ASSIMILATION AND CONTRAST EFFECTS IN THE PRIMING OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STEREOTYPES THROUGH TV EXPOSURE

By Francis Dalisay and Alexis Tan

This study applied theoretical propositions of the assimilation and contrast perspectives of social psychology to investigate the effects of exposure to TV portrayals of Asian Americans on judgments regarding Asian and African Americans. Experimental participants exposed to TV-mediated messages reinforcing the Asian American "model minority" stereotype were more likely to positively evaluate Asian Americans and to negatively evaluate African Americans than participants exposed to messages countering the "model" stereotype or to a control stimulus. Exposure to the "model" reinforcement also led to disagreement with affirmative action.

Literature spanning more than four decades suggests that Asian Americans have been stereotyped as the "model minority." A Pew survey, for example, indicated that roughly 80% of the American public holds favorable perceptions of Asians. Two recent content analyses of advertisements appearing in popular American magazines also reveal that Asian Americans have been portrayed as skilled in technology, business-oriented, and hardworking. Yet little is known about how exposure to media portrayals of Asian Americans could influence stereotypes.

Although evidence from a vast number of empirical studies shows that the media are able to form and reinforce negative racial stereotypes, what also remains generally unexamined is the plausibility that the favorable images of some social groups, such as Asian Americans, could breed unfavorable judgments regarding other groups, such as African Americans. Hurh and Kim introduced this plausibility by stating, "[s]ince Asian-Americans' success may be considered by the dominant group as a proof of openness in the American opportunity structure, there is a constant danger that other less successful minorities could be regarded as 'inferior' and/or 'lazy.'" With the growing numbers of

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racial minorities living in the United States, it is reasonable to expect increased interaction between minority groups, which could result in greater intergroup competition for limited political and economic resources. Investigations are therefore warranted to determine how particular racial groups are perceived in comparison to other groups, whether some groups are perceived more "positively" than others, and, if so, whether the media have a role in influencing such perceptions.

The present study applies the theoretical propositions of the assimilation and contrast perspectives of social psychology to investigate the effects of exposure to TV-mediated portrayals of Asian Americans on subsequent judgments regarding Asian and African Americans.

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, drawing upon the assimilation perspective, this study seeks to confirm that exposure to information reinforcing the "model minority" stereotype leads to positive stereotyping of Asian Americans. An attempt at confirming this proposition is made in light of literature implying that the Asian American "model minority" stereotype could also elicit negative perceptions of Asians. Second, by drawing upon the contrast perspective, this study investigates whether exposure to differing media portrayals of Asian Americans leads to differing judgments regarding African Americans. This study thus attempts to reveal whether favorable stereotypes—specifically, those disseminated by visual and electronic media—could result in both positive and negative stereotyping of racial groups.

**Stereotypes and the Media.** The term "stereotype" was coined by Walter Lippmann to refer to the "pictures" individuals hold in their heads. Lippmann's definition served as the foundation for social psychologists' conceptualization of stereotypes as overgeneralized or oversimplified mental representations of social groups. According to Allport, these mental representations are formed through contact experiences. That is, positive contact experiences are assumed to promote positive stereotyping, while negative contact experiences result in negative stereotyping. Yet when opportunities for direct contact with racial group members are lacking, the media serve as important agents in the formation and reinforcement of racial stereotypes.

Both the cultivation and social cognitive theories suggest that as individuals are exposed to stereotypical portrayals of racial groups through the media, specifically through TV, individuals acquire stereotypes that are congruent to the ways the groups are portrayed. Media effects scholars within the past decade have extended this idea by drawing upon information processing models such as the associative network to propose that individuals' existing cognitions play important roles in influencing race-based judgments they make after exposure to TV-mediated messages. The associative network model posits that stereotypes are structured into networks consisting of interlinked nodes (assumed to represent the traits possessed by social groups) and that activation of any one of these nodes, through either automatic or conscious processing, results in activating other interlinked nodes.
It is assumed that when individuals are presented with incoming information, they will use the most easily retrievable or accessible information already contained in their cognitive networks to "make sense" of the incoming information. This suggests that the racial stereotypes most accessible to a person can be activated when the person is exposed to media messages containing racial cues.14

Research on priming has particularly shown that exposure to media messages containing racial cues can influence subsequent judgments regarding race-based issues. For example, Valentino found that when research participants were exposed to crime news with minority suspects, the participants negatively evaluated a political candidate's performance across race-based issues such as crime and welfare, but not across other issues, such as taxes.15

Assimilation and Contrast in Media Stereotyping. That individuals are able to acquire stereotypes of racial groups congruent to the ways the groups are portrayed by the media is a proposition that falls under the assimilation perspective of social psychology. Sherif and Hovland explicated the functions of assimilation in communication processes years ago.16 Bless, Schwarz, and Wanke explained that assimilation occurs "whenever the judgment reflects a positive relation between the implications of some piece of information and the judgment."17 In this case, assimilation explains that exposure to TV-mediated negative portrayals of racial groups leads to negative stereotyping, and exposure to positive portrayals leads to positive stereotyping.

There is widespread evidence for the existence of assimilation effects in the context of media stereotyping. Research programs drawing upon the cultivation perspective, in particular, can be classified as adhering to the assimilation perspective. A number of cultivation-related studies have established that exposure to negative TV portrayals of African Americans leads to negative stereotyping of them.18 Yet research also shows that exposure to positive portrayals of African Americans leads to positive stereotyping. For example, Power, Murphy, and Coover found that white research participants who were primed with counter-stereotypical (positive) portrayals of African Americans were more likely to attribute the plights of African Americans to external causes and view African Americans as credible. However, whites who were primed with news stories containing stereotypical (negative) portrayals of African Americans were more likely to attribute their plight to internal causes and perceive African Americans as less credible.

Based on the assimilation perspective, we propose that if the "model minority" stereotype does conjure "favorable" perceptions of Asians, then exposure to information reinforcing the stereotype would lead to positive stereotyping of Asian Americans.19 Likewise, exposure to information countering the stereotype would lead to negative stereotyping.

Much work examining the media's influence on racial perceptions has been based on the assimilation perspective. Mass communication researchers have generally tended to overlook the role that contrast plays in processes related to the media's priming of race-based judgments. As
Tormala and Petty explained, “contrast occurs when a person’s judgment of a target stimulus shifts away from the context. For instance, one might judge a target person as more (assimilation) or less (contrast) hostile after initial exposure to a hostile individual.” According to Bless et. al, contrast occurs “whenever the judgment reflects a negative (inverse) relationship between the judgment and the implications of some piece of information.”

In one study investigating the contrast effect, Stapel and Schwarz found that research participants who were asked to think about Colin Powell’s decision to join the Republican Party (Powell was positively perceived by the general American public at the time of the study) were more likely to subsequently make positive evaluations of the party. However, for participants who were asked to think about Powell’s refusal to run as a presidential candidate for the Republican Party, they were more likely to make negative evaluations of the party, and negatively judge Bob Dole, the Republican candidate for the 1996 presidential election.

The concepts of the contrast and assimilation effects also suggest that shifting standards of comparison may be used when two differing target groups are judged simultaneously. The shifting standards model explains that minimum standards (or minimum qualifications) are set lower for negatively stereotyped versus positively stereotyped groups. However, confirmatory standards (or ability expectations) are set higher for negatively stereotyped groups. As a result, negatively stereotyped groups may be positively evaluated when they meet minimum standards, but may be negatively evaluated when they are perceived to lack the abilities of positively stereotyped groups. These ideas suggest that when whites are placed in a position to judge African Americans in comparison to Asian Americans, whites may use higher confirmatory standards to evaluate African Americans. These higher standards, which are assumed to result from the stereotyping of Asians as the “model minority,” may trigger whites to perceive African Americans as less “successful” in comparison to Asian Americans. When whites are exposed to TV-mediated messages portraying Asian Americans, this could then activate the perception of Asian Americans as the “model minority,” and subsequently prime negative stereotypes of African Americans.

Results from two experiments provide evidence that African Americans may be judged less favorably when they are evaluated after exposure to information pertaining to Asians. Ho and Jackson found that participants who evaluated Asian Americans before evaluating African Americans held more anti-black attitudes, in comparison to those who did not evaluate Asians first. However, Ho and Jackson’s stimulus comprised both “positive” (e.g., “The high intelligence of Asian Americans benefits America”) and “negative” statements (e.g., “One should always be wary of Asian Americans, as they are too intelligent”). It thus could not be determined whether exposure to the positive statements regarding Asian Americans alone primed negative judgments of African Americans.

In another study, Ramasubramanian and Oliver found that participants who were exposed to news stories about Asian Indians were likely to hold less favorable attitudes toward African Americans.
Ramachandran and Oliver's study did not investigate whether exposure to stereotypical and counter-stereotypical portrayals of Asian Americans could lead to shifts in the stereotyping of African Americans. The present study proposes that exposure to differing media portrayals of Asian Americans could lead to differing judgments regarding not only Asian Americans themselves, but also African Americans as well.

Based upon the literature reviewed above, we proposed the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Exposure to TV-mediated messages reinforcing the Asian American “model minority” stereotype will result in more positive stereotyping of Asian Americans, in comparison to exposure to TV-mediated messages countering or irrelevant to the Asian American “model minority” stereotype.

**H2:** Exposure to TV-mediated messages reinforcing the Asian American “model minority” stereotype will result in more negative stereotyping of African Americans, in comparison to exposure to TV-mediated messages countering or irrelevant to the Asian American “model minority” stereotype.

**H1** predicts a congruency between the type of stimulus watched and subsequent judgments—or an assimilation effect. Specifically, **H1** predicts that the reinforcement group will have the most positive stereotypes of Asian Americans, the countering group will have the most negative stereotypes, and the control group will have the most neutral. **H2** tests a contrast effect by predicting that participants who watch portrayals of Asian Americans (reinforcing or countering the “model minority” stereotype) will be more likely to negatively stereotype African Americans than participants who do not watch portrayals of Asian Americans (control). It is thus expected that mere exposure to TV-mediated messages containing portrayals of Asian Americans would prime comparative judgments between Asian and African Americans, resulting in negative evaluations of African Americans. However, due to shifting standards of comparison, it is expected that participants who watch a reinforcement of the “model minority” stereotype would have more negative stereotypes of African Americans than participants who watch a portrayal countering the “model minority” stereotype.

Yet to further explore the stereotyping of African Americans that could result from exposure to Asian American media portrayals, we propose a research question. This question attempts to augment the findings of studies suggesting that the media’s effects on judgments regarding African Americans can be indirectly assessed by asking individuals about their opinions regarding implicit “race-coded” rather than explicit “race-specific” issues. All the while, the following
research question builds upon Ho and Jackson's proposition that, "the success image of Asian-Americans can lead them to be perceived as 'successful' and 'problem free' and not in need of social programs designed to benefit disadvantaged minorities, such as African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans."^29

RQ1: What are the effects of exposure to TV-mediated messages reinforcing or countering the Asian American "model minority" stereotype on endorsement of affirmative action?

Methods

**Experimental Design and Participants.** To test H1 and H2, which predicted causal relationships between media content and stereotyping, a one-factor (Asian American portrayals), three-group ("model minority" reinforcement, "model minority" countering, and control) experiment was conducted in December 2006. Two pretests were also conducted, which are described in detail below. Participants in the final experiment were 141 undergraduate students enrolled in introductory mass communication courses at a large and predominantly white public university in the United States. Students volunteered on the basis of being awarded course credit for their participation. Only participants who self-identified themselves as "Caucasian American" (n = 122) were included in the analyses. Although we acknowledge that the use of convenient sampling serves as a limitation, the use of college students for our study is justified for two reasons. First, the mass communication students selected for this study could, to a large extent, represent the next generation of media practitioners and media researchers. Second, previous research suggests that college students may be aware of, and thus attempt to conceal, their stereotypes of racial groups. Therefore, if the stimuli used in our study were able to affect the racial perceptions of college students, the stimuli could likely affect the perceptions of the general population. Descriptive statistics revealed that 54% (n = 65) of the Caucasian American participants were female, 46% (n = 57) were male, and the mean age was 20 (sd = 1.66). Thirty-nine percent (n = 47) of the participants came from households with incomes of more than $100,000 per year, and the median household income reported was $80,000 per year.

**Procedure.** Participants were told they would be participating in a study that required them to merely report their usage of entertainment media and watch and evaluate a thirteen-minute video clip. At no point were they told they would be asked to judge racial groups. Male Caucasian American graduate assistants proctored the experiments. When participants arrived at the experiment setting, they were randomly assigned to one of the three following groups: the reinforcement, the counter, or the control. After randomization and assignment, participants were shown a video clip and administered a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of items organized in the following order: dummy items serving as decoys attempting to conceal the study's purpose, a Likert item measuring endorsement of affirmative action embedded among the
dummy items, two semantic differential scales respectively measuring stereotypes of African Americans and stereotypes of Asian Americans, and demographic questions. Participants were then debriefed.

Reinforcement of “Model Minority” Stereotype. TV-mediated messages reinforcing the “model minority” stereotype consisted of a thirteen-minute video of clips acquired from a video recording titled *The Asianization of America.*[^31] The stimulus featured three scenes: the first scene contained footage of Asians (of East Asian descent) immigrating into the United States, the second scene showed Asians/Asian Americans adhering to a hard work ethic both at their jobs and at school, and the third scene contained interviews with prominent Asian Americans (a Japanese American male and a Chinese American female) who had immigrated to the United States to become successful and prolific corporate businesspersons.

Counter-portrayal of “Model Minority” Stereotype. TV-mediated messages countering the “model minority” stereotype consisted of a thirteen-minute video of clips from the film *Better Luck Tomorrow.*[^32] The stimulus featured three scenes: a fight scene in which one of the Asian American characters brandishes a handgun, a scene in which the teenagers break into and rob their high school, and a scene in which the teenagers are shown consuming alcohol and cocaine excessively.

Control. A thirteen-minute filler video was administered to the control group. The control video was meant not to prime any existing racial attitudes toward Asian or African Americans. The video chosen for this stimulus consisted of clips acquired from a PBS documentary about panthers and cheetahs titled *On the Edge of Extinction: Panthers & Cheetahs.*[^33] The stimulus featured three scenes: the first scene narrated efforts to prevent the extinction of panthers and cheetahs, the second scene narrated the history of panthers (cougars) in North America, and the third scene narrated the role of science in preventing the animals’ extinction.

Pretest 1: Manipulation Check. A pretest was conducted in December 2005 to test the effectiveness of the two treatment stimuli. Participants were 57 undergraduate students from the same university. One group was shown the reinforcement stimulus ($n = 28$), and the second group was shown the countering stimulus ($n = 29$). The two groups were then asked to list the first two adjectives that came to mind about how they felt the video clips they viewed portrayed Asian Americans. Open-ended responses indicated the reinforcement and countering stimuli were effective in priming their expected Asian American stereotypes. The words frequently mentioned by the reinforcement group to describe how their video depicted Asian Americans included “hard-working” (mentioned by 16 participants), “smart” ($n = 5$), “intelligent” ($n = 4$), and “disciplined” ($n = 3$). The words frequently mentioned by the countering group were “violent” ($n = 12$), “immoral” ($n = 6$), “greedy” ($n = 5$), “rebellious” ($n = 5$), “angry” ($n = 4$), and “crazy” ($n = 3$). Additionally, participants were asked to rate how the video they watched depicted Asian Americans based on a 7-point, ten-item semantic differential scale similar to the one used in the actual experiment,
which asked whether the video depictions of Asian Americans were closer to one or the other of two bipolar adjectives. Results indicated that the reinforcement group felt their video depicted Asian Americans more favorably (M = 5.74, sd = .51) than the countering group (M = 3.91, sd = .63), t(55) = 10.33, p < .001.

**Stereotypes of African Americans and Asian Americans.** Two similar semantic differential scales were used to measure stereotypes of Asian Americans and African Americans. The scales consisted of ten items each containing bipolar adjectives (e.g., Violent/Not Violent), in which negative poles were scored with 1 and positive poles were scored with 7. Participants were asked whether their “mental pictures” of the racial groups were closer to one or the other of the two bipolar adjectives. The scale measuring stereotypes of Asian Americans for the final experiment was found to be reliable (α = .89, M = 5.37, sd = .72), and so was the scale measuring African American stereotypes (α = .87, M = 4.40, sd = .90).

**Pretest 2: Determining Stereotype Scale Order.** A second pretest was conducted in February 2006 to investigate whether a contrast effect might occur as a result of an order effect within the questionnaire—that is, if participants were asked to evaluate Asian Americans prior to evaluating African Americans, this could affect their evaluations of African Americans, and vice-versa. Participants in the second pretest (undergraduate students from the same university, N = 104) were randomly assigned to one of two groups and asked to complete a questionnaire containing the two scales described above. One group was administered a questionnaire asking them to evaluate Asian Americans before evaluating African Americans, and the other half was administered a questionnaire asking them to evaluate African Americans before evaluating Asian Americans. Findings revealed that participants who evaluated Asian Americans before evaluating African Americans were more likely to negatively stereotype African Americans (M{African American} = 3.98, sd = .55) than those who evaluated African Americans without first evaluating Asian Americans (M{African American} = 4.47, sd = .88), t(102) = 3.42, p = .001. However, no statistically significant difference between the stereotyping of Asian Americans was found between the Asian-first and African-first conditions (p = .51, two-tailed). These results were indicative of a contrast effect occurring as a result of scale order only if Asian Americans were evaluated prior to evaluating African Americans. To prevent an order/contrast effect from confounding the study’s results, the scale measuring stereotypes of Asian Americans was strategically placed on a separate page directly after the scale measuring stereotypes of African Americans in the questionnaire used for the final experiment.

**Endorsement of Affirmative Action.** An item asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statement based on a 1- to 5-point Likert scale, where a higher score indicated greater endorsement of the policy: “Affirmative action continues to be needed to help women and minorities overcome discrimination.” This item was embedded among the deception items described below. The item had acceptable skewness (.07, se = .22) and kurtosis (-1.03, se = .44), and its mean score was 2.80 (sd = 1.25).
TABLE 1

Means for Stereotypes of Asian and African Americans from Exposure to TV-mediated Messages Reinforcing the “Model Minority” Stereotype, Countering the Stereotype, and a Control Stimulus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reinforcement (sd)</th>
<th>Counter (sd)</th>
<th>Control (sd)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes of Asian Americans</td>
<td>5.70 (.75)</td>
<td>5.03 (.70)</td>
<td>5.39 (.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes of African Americans</td>
<td>4.07 (.94)</td>
<td>4.42 (.73)</td>
<td>4.78 (.90)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deception Items. In an attempt to conceal the true purpose of the study and prevent participants from providing socially desirable responses, dummy items serving as decoys were strategically placed in the first and second pages of the questionnaire. These items asked participants about their usage of entertainment media (e.g., “When was the last time you watched a movie in a public theater?”) and to evaluate the video they had just watched (e.g., “Please rate the quality of this video”).

Demographics. Participants were also asked to self-report their age, gender, race, and household income.

Stereotypes of Asian Americans. H1 predicted that exposure to TV-mediated messages reinforcing the Asian American “model minority” stereotype will result in more positive stereotyping of Asian Americans, in comparison to exposure to TV-mediated messages countering or irrelevant to the stereotype. Results of a one-way ANOVA showed that participants who watched the “model minority” reinforcement video evaluated Asian Americans more positively, $F(2, 118) = 9.89$, $p < .001$ (see Table 1.) Post-hoc comparisons using Fisher’s least significant difference criterion confirmed differences across all pairs of groups at the $p < .05$ rejection level. The effect size for the treatments versus the control was also computed using Cohen’s $f^2$, suggesting the treatments had a large effect ($f = .40$) on stereotyping of Asian Americans. Results support H1.

Stereotypes of African Americans. H2 predicted that exposure to TV-mediated messages reinforcing the Asian American “model minority” stereotype will result in more negative stereotyping of African Americans, in comparison to exposure to TV-mediated messages countering or irrelevant to the stereotype. Results of a one-way ANOVA showed that participants who watched the “model minority” reinforcement video evaluated African Americans more negatively, $F(2, 119) = 6.87$, $p < .01$ (see Table 1.) Post-hoc Fisher’s LSD comparisons confirmed differences across the reinforcement and control groups at the $p < .05$ rejection level, while differences between the reinforcement and coun-
tering \((p = .07)\) and the countering and control groups \((p = .06)\) failed to achieve significance. The effect size for the treatments versus the control was also computed using Cohen's \(f\), suggesting the treatments had a large effect \((f = .34)\) on stereotyping of African Americans. Results support H2.

**Endorsement of Affirmative Action.** RQ1 asked about the effects of exposure to information reinforcing or countering the Asian American "model minority" stereotype on endorsement of affirmative action. Results of a one-way ANOVA showed that participants who watched the reinforcement video were less likely to endorse affirmative action \((M = 2.50, sd = 1.22)\) than participants who watched the counter-stereotypical \((M = 3.00, sd = 1.24)\) or control videos \((M = 3.20, sd = 1.22)\), \(F(2,118) = 5.09, p < .05\). Post-hoc comparisons revealed differences across the reinforcement and control groups at the \(p < .05\) rejection level, while the difference between the reinforcement and countering groups \((p = .07)\) failed to achieve significance. The difference in means between the countering and control groups was not significant \((p > .50)\). The effect size for the treatments versus the control was also computed using Cohen's \(f\), suggesting the treatments had a medium effect \((f = .24)\) on lesser endorsement of affirmative action. These results suggest exposure to TV-mediated messages reinforcing the "model minority" stereotype led to less endorsement of affirmative action.

**Discussion and Implications**

The present study applied the theoretical propositions of the assimilation and contrast perspectives of social psychology to investigate the effects of viewing TV-mediated portrayals of Asian Americans on subsequent judgments regarding Asian and African Americans, and endorsement of affirmative action. H1's findings provide evidence for the occurrences of assimilation effects in that exposure to TV-mediated portrayals reinforcing the "model minority" stereotype promoted positive stereotyping of Asian Americans, and exposure to TV-mediated portrayals countering the "model minority" stereotype led to negative stereotyping. These findings confirm that exposure to information reinforcing the stereotype leads to "positive" stereotyping of Asian Americans. In essence, the "model minority" stereotype elicits positive perceptions of Asian Americans. Yet, as suggested by previous research, Asian Americans have also been stereotyped under such negative categories as the "yellow peril." There may be positive and negative stereotypes held toward Asian Americans, and the findings for H1 indicate that such stereotypes could be explained by exposure to differing media portrayals of Asian Americans.

The results for H2 augment Ho and Jackson's and Ramasubramanian and Oliver's findings. Specifically, H2's results suggest that the effects of exposure to information about a specific racial group are not constrained in priming the stereotypes held regarding the target group in question. In our study, participants in both the Asian American "model minority" reinforcement and countering treatment conditions evaluated African Americans more negatively than participants in the control condi-
tion. This finding can be explained by the contrast effect because regardless of the type of Asian American portrayal watched (negative or positive), participants who viewed a video depicting Asian Americans tended to judge African Americans more negatively than participants who were not shown an Asian American portrayal.

Yet judgments of African Americans varied depending on the type of Asian American portrayal watched, as exposure to TV-mediated messages reinforcing the “model minority” stereotype led to more negative stereotyping of African Americans than exposure to messages countering the stereotype. These findings can be attributed to shifting standards of comparison. Participants who watched a reinforcement of the “model minority” stereotype may have used higher confirmatory standards when evaluating African Americans (in comparison to participants watching the countering portrayal), which may have resulted in more negative stereotyping of African Americans. Yet the negative stereotyping of African Americans appeared to have been tempered by exposure to a “deviant” portrayal of Asian Americans, as participants who watched the counter-stereotypical Asian portrayal tended to stereotype African Americans more positively than participants who watched the reinforcement.

On the other hand, it may have been plausible that the counter-stereotypical stimulus—which contained scenes portraying Asian Americans as violent, committing crimes, and using drugs—also activated negative stereotypes of African Americans as violent, criminals, and drug addicts. Our participants may have assimilated the representations of Asian American “deviance” they watched to similar stereotypes of African Americans, which then resulted in more negative stereotyping of African Americans (in comparison with the control group). This plausibility is suggested by studies reporting that exposure to criminality representations can activate negative stereotypes of African Americans. Further research is warranted to differentiate assimilation and contrast effects as they relate to the media’s effects on stereotyping in similar contexts.

With regard to the results for RQ1, exposure to TV-mediated messages reinforcing the Asian American “model minority” stereotype led to less endorsement of affirmative action. These results are not surprising, given that some arguments made against preferential treatment policies in the United States are framed in the basis of highlighting the “successes” of Asian Americans. Additionally, our results suggest that those who watched the control video were more likely to endorse affirmative action than those who watched the video containing counter-stereotypical portrayals of Asian Americans. Because our first pre-test found that the counter video triggered stereotypes of Asian Americans as “violent,” “immoral,” “greedy,” “rebellious,” “angry,” and “crazy,” which suggest deviance, our respondents may have reasoned that because Asians were deviant, they were not deserving of public assistance. Similarly, Tan, Fujioka, and Tan suggested that exposure to negative TV portrayals of minorities leads to lesser endorsement of affirmative action.
Our results have three implications. First, given the finding that exposure to a positive portrayal of a minority group can result in negative stereotyping of another minority group, it may be pertinent for media educators to inform their students of this potential. Journalism and mass communication professors and instructors in colleges and universities, who have the roles of training future news producers, journalists, and media industry executives, could integrate lectures informing their students that positive stereotyping by the media may also result in negative stereotyping among consumers. Second, our results could be used to advocate the development of more sophisticated assimilation and contrast models of media stereotyping. Such models may be used to investigate whether exposure to information reinforcing the Asian American "model minority" stereotype could influence hiring preferences for Asian American versus African American job candidates, or voting preferences for Asian American versus African American political candidates. Mass communication researchers may also consider investigating the roles of assimilation and contrast in processes related to the media's priming of gender-based judgments and stereotypes.

Third, our study presented experimental evidence that television portrayals of a specific racial group can affect perceptions of another group. In reality, most groups, particularly white Americans, are portrayed positively and negatively in television. Therefore, our findings should be interpreted in the context of overall portrayals in television and would be most likely observed when portrayals of a specific group are predominantly positive or negative, or when a particular portrayal is remembered and internalized. Our findings suggest that if Asian Americans are only shown positively, this could lead to positive stereotyping of Asian Americans and harm perceptions of African Americans. If Asian Americans are only shown negatively, this could harm perceptions of them, yet foster positive perceptions of African Americans. Based on our findings, we do not recommend that minority groups (particularly Asian Americans) be portrayed in an entirely positive manner. What we do recommend is that the media provide representations of racial minorities that attempt to "capture the full range" of human experiences. What this entails is that the portrayals of minority groups equally reflect the range of portrayals existing for dominant groups (i.e., white Americans).

NOTES


20. Note that our study was fundamentally built upon the assumptions that American stereotypes perceived to be “positive” are traits that are valued by the American dominant culture, and American stereotypes perceived to be “negative” are traits that are not valued. These are assumptions inherent in predominant social psychological perspectives on racial attitude formation and reinforcement, such as McConahay’s
modern racism (John B. McConahay, "Modern Racism and Modern Discrimination: The Effects of Race, Racial Attitudes, and Context on Simulated Hiring Decisions," Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 9 [1983]: 551-58). The stereotype of Asians as the "model minority" could conjure up traits that are valued by the American dominant culture, such as wealth, intelligence, and hard work ethic.


26. Ho and Jackson, "Attitudes Toward Asian Americans."


29. Ho and Jackson, "Attitudes Toward Asian Americans."

30. Devine, "Stereotypes and Prejudice."


32. Better Luck Tomorrow, motion picture, directed by Justin Lin (United States: Paramount Pictures, 2002).


34. The scales were adapted from Tom Smith, "Ethnic Images in the United States," The Polling Report 7 (1991): 1-5; A. Tan, Fujioka, and G. Tan, "Television Use, Stereotypes of African Americans and Opinions on Affirmative Action."

35. To aid in the interpretation of the results for the ANOVAs and post hoc comparisons, effect sizes using Cohen's $f$ are reported. See
Jacob Cohen, *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*, 2d ed. (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988); Jacob Cohen, "Quantitative Methods in Psychology: A Power Primer," *Psychological Bulletin* 112 (July 1992): 157. Cohen suggested that an $f$ in the range of .10 is indicative of a small effect, an $f$ in the range of .25 indicates a medium effect, and an $f$ in the range of .40 indicates a large effect. Although Cohen cautioned about the use of these guidelines as rigid standards, they are still widely accepted by researchers in the social and behavioral sciences.


37. Ho and Jackson, "Attitudes Toward Asian Americans"; Ramasubramanian and Oliver, "Activating and Suppressing Hostile and Benevolent Racism."

38. See Biernat and Kobrynowicz, "Gender- and Race-Based Standards of Competence."

39. Dixon and Azocar, "Priming Crime and Activating Blackness"; Oliver, "Caucasian Viewers' Memory of Black and White Criminal Suspects in the News."


41. Tan, Fujioka, and Tan, "Television Use, Stereotypes of African Americans and Opinions on Affirmative Action."

42. Wu and Lee noted the limited research pertaining to Asian-American politicians. See Wu and Lee, "The Submissive, the Calculated, and the American Dream."