

When is a compliment not a compliment? Evaluating expressions of positive stereotypes ☆

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Abstract

Unlike negative stereotypes, positive stereotypes are often perceived as admirable qualities, and expressions of such beliefs may be intended as compliments toward group members. Two experiments were conducted to examine how the targets of positive stereotypes evaluate others who express such stereotypic “compliments.” In Study 1, Black participants evaluated a White student who praised the athletic ability of African Americans more negatively than a control condition. In Study 2, Black and White participants watched an interracial interaction that involved the White actor expressing positive stereotypes or a control interaction with no stereotypes. In the positive stereotype condition, Black participants evaluated the White actor and the interaction as a whole more negatively than did White participants, but there were no differences in the control condition. The implications for the perpetuation of interracial distrust and avoidance are discussed.

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In January 1988, Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder was fired from his job as a football commentator on CBS after making several controversial comments regarding African American athletes. During a television interview Snyder remarked, “The Black is the better athlete, and he practices to be the better athlete, and he’s bred to be the better athlete because this goes way back to the slave period. The slave owner would breed this big Black with this big Black woman so he could have a big Black kid. That’s where it all started” (Uhlir, 1988, p. 47). Although he subsequently apologized for his comments, Snyder was reportedly sur-

prised by the tremendous public outcry that ensued, and his brother attempted to defend him by claiming that he was actually praising Blacks. Few people today would speak so candidly during a television interview, but many people share similar sentiments about the athletic ability of African Americans and may likewise feel that such positive beliefs are indeed a form of praise (Czopp & Monteith, 2006). How are African Americans likely to respond to such expressions of positive stereotypes? The general goal of this research is to examine African Americans’ perceptions of Whites who make such stereotypic “compliments.”

Positive stereotypes

When asked to consider issues related to stereotyping and prejudice, most people are likely to focus on the negative aspects of these processes, and the majority of social psychological research reflects such emphasis on hostile beliefs and attitudes towards social groups (Fiske, 1998; Jones, 1997). However, perceptions of outgroups are not uniformly negative and often include evaluatively favorable

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components as well. For example, people often have strong positive feelings toward women, who are perceived as kind, sensitive, and nurturing (Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu, 1997; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000). Asians have been labeled the “model minority” because of their perceived academic competence and prominent socioeconomic achievements (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Jackson et al., 1996; Jackson, Lewandowski, Ingam, & Hodge, 1997; Lin, Kwan, Cheung, & Fiske, 2005). African Americans are considered to possess superior athletic prowess and a natural sense of rhythmic and musical ability (Czopp & Monteith, 2006; Devine & Elliot, 1995; Madon et al., 2001). These stereotypes can be considered positive in the sense that they are evaluatively favorable and seem to confer some sort of “advantage” to members of these groups over non-members. However, as stereotypes, they are inherently restrictive because they are based solely on group membership rather than any individuating information. Furthermore, these positive stereotypes often maintain a complementary relation with more negative stereotypes so as to ensure that members of target groups can always be denigrated (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). For example, women are perceived as warm but weak, Asians as competent but cold, and Blacks as athletic but unintelligent. Furthermore, research by Jost and Kay (Jost & Kay, 2005; Kay & Jost, 2003) suggests that these complementary beliefs may serve to justify and perpetuate existing intergroup differences in status and power.

Therefore, although positive stereotypes are subjectively favorable and may seem to offer praise and admiration for targets, they are not necessarily beneficial or constructive for improving intergroup relations. Indeed, public endorsements and expressions of positive stereotypes may not be accepted or welcomed by the targets of such beliefs, who for several reasons may respond negatively. First, from a self-verification perspective (Swann, 1987), targets may prefer to be perceived accurately by others and may object to others’ inaccurate perceptions of them, even if such misperceptions are quite favorable. That is, if perceivers positively stereotype target group members (e.g., assume all Blacks are athletic), to the extent that targets do not perceive themselves as athletic (and are fairly certain in this self-conceptualization), they are likely to engage in active attempts to refute the misperception and provide more self-confirming information (Hilton & Darley, 1985; Swann & Ely, 1984). Targets may resent having been forced to disconfirm perceivers’ inaccurate categorization of them (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Second, targets may be more sensitive to interpersonal cues that are potentially related to prejudice (Flournoy, Prentice-Dunn, & Klinger, 2002). For example, Johnson, Simmons, Trawalter, and Ferguson (2003) found that Blacks were more likely than Whites to attribute ambiguously racist behavior to the actors’ prejudiced attitudes. Similarly, target group members may hold general expectations that most interactions with majority group members are likely to include prejudice (Johnson & Lecci, 2003). As a result, targets may be suspicious of prejudice even if the majority group members’

behavior toward them appears to be favorable or prosocial. Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, and Major (1991) found that Black students who believed they had been evaluated by a White student who was aware of their race interpreted positive feedback as prejudice on the part of the White student.

Thus, despite the complimentary nature of many positive stereotypes, targets may find them unacceptable and react negatively to expressions of such beliefs. Interestingly, majority group perceivers may not share targets’ recognition of the inappropriateness of positive stereotypes because they tend to evaluate individuals who confirm such stereotypes quite favorably. Glick et al. (1997) found that men positively evaluated females who exemplified stereotypes of women as warm and nurturing (e.g., housewives, mothers). Similarly, Czopp and Monteith (2006) demonstrated that White participants favorably evaluated and felt positive emotions toward the African American stereotype subgroups of athletes and musicians. These favorable associations may lead majority group members to assume that a group’s stereotypic “strengths” are admirable and praiseworthy.

Additional research suggests that, compared to negative stereotypes, people are less likely to perceive positive stereotypes as inappropriate and consequently do not correct for their influence in social judgments (Lambert, Khan, Licke, & Fricke, 1997). For example, Devine and Elliot (1995) demonstrated that, unlike more negatively-valenced stereotypes of African Americans, participants did not differ in their endorsement of positive stereotypes as a function of their prejudiced attitudes. That is, although only high-prejudice participants believed that negative stereotypes actually apply to Blacks, almost all participants regardless of their prejudiced attitudes rated positive stereotypes as accurate depictions of Blacks. Moreover, people often fail to perceive the inappropriateness of positive stereotypes when evaluating others’ expressions of stereotypes. Mae and Carlston (2005) found that White participants rated speakers who endorsed positive stereotypes of various social groups as less prejudiced and more likable (and similar to control conditions) compared to speakers who endorsed negative stereotypes.

Taken together, the above research suggests a discrepancy in how targets and perceivers understand and appreciate positive stereotypes. On the one hand, majority group perceivers may feel that such favorable beliefs are indeed complimentary because they reflect genuine praise for another group’s “strengths.” On the other hand, however, targets may recognize the inherent restrictiveness of such stereotypes and may feel they are being “pigeon-holed” based exclusively on their group membership.

Overview and hypotheses

Across two experiments, African American participants report their evaluations of Whites who express positive racial stereotypes. In Study 1, Black participants watched a video of a White student ostensibly interviewing for a

position on a diversity committee. For half the participants, the interview included stereotypic compliments about Blacks; for the other half, these comments were omitted. Participants were expected to rate the applicant as more prejudiced and less qualified when she positively stereotyped Blacks compared to the control condition. In Study 2, Black and White participants watched a video depicting a casual interracial interaction. In one condition the White actor praised Blacks in stereotypic domains, and in the control condition there was no mention of stereotypes. All participants evaluated the actors' friendliness and prejudice level as well as the constructiveness of the interaction for improving race relations. Relative to the control condition, Black participants were expected to rate the White actor who expressed stereotypic compliments more negatively and the interaction more harmful to race relations than White participants.

Study 1

Method

Participants

Sixty-six self-identified African Americans (28 men, 38 women; mean age = 25.2 years) participated in the research as partial fulfillment of course credit, for course extra credit, or in exchange for \$15. All participants provided their informed consent before participating and were thoroughly debriefed at the conclusion of the study.

Procedure

Participants completed the study individually using MediaLab software (Jarvis, 2004). When they arrived to the experiment location, an experimenter escorted them to a lab room with a computer, and began the computer program.¹ Participants first read instructions that explained they would watch several video clips purportedly taken from a recent round of interviews to fill a student position on a university task force for diversity. Afterwards, they would rate the student on various dimensions.

Interview videos. The candidate for the task force was a White female college student. Participants watched three separate video segments that included the candidate's responses to three separate questions. The candidate's responses to the first and third questions were identical for all participants and included comments that would suggest she should be evaluated rather favorably. For example, in response to the question, "What are your thoughts on the issue of campus diversity?" the candidate replied, "Ever since I've been here I've had the chance to meet a lot of different people from a lot of different backgrounds. I think students really need to take advantage of the diversity

available to them among their fellow students." The second video segment contained the positive stereotype manipulation. In both conditions, the candidate concluded her response by stating, "It's really important to emphasize the different positive contributions of minority groups that enrich campus life for everyone." In the control condition, the video ended immediately after this sentence. In the positive stereotype condition, the candidate continued, "For example, I think it's great that so many of the Black students are involved in sports. Black people are just so athletic and it's a good example of trying to succeed by using their natural talents."

Candidate evaluations. After watching all three video segments, participants evaluated the candidate on various personal and professional dimensions. First, participants rated the candidate on 8 personality characteristics. Subsequent factor analysis indicated two factors that accounted for 66% of response variance. The first factor (eigenvalue = 3.89) included the items *prejudiced*, *biased*, *naïve*, and *arrogant*, and a composite score was computed to form an index of candidate bias ($\alpha = .84$). The second factor (eigenvalue = 1.39) included the items *friendly*, *warm*, *open-minded*, and *intelligent*; similarly, a composite score was computed to form an index of candidate likability ($\alpha = .77$). Finally, participants responded to six questions regarding their impression of the candidate's ability to serve on a diversity task force (e.g., "This person is qualified for this position because she has a good outlook on race relations"). Participants' responses were averaged to form a qualification index ($\alpha = .86$, after reverse-scoring three items). For each evaluation measure, responses were made using a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*). Finally, participants were given an open-ended opportunity to type any additional comments about why they felt this candidate should or should not be given the position.

Results and discussion

The three evaluation factors (i.e., candidate likability, bias, qualification) were analyzed in a 2 (condition: positive stereotype or control) \times 2 (participant gender) Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). At the multivariate level, neither the main effect of participant gender, $F(3, 60) = 1.20$, $p = .32$, nor the gender by condition interaction $F(3, 60) = 0.07$, $p = .98$ was significant. In contrast, the effect of condition was significant, $F(3, 60) = 5.48$, $p = .002$, Wilks' $\lambda = .79$. Condition means for ratings of the candidate's likability, bias, and qualifications are provided in Table 1. At the univariate level, there was a significant main effect of condition on evaluations of the candidate's likability, $F(1, 62) = 4.22$, $p = .044$, $d = 0.52$. Participants rated the candidate as significantly less likable in the positive stereotype condition than in the control condition. Participants also rated the positive stereotyping candidate as more biased than the control candidate, $F(1, 62) = 16.69$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.04$. Finally, there was a significant main effect of con-

¹ Several individuals of various racial background served as experimenters: one White female, one Asian male, one Asian female, and one Black female. There were no theoretically meaningful differences in participants' responses as a function of experimenter.

Table 1
Study 1: Condition means for black participants' ratings of white candidate

	Control condition <i>n</i> = 33	Positive stereotype condition <i>n</i> = 33
Likability	5.61	5.10
Bias	2.79	4.23
Qualification	4.58	3.56

Note. All means in the same row differ at $p < .05$.

dition on evaluations of the candidate's qualifications, $F(1,62) = 7.34$, $p = .009$, $d = 0.69$ such that participants rated the candidate as significantly less qualified in the positive stereotype condition than in the control condition.

Participants' open-ended evaluations were coded by two independent raters who were blind to the study's hypotheses and participant condition. Two participants failed to provide any comments. The raters scored the comments on an 11-point scale from -5 (*Very negative, definitely should not receive the position*) to $+5$ (*Very positive, definitely should receive the position*) with zero corresponding to a neutral evaluation. Agreement between the coders was high ($r = .92$), and ratings were averaged to form a composite score of participants' comments. Consistent with the previously reported findings, participants evaluated the candidate significantly less favorably when she expressed positive stereotypes ($M = -0.65$, $SD = 3.41$) than when she did not ($M = 1.19$, $SD = 3.43$), $F(1,62) = 4.65$, $p = .035$, $d = 0.55$. Indeed, participants perceived the White student quite differently in the two conditions. One participant in the control condition wrote: "The reason why I think she should be given the position is that she seem to be a very friendly person, open minded and it looks like we share the same beliefs on diversity." In contrast, one participant in the positive stereotype condition commented: "She has no experience with diversity so she truly does not know about anybody but white people. Seeing black people on campus and acknowledging that they are athletic does not imply that she knows anything socially meaningful about being black or diversity."

The findings from Study 1 support the general hypothesis that African Americans would react negatively to Whites who express positive stereotypes, regardless of the benevolence of their intentions. When the White candidate praised Blacks for their athleticism, participants rated her as less likable, more biased, and less qualified to serve on a diversity committee than when the candidate did not make such comments. Study 2 was conducted to replicate these findings and examine several additional issues. First, in Study 1, participants may have rated the White stereotyping candidate more negatively because making stereotypic comments in the evaluative context of a job interview could be perceived as a deficiency in self-awareness (and thus indicative of incompetence). To examine expressions of positive stereotypes in a more casual interpersonal setting, participants in Study 2 watched and evaluated a conversation between a Black and a White actor. Second, to com-

pare Blacks' and Whites' perceptions of expressions of positive stereotypes, Study 2 included both Black and White participants. Finally, in addition to evaluating the actors, participants rated the interaction as a whole in terms of its constructiveness for improving race relations.

Study 2

Method

Participants

Ninety White (74 women, 16 men) and 51 Black (35 women, 16 men) introductory psychology students participated in exchange for course credit or \$15.

Procedure

Participants completed the experiment individually over the computer using MediaLab software (Jarvis, 2004). After obtaining informed consent, participants were given general instructions and the computer program was started. At the completion of the study, participants were issued course credit (or paid \$15) and debriefed.

Interaction videos. Participants watched two videotaped interactions that portrayed conversations between two people who were meeting for the first time. The first video was a filler interaction between a White male and White female student intended to mask the true purpose of the study. The second and critical interaction involved a conversation between a White male and a Black male in which the actors discussed various issues of interest (i.e., school work, sports, career goals). In the control interaction condition there was no mention of race or the applicability of racial stereotypes within these conversation topics. In the positive stereotype condition, at the end of the conversation and while discussing sports, the White actor commented on his admiration for the talent and success of Black athletes, "One thing I noticed about Black people is that you all are just unbelievable natural athletes. I'm glad we've got so many on our sports teams!" The interaction ended immediately after the White actor's comments and did not show the Black actor's reaction.

Evaluations. After viewing the interaction, participants completed several questionnaires designed to evaluate both the Black and White actors and the overall interaction. The order in which participants evaluated the Black and White actor was randomly determined. Participants rated the extent to which 10 trait adjectives accurately described the actor.² Five of these items (*prejudiced, racist, bigoted, biased, offensive*) were combined to form a *prejudice* index for each actor (White actor $\alpha = .93$, Black actor $\alpha = .94$), and

² Similar to Study 1, factor analyses were conducted for participants' separate evaluations of the White actor and Black actor. Both analyses yielded two factors that accounted for 77% (White actor) and 80% (Black actor) of variance: White prejudice (eigenvalue = 5.62) and White likability (eigenvalue = 2.08), Black prejudice (eigenvalue = 1.44) and Black likability (eigenvalue = 6.53).

five of the items (*friendly, pleasant, likable, nice, sociable*) were combined to form a *likability* index for each actor (White actor $\alpha = .93$, Black actor $\alpha = .94$). Participants then responded to 10 questions regarding the extent to which they felt (based on their personal attitudes and beliefs) that the overall interaction was constructive in promoting harmonious race relations (e.g., “This interaction was helpful in reducing intergroup hostility,” “Interactions like this are unlikely to bring Blacks and Whites closer together”). Responses were combined to form an *interaction evaluation* index ($\alpha = .94$) with higher scores corresponding to more favorable evaluations of the interaction. Lastly, participants responded to three questions evaluating how realistic the scenario was (e.g., “How realistic was this interaction?” “Although this involved actors, I could imagine an interaction like this taking place in the real world”) using a 1 (*Not very real/Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Very real/Strongly agree*) scale. Responses to these three items were averaged to form a *realism* index ($\alpha = .80$).

Results and discussion

To examine the potential interactive effects of condition, participant race and actor race on participants’ evaluations, two difference scores were computed by subtracting ratings of the Black actor’s prejudice and likability from ratings of the White actor’s prejudice and likability, respectively. These two difference scores were analyzed in a 2 (interaction condition: positive stereotype or control) \times 2 (participant race: Black or White) MANOVA. This analysis yielded significant main effects of condition, $F(2, 136) = 28.20$, $p < .001$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .71$, and race, $F(2, 136) = 4.96$, $p = .008$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .93$, that were qualified by their interaction, $F(2, 136) = 4.23$, $p = .016$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .94$.³ To examine this interaction further, participants’ evaluations of the Black and White actors were separately analyzed in 2 (interaction condition: positive stereotype or control) \times 2 (participant race: Black or White) MANOVAs with ratings of the actor’s prejudice level and likability as the dependent variables. Due to the small number of men in the sample (cell n s = 6–8), participant gender was not included in analyses.

White actor evaluations

The MANOVA for evaluations of the White actor yielded significant main effects for experimental condition, $F(2, 136) = 47.61$, $p < .001$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .59$, and participant race, $F(2, 136) = 4.56$, $p = .011$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .94$. These effects were qualified by the condition by race interaction, $F(2, 136) = 6.37$, $p = .002$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .91$. Univariate tests

indicated that the condition by race interaction was significant for evaluations of the White actor’s prejudice level, $F(1, 137) = 9.86$, $p = .002$, and likability, $F(1, 137) = 7.38$, $p = .007$. The mean values for the prejudice and likability variables as a function of participant race and interaction condition are provided in Table 2. Simple effects tests among participants in the control interaction condition yielded no significant effects of participant race. In contrast, among participants in the positive stereotype condition the simple effects tests of participant race were significant for evaluations of the White actor’s prejudice level, $F(1, 137) = 9.12$, $p = .003$, $d = .76$, and likability, $F(1, 137) = 16.47$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.03$. Consistent with hypotheses, Black participants rated the White actor who expressed positive stereotypes as more prejudiced and less likable than White participants. Additional analyses indicated that the effect of interaction condition among Black participants was significant for both measures, but the effect of interaction condition among White participants was significant only for the prejudice measure.

Black actor evaluations

The MANOVA for evaluations of the Black actor yielded no significant main effects for interaction condition or participant race, and the condition by race interaction was also nonsignificant, $F(2, 136) = 0.42$, $p = .65$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .99$. Thus, participants’ ratings of the Black actor were fairly uniform and did not reliably differ as a function of participant race or interaction condition.

Evaluation of the interracial interaction

Interaction realism. The overall mean of the 7-point realism index was quite high ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.38$) suggesting that participants perceived the interaction as fairly representative of a potential interracial interaction. Importantly, there were no significant main effects associated with experimental condition or participant race, and the condition by race interaction was also nonsignificant, $F(1, 137) = 0.092$, $p = .76$, suggesting that Black and White participants rated the positive stereotype encounter equally realistic and comparable to the control condition.

Interaction constructiveness. Participants’ overall evaluation of the helpfulness of the interaction in promoting race relations was analyzed in a univariate ANOVA with participant race and interaction condition as the independent

Table 2
Study 2: Condition means for white target evaluations and interaction constructiveness as a function of participant race

	Control condition		Positive stereotype condition	
	White $n = 45$	Black $n = 26$	White $n = 45$	Black $n = 25$
Prejudice	1.90 _a	1.44 _a	3.44 _b	4.43 _c
Likability	5.78 _a	5.72 _a	5.54 _a	4.49 _b
Interaction constructiveness	5.89 _a	5.93 _a	4.66 _b	3.66 _c

Note. Means in the same row with different subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

³ These data were also analyzed at the univariate level with separate mixed-model 2 (between-participants: condition) \times 2 (between-participants: participant race) \times 2 (within-participants: actor race) ANOVAs. Consistent with the reported MANOVA using difference scores, the three-way interaction was significant for prejudice ratings, $F(1, 137) = 4.08$, $p = .045$, as well as likability ratings, $F(1, 137) = 7.93$, $p = .006$.

variables. This analysis yielded a strong main effect of interaction condition, $F(1,137)=68.37, p<.001, d=1.41$. As can be seen in Table 2, both Black and White participants reported that the positive racism interaction was less constructive than the control interaction. There was also a main effect of participant race that was qualified by the condition by race interaction, $F(1,137)=5.96, p=.016$. A simple contrast test showed no effect of participant race in the control interaction condition. However, among participants in the positive racism interaction condition, there was a significant effect of participant race, $F(1,137)=10.90, p=.001, d=0.84$. As hypothesized, in the positive stereotype condition, White participants rated the interaction as significantly more constructive than Black participants (see Table 2). Thus, although all participants perceived the interracial interaction involving positive stereotypes to be less helpful for race relations than the control interaction, Black participants felt it was even less constructive than White participants.

General discussion

Across two experiments, Black participants consistently evaluated a White actor who expressed positive stereotypes as more prejudiced and less likable than when no such comments were made. Furthermore, White participants rated expressions of positive stereotypes more favorably than did Black participants, including rating interracial interactions involving positive stereotypes as more productive for improving race relations than Blacks. Although White participants appeared to have some awareness of the negative effects of positive stereotypes, they seem to have underappreciated their impact on Blacks. Importantly, both Black and White participants rated the positive stereotype interaction in Study 2 as quite realistic in an absolute sense and relative to the control interaction suggesting that, at least among student populations, Whites' expressions of positive stereotypes are not uncommon. In the context of current research on the delicacy of interracial relationships, the current findings suggest yet another potential stumbling block.

Considerable research has shown that people are very concerned about how they self-present in interracial situations. For example, Whites are often anxious about appearing prejudiced during interactions with Blacks (Plant, 2004; Plant & Devine, 2003) and often hold "meta-stereotypes" that minority group members expect Whites to be prejudiced (Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). The burden of these interpersonal concerns may contribute to the deleterious effects of interracial interactions on executive cognitive functioning (Richeson & Trawalter, 2005). As a result of their diminished cognitive resources, Whites' ability for successful self-regulation may be compromised and prejudiced responding may increase. Taken together, these factors have the potential to create a paradoxical situation in which Whites' attempts to improve their relationships with Blacks may backfire and ultimately reinforce intergroup distrust and avoidance.

Shelton and Richeson (2005) have argued that the avoidance of intergroup contact between Blacks and Whites can at least partially be explained by pluralistic ignorance. They have demonstrated that members of both groups report a strong desire for increased contact with members of the outgroup but maintain inaccurate perceptions that the outgroup does not share the same desire for contact with them. Furthermore, Shelton and Richeson suggest that both Blacks and Whites attribute their own inaction for initiating contact to their fear of rejection, but attribute out group members' inaction to a lack of interest. Interactions involving expressions of stereotypic compliments may serve to reinforce concerns for members of both groups and may perpetuate avoidance of contact between Blacks and Whites. For example, imagine a White student who would like to enjoy greater contact with a more diverse group of people. Despite anxiety over potentially being rejected, she overcomes her concerns and approaches a Black classmate and initiates conversation. The Black student is also interested in increased contact with Whites, but in addition to her fear of rejection, she is concerned about potential prejudice from the White student (Johnson & Lecci, 2003). Because they both enjoy music, their conversation turns to their favorite musical artists, and in the course of their discussion, the White student makes a seemingly innocuous comment about the singing or dancing ability of African American artists. Based on the current findings, the Black student is likely to be turned off by such comments and may respond rather coolly before ending the conversation. From the White student's perspective, despite overcoming her fears for rejection her initial concerns have been reinforced: Black people do not want to hang out with White people. From the Black student's perspective, her concerns have been reinforced as well: White people are prejudiced against Black people.

How can such misunderstandings be avoided or corrected? One obvious way would be to increase awareness that expressions of positive stereotypes are unlikely to be received well by the groups they target. Additionally, those with strong internal motivation to respond without prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998) may use self-regulation strategies to replace their stereotypic response with a more egalitarian response (Monteith, Ashburn-Nardo, Voils, & Czopp, 2002). Those with more external motivation to respond without prejudice may avoid expressions of positive stereotypes to prevent any potential reprimands from others. However, even with such awareness and motivation, perceivers often fail to recognize when their behavior is influenced by their automatic stereotypic associations in intergroup interactions (Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; McConnell & Leibold, 2001). Finally, target group members can also play an active role in increasing others' awareness of the inappropriateness of positive stereotypes. Although directly confronting those who express stereotypes is likely to yield negative interpersonal reactions, such confrontations are often-

times effective in curbing prejudiced responses in the future (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006).

The negative interpersonal consequences of expressions of positive stereotypes may not be limited to racial groups, and future research should address the extent to which these effects generalize to different intergroup contexts (e.g., gender, sexual orientation). For example, men's attempts to compliment women based on stereotypic traits (e.g., nurturance, physical attractiveness) may be perceived by women as condescending, offensive and/or harassment. Furthermore, genuine performance-based compliments that are qualified by the target's group membership are likely to yield negative reactions. Garcia, Miller, Smith, and Mackie (2006) found that participants reacted to group-qualified compliments (e.g., "You did really well for a woman!") with heightened anger and evaluated the person making the compliment as prejudiced. Furthermore, although target group members may be likely to react negatively to any expressions that are category-based generalizations, the stereotypic comments in the current studies relied on one specific trait (e.g., athletic ability). Future research should also examine a greater variety of expressions of stereotypic compliments. In doing so potential mediators (e.g., targets' prejudiced attitudes, targets' need to be individuated) of the negative effects of positive stereotyping may be identified. Finally, the stereotypic expressions used in these studies may have been considered rather forthright (though both Black and White participants rated them as very realistic). To examine the comparative sensitivity of targets and non-targets to stereotypic praise, less outspoken expressions of a variety of stereotypic traits should be included.

Shelton (2000) recently called upon social psychology researchers to approach issues related to stereotyping and prejudice from the viewpoint of individuals targeted by prejudice and that focuses on the direct effects of prejudice on intergroup relations (see also Swim & Stangor, 1998). This research directly fills this niche by examining a potentially insidious aspect of intergroup processes; positive stereotypes may seem like compliments to some, but do not appear to be taken as such by those targeted by the stereotypes.

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