant to the stereotyped domain. We suggest, instead, that because positive stereotypes (such as the Black athletic stereotype) are less likely to be noted as information worthy of skepticism, they may be especially potent means of (i) influencing people's general beliefs about the nature of group differences (i.e., the extent to which African Americans are biologically different from other groups) and, ironically, (ii) triggering other, negative stereotypical beliefs about the target group (e.g., African Americans are criminal).

Importantly, there is reason to believe that positive stereotypes may be unlikely to set off red flags in observers. Researchers interested in benevolent sexism, for example, have proposed that one reason why positive stereotypes of women (e.g., as nicer and more polite than men) may be so potent and detrimental to gender inequality is because these stereotypes appear flattering rather than hostile (Glick & Fiske, 1996; also see Jost & Kay, 2005). Other research that has focused on the prevalence and antecedents of positive stereotypes – including research on the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) and the system justifying function of complementary stereotypes (Kay & Jost, 2003) – has similarly theorized about the potentially insidious nature of positive stereotypes. Finally, Mae and Carlston (2005) observed that White participants asked to look for prejudice judged speakers who offered negatively valenced comments about a social group as more prejudiced than speakers who offered positively valenced comments (see also Czopp & Monteith, 2006; Devine & Elliot, 1995). To the extent this suggests positive stereotypes may go unnoticed and unchallenged (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Kervyn, Bergsieker, & Fiske, 2012), we propose two consequences that have not been directly addressed in any previous research.

First, the more people are willing to entertain sweeping generalizations about groups based on social categories (i.e., endorse, rather than deny or try to inhibit, stereotypes), the more likely they should become to believe these differences are the result of something fundamentally and naturally different about the group (Keller, 2005; Prentice & Miller, 2006). Essentialist beliefs can only arise if people accept the veracity of a claimed group difference; that is, if it is accepted rather than challenged. Given this, if positive stereotypes about a specific group are less likely to be coded as biased or trigger negative emotions, they may be a particularly effective means (compared to both negative stereotypes and baseline conditions) of enhancing beliefs that a group is genetically, biologically, or otherwise “naturally” different. Because these types of beliefs have been linked to many consequential outcomes (e.g., Keller, 2005; Williams & Eberhardt, 2008) understanding the unique potential for positive stereotypes to facilitate them is important.

Second, positive stereotype exposure may also increase the likelihood of perceivers applying *negative* stereotypes to members of the target group. Models of spreading activation suggest that networks of information about social groups, whether endorsed or not, are intertwined and connected in memory (Neely, 1976). When one aspect of the stereotype is made more accessible, therefore, the others become more likely to be used and applied in social judgment (Higgins, 1996). Perceivers can, however, inhibit the application of stereotypical information if they are made aware of the potential for prejudice to cloud their judgment and/or are motivated to avoid bias (see Kunda & Spencer, 2003). Thus, if positive stereotypes are more adept than negative stereotypes at flying under the radar, exposure to them may be more likely to lead perceivers to apply negative stereotypical information when making subsequent social judgments about members of the target group.

Across 4 experimental studies (and one replication study), we test for these effects.

Study 1

In Study 1, our goal was to test our basic assumption that people will be more skeptical of information that is stereotypical and negative compared to information that is stereotypical but positive. We

exposed participants to fake newspaper articles describing recent scientific findings that are consistent with either a common positive stereotype (i.e., superior athletic ability; Czopp & Monteith, 2006) or a common negative stereotype (i.e., inferior intellectual ability) about African Canadians. We then asked participants, in open-ended format, to reflect on the article.

Method

Fifty-two undergraduates (44.4% women, 13.5% undisclosed; $M = 21.1$ years of age) participated in exchange for course credit (no African Canadians were recruited in any of the studies). Participants were randomly assigned to read a media article describing scientific research. In the positive stereotype condition, participants read an article titled “Science confirms details of athletic ability and performance.” It informed participants of a (fictitious) research study that examined physical differences in athletic ability in a large group of individuals from age 5–25. The article was 393 words long and was purporting from a major newspaper. The article described research that was conducted by researchers at Harvard University and that was published in the journals, *Science* and *Nature*. The research was conducted using a sample of 14 000 Americans who were evaluated using a standardized Athletic Ability Test (AAT), which included a “wide variety of athletic measures, such as tests of strength, endurance, agility, consistency, and many specific athletic-acquiring skills.” Results indicated that scores on the test strongly predicted later athletic performance. In “a follow-up analysis” that was “not the initial focus,” they found that Black participants had consistently higher athletic test scores than White participants, even in childhood.

In the negative stereotype condition participants read an article titled “Science confirms details of intelligence and academic ability.” The description of the research was very similar to the positive stereotype condition, but the content relevant to intelligence (this time in the negative direction) was substituted for the content relevant to athleticism.

Next, participants received the following set of instructions: “First, please take a moment to reflect on the article that you just read”. Media articles often try to present balanced views of the topic. Sometimes, however, they can contain biased information or views. Please describe whether there was (or was not) any biased information or views in the media article you just read. “Two coders determined if participants’ answers noted bias (1) or not (0), reliability $\kappa = 1.00$.”

Results

Two participants were excluded prior to analyses for questioning the authenticity of the article. As predicted, detection of bias differed by condition, $\chi^2 = 4.43, p = .036$. When asked to deliberate on bias in the article, those who were exposed to a positive stereotype of African Americans were less likely to report bias (44.4%) than those who were exposed to a negative stereotype (73.9%).

Study 2

The findings observed in Study 1 are consistent with the notion that positive stereotypes – and the Black athletic stereotype in particular – may be uniquely positioned to evade the skepticism or vigilance that negative stereotypes receive, but this study is not without limitations. First, our dependent measure involved asking participants to explicitly reflect on whether they thought the article included bias. It is conceivable that this explicit request triggered an asymmetry in vigilance that would not have surfaced in its absence. This also applies to previous related studies (Mae & Carlston, 2005). Second, although the dependent measure employed likely captured explicit judgments that the information may be biased, it cannot tell us whether people are emotionally threatened or troubled by this. To resolve both of these issues, in Study 2 we do not ask participants to reflect on the article after they

read it but instead we measured the extent to which they were experiencing a range of emotions. To the extent the negative stereotype information sets off “alarms” that are not triggered by positive stereotypes, we should see more intense aversive emotions amongst those participants exposed to the Black and unintelligent stereotype information. Third, Study 1 did not include a neutral, baseline condition. Study 2 adds this third condition to the design.

Method

Forty eight undergraduates (68.8% women; $M = 20.2$ years of age) participated in exchange for course credit. The manipulations were identical to those employed in Study 1 with the exception of the addition of a neutral condition. In this condition, participants read a media article titled “Science confirms details of the underwater world.” This article simply highlighted research on the exploration of seabed resources. Afterwards, participants completed a 20-item measure of Positive and Negative Affect (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), which required participants to indicate how much they felt each emotion at that moment (1 = not at all, 9 = extremely). The subscale reliabilities for positive and negative affect were good ($\alpha = .90$ and $.91$, respectively).

Results and discussion

A one-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) revealed no between condition effect of exposure to stereotype content on overall positive affect, $F(2, 45) = 1.80, p = .178$. However, as predicted, overall negative affect differed significantly between conditions, $F(2, 45) = 4.27, p = .020$. Contrast analyses revealed that the Black and unintelligent condition led to more negative affect ($M = 3.18, SD = 1.44$) compared to the Black and athletic ($M = 2.04, SD = 1.14$) and neutral ($M = 2.14, SD = 1.12$) stereotype conditions, $F(1, 32) = 6.46, p = .016$; $F(1, 30) = 4.90, p = .035$, respectively, which did not differ from one another, $F(1, 28) = 0.06, p = .800$.

Thus exposure to information that depicts African Americans as stereotypically inferior led to more negative emotions compared to both exposure to information that portrays them as stereotypically superior and exposure to a race-neutral passage. Exposure to the Black athletic stereotype did not appear to produce any notable increase in emotions, an observation that nicely supports our hypothesis that, compared to negative stereotypes, positive stereotypes may be especially adept at “flying under the radar.”

We now turn our attention to the more provocative of our hypotheses: namely, that while positive stereotypes (and the Black athletic stereotype, in particular) may be the least likely to arouse skepticism or engender emotional reactions, they may also be the most likely to foster harmful, essentialist beliefs (Study 3) and increase the likelihood of the application of negative stereotypes (Study 4).

Study 3

Will exposure to the same positive stereotype used in Studies 1 and 2 – given its relative immunity to skeptical reactions – be more likely than negative stereotypes (and neutral information) to affect people's general beliefs about African Americans, even in domains unrelated to the specific stereotype? To the extent this might happen, one likely route is via the facilitation of essentialist beliefs – beliefs that African Americans are biologically distinct. These types of beliefs stand to be strengthened by claims of group differences that remain relatively unchallenged or uninhibited. Given that (at least some) positive stereotypes do not receive the scrutiny, vigilance, or call to action that negative stereotypes do, they may be uniquely positioned to strengthen these types of beliefs.

In Study 3, we test this hypothesis. To do so, we employ the identical manipulations used in Study 2. Afterwards, as part of an ostensibly unrelated study, we measure the extent to which participants believe

differences between African and White Americans (as well as a set of other social groups) are attributable to “nature,” that is, biology.¹

Method

One hundred and fifty four undergraduates (56.8% women, 13.5% undisclosed; $M = 21.6$ years of age; 12 participants excluded for suspicion: Positive condition = 3, Neutral condition = 1, Negative condition = 8)² participated for either course credit or \$5. Participants were informed that they would complete two unrelated surveys. First, participants were randomly assigned to the same three conditions as Study 2. Next, participants were asked to provide their opinions on group differences to help create materials for future research. Participants rated each (supposedly randomly selected out of 200 possibilities) pair of groups on whether any differences between the groups could be explained by nature (e.g., natural, biological differences). Specifically, participants were told that:

Although some groups of people are very similar to other groups of people, many groups of people are very different from other groups of people. These group differences may be explainable by nature and/or by nurture. By nature we mean natural, biological differences where people are predisposed to develop in a certain way. By nurture we mean learned, socialized differences where the environment in which one lives influences how people develop in a certain way. People tend to vary in how much they view group differences to be due to nature and/or nurture. Please rate how much any differences between the following groups may be explained by nature.

The scale anchors were “1 = not at all explained by nature” and “9 = mostly explained by nature.” All participants were actually provided with the same set of pairs to compare. Embedded in this was the pairing of Blacks and Whites. We also included four other common social group pairs (men and women, Protestants and Catholics, liberals and conservatives, married people and singles) to serve as a comparison category ($\alpha = .66$). The remaining groups were filler pairings (e.g., scientists and novelists, politicians and CEOs) to help mask our interest in the Black–White pair.

Results

Our main analyses consisted of a 3 (stereotype exposure condition: positive, negative, neutral) \times 2 (Black–White vs. Other Social Groups) ANOVA for nature scores, with repeated measures on the last variable. Results revealed a within-subject main effect of group evaluation, $F(1, 139) = 40.77, p < .001$. Importantly, the predicted interaction attained significance, $F(2, 139) = 4.11, p = .018$ (see Fig. 1). To decompose this interaction, we conducted a one-way ANOVA on Black–White nature scores, and separately, on the composite of the other social group nature scores. For Black–White differences, there was a main effect of condition, $F(2, 139) = 3.26, p = .04$. Contrast tests revealed that, indeed, the positive stereotype condition led to higher estimates of natural differences between Blacks and Whites ($M = 6.04, SD = 2.07$), than the negative stereotype condition ($M = 4.88, SD = 2.24$), $F(1, 84) = 6.31, p = .014$, and the neutral condition ($M = 5.05, SD = 2.60$), $F(1, 99) = 4.34, p = .040$. Importantly, the negative and neutral conditions did not

¹ To ensure that any observed effects could not be due to baseline differences in the extent to which people associate athletic ability versus intelligence with genetics we conducted a pilot test to examine lay beliefs about how much athleticism and intelligence (embedded along with 15 other traits) are influenced by biological factors. Participants were asked to rate each trait using the following scale: 1 = mostly genetically determined, 9 = mostly socially determined. Importantly, results revealed no significant differences between beliefs about the genetic basis of athleticism and intelligence, $F(1, 16) = .28, p = .603$.

² Results of all studies remain significant when suspicious participants are included.

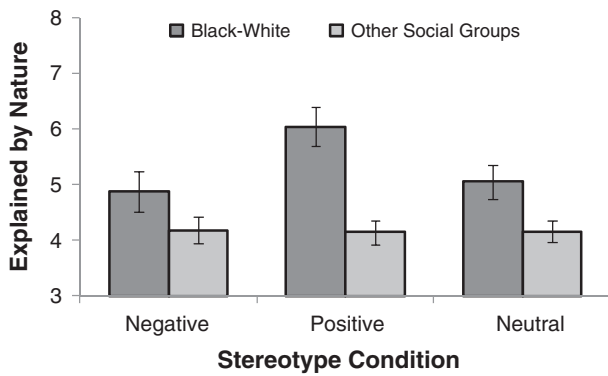


Fig. 1. Mean endorsement of nature explanation for Black–White pair and other social groups following stereotype content manipulation, Study 3. Error bars indicate standard errors.

differ, $F < 1$, *ns*. For the composite of the other social group comparisons, there was no significant difference between conditions, $F < 1$, *ns*.

Discussion

Thus, not only is exposure to a common positive stereotype about African Americans (i.e., Black people are superior athletes) less likely to trigger skepticism and emotional arousal than exposure to a common negative stereotype (i.e., Black people are inferior intellectually), but exposure to this very same positive stereotype may also be more likely to strengthen the belief that general differences between African Americans and Whites are due to biological factors – a belief that has been implicated as causally related to a number of behaviors and judgments that are socially problematic. The facts that (i) the exposure conditions did not exert similar effects on judgments of the comparison social pairs, and (ii) the emotion data in Study 2 showed no difference in emotion between the baseline and positive stereotype exposure conditions, suggest this effect (as well as the one to be presented in Study 4) is not attributable to a simple mood-based mechanism. In addition, because these findings are provocative, we conducted a direct replication of this study, but with a pre-measure of essentialist beliefs ahead of the experimental session, so as to ensure this effect was not due to a random assignment failure. The pattern of data from Study 3 replicated, regardless of whether or not pre-measured essentialism scores were included as a covariate.³

Study 4

In Study 4 we switch our emphasis to a different, and even more counter-intuitive consequence of exposure to positive stereotypes about African Americans: the increased application of *negative* stereotypes

³ For the replication, ninety eight undergraduates (50.0% women, 3.1% undisclosed; $M = 19.5$ years of age; 13 participants were removed for suspicion: Positive = 4, Neutral = 4, Negative = 5²) participated for course credit. Participants followed the identical procedure as Study 3, except they completed a single question regarding their pre-existing beliefs about Black and White group differences in a testing session several weeks prior to study registration. The question asked “How much are any differences between Blacks and Whites explained by nature or nurture?” (1 = *mostly explained by nature*, 9 = *mostly explained by nurture*). A 3 (Stereotype condition) \times 2 (Black-White rating versus Other Social Groups ratings) ANCOVA, for differences in nature scores, with repeated measures on the last variable and controlling for pre-existing beliefs of Black–White differences yielded a within-condition effect of group evaluation, $F(1, 77) = 55.06$, $p < .001$, and also the predicted interaction, $F(2, 77) = 3.36$, $p = .040$. When decomposed, once again we observed a between condition effect for Black–White nature scores, $F(2, 77) = 3.19$, $p = .047$, such that those in the positive stereotype condition endorsed higher nature scores for differences between Blacks and Whites ($M = 6.97$, $SE = 0.40$) compared to the negative stereotype condition ($M = 5.77$, $SE = 0.41$), $F(1, 50) = 4.94$, $p = .031$, and compared to the neutral condition ($M = 5.67$, $SE = 0.40$), $F(1, 52) = 5.44$, $p = .024$. Again, there were no significant differences between the negative stereotype and neutral conditions for nature scores, $F < 1$, *ns*.

when judging African American targets. Specifically, we examine whether exposure to positive, compared to negative, stereotypes (and baseline conditions) would make it more likely that participants would view African American targets as criminal in a subsequent, and seemingly unrelated, social perception task. If positive stereotypes are less likely than negative stereotypes to be denied or inhibited by a perceiver, then they should be more likely to lead to the subsequent spreading activation of other stereotypes about the target group, whether positive or negative (Higgins, 1996; Neely, 1976). Because criminality is often a physical act, and the Black athletic positive stereotype is physical, we opted to switch the content of the negative stereotype exposure condition to something also somewhat physical. Thus, rather than exposing participants to information about Black–White differences in intelligence for the negative stereotype condition, we exposed them to information about Black–White differences in violence, a more physical trait than intelligence. Doing so also offers us the opportunity to stretch the counter-intuitivity of our predictions, insofar as we are now predicting that exposure to the Black athletic stereotype will lead to more application of the Black criminal stereotype than not only baseline conditions but also exposure to the Black violent stereotype (a stereotype with clear connections to criminality).

Method

One hundred and seven US citizens (62.6% women; $M = 45.0$ years of age) participated for entry into draws for money. Participants were exposed to the same manipulations used in previous studies with one exception: instead of a media article on intelligence, participants in the negative stereotype condition read a very similarly worded article describing African Americans as being more violent and aggressive than White Americans (e.g., Black participants were more likely to be in the top 25% of violent offenders). Afterwards, to help reduce suspicion, participants completed a filler task.

Next, participants were asked to rate strengths and weaknesses of ten male profiles that ostensibly needed pretesting for future studies. To minimize the likelihood that participants would connect the manipulation and dependent measure, we embedded the target race manipulation within the target profiles. Each target person’s profile included their name, age, and scores on three personality tests (Perceptual Style, Neuroticism, Conformity Orientation). The 10 names included two stereotypically Black names. The remaining profile information (e.g., age, personality scores) varied, but the average of these scores did not vary between ethnic conditions. After each profile, participants indicated how likely it is that the person would perform an act of kindness, cheat, be involved in a crime, and volunteer at a charity (1 = *very unlikely*, 9 = *very likely*). The crime and cheat items were combined to assess negative stereotype endorsement (Whites: $\alpha = .89$; Blacks: $\alpha = .80$), whereas the kindness and volunteer items were used to assess positive trait endorsement (Whites: $\alpha = .79$; Blacks: $\alpha = .70$).

Results and discussion

Prior to analyses, twelve participants, across conditions, were removed for suspicion.² We conducted a 3 (Stereotype condition) \times 2 (Target: Black vs. White) ANOVA, for application of the negative stereotype with repeated measures on the last variable. There was a within condition effect of ethnicity, $F(1, 92) = 3.97$, $p = .049$, and also the predicted interaction, $F(2, 92) = 3.32$, $p = .041$ (see Fig. 2). Separate ANOVAs for Black and White targets revealed only a between condition effect for the Black target profiles, $F(2, 92) = 4.31$, $p = .016$. Contrasts revealed that exposure to the positive stereotype led to higher beliefs in the likelihood of the Black targets being cheaters and criminals ($M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.228$) compared to exposure to the negative stereotype ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 1.12$), $F(1, 57) = 6.43$, $p = .014$, and the neutral condition ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.225$), $F(1, 59) = 6.96$, $p = .011$. The negative stereotype and neutral conditions did not significantly differ, $F < 1$,

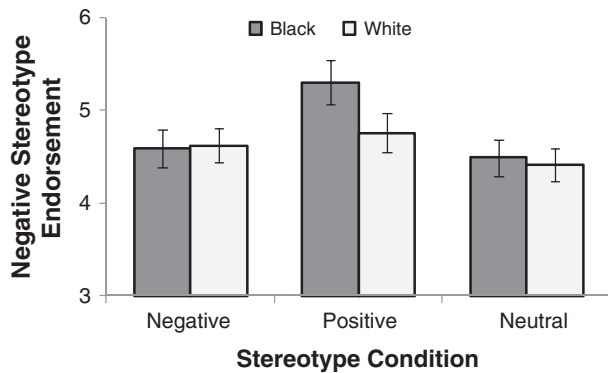


Fig. 2. Mean negative stereotype endorsement of Black and White profiles following stereotype content manipulation, Study 4. Error bars indicate standard errors.

ns. For the White targets, ratings of these traits did not differ as a function of the positive ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.08$), negative ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.17$), or neutral exposure conditions ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .88$), $F < 1$, ns. Finally, within condition contrasts revealed that endorsement of the negative stereotypical traits were higher for the Black profiles compared to the White profiles in the positive stereotype exposure condition, $F(1, 24) = 11.54$, $p = .002$, but not in the negative stereotype or neutral conditions (both $F_s < 1$, ns).⁴

Not only, therefore, can positive stereotypes about African Americans better evade skepticism and arousal and more substantially heighten beliefs in the biological basis of Black–White differences in behavior, but they may also increase the likelihood that people apply negatively-valenced stereotypes to African American targets. That negative stereotyping was heightened in the positive stereotype condition relative to not only the negative stereotype but also baseline conditions suggests these effects are not merely due to people preventing the negative stereotype from affecting subsequent judgments, but also the ability of the positive stereotype to facilitate negative stereotyping.

General discussion

Across four studies, we have sought to demonstrate that far from the innocuous, humorous, and harmless bit of cultural knowledge they are often treated as, positive stereotypes may represent a clandestine means of proliferating antiquated and prejudicial social beliefs. They are less likely to produce skepticism about their veracity (Study 1) and less likely to engender negative emotions (Study 2), while also more likely to increase beliefs in a biological underpinning to Black–White differences in behavior (Studies 3) and more likely to facilitate the application of negative stereotypes to African American targets (Study 4). When we consider the extent to which positive stereotypes are often seamlessly integrated into public discourse, the implications of these findings seem significant indeed. Previous research has noted the prevalence and antecedents of positive stereotypes (Fiske et al., 2002) and their potential to negatively impact members of the positively stereotyped group and to justify inequality. The present research adds to this by demonstrating the extent to which these types of stereotypes may be uniquely capable at reinforcing cultural stereotypes and beliefs that people explicitly eschew as racist and harmful – even more so than exposure to explicitly negative stereotypes.

Before concluding, we would like to note some potentially fruitful avenues for future research. First, we focused only on the Black and athletic stereotype. Given its prevalence, the fact that this stereotype can cause the effects observed above is, we believe, noteworthy in its own right. Nonetheless, future research that broadens this investigation to a wider net of positive stereotypes is needed to test the generality of the effects seen in Studies 2 and 3. Second, our manipulations of positive and negative stereotypes – because they were couched as data drawn from *Science* and *Nature* – may have suggested an essential or biological aspect to the group differences they discussed. Future research should assess whether the observed asymmetries in vigilance, skepticism, essentialism, and negative stereotyping would still occur if the articles excluded any suggestion of essential differences. Finally, admittedly our studies focus more on demonstrating phenomena than on demonstrating the presumed mechanisms that underlie them. Although we do theorize about mechanism in the Introduction, our empirical emphasis here – in this very first investigation – was on demonstrating that these predicted asymmetries do exist; that is, that positive stereotypes can be both less likely to trigger skepticism and arousal while, at the same time, more likely to produce antiquated and damaging social beliefs. Tests of mechanism, however, are important and should be conducted in future research.

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⁴ A 3 (Stereotype condition) × 2 (Profile Ethnicity: Black vs. White) mixed-model ANOVA was also conducted for the positive traits. There was only an effect of ethnicity, $F(1, 92) = 6.08$, $p = .02$, such that means were higher for White profiles ($M = 5.52$, $SD = .81$) than Black profiles ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.07$).