

Prescriptive Stereotypes and Workplace Consequences for East Asians in North America

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We pursue the idea that racial stereotypes are not only descriptive, reflecting beliefs about how racial groups actually differ, but are prescriptive as well, reflecting beliefs about how racial groups *should* differ. Drawing on an analysis of the historic and current status of East Asians in North America, we study descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes of East Asians along the dimensions of competence, warmth, and dominance and examine workplace consequences of violating these stereotypes. Study 1 shows that East Asians are descriptively stereotyped as more competent, less warm, and less dominant than Whites. Study 2 shows that only the descriptive stereotype of East Asians as less dominant than Whites is also a prescriptive stereotype. Study 3 reveals that people dislike a dominant East Asian coworker compared to a nondominant East Asian or a dominant or a nondominant White coworker. Study 4 shows that East Asians who are dominant or warm are racially harassed at work more than nondominant East Asians and than dominant and nondominant employees of other racial identities. Implications for research and theory are discussed.

Keywords: stereotype, harassment, discrimination, race, Asian

Until recently, the stereotyping literature has presented racial stereotypes as descriptive, reflecting beliefs about what members of different racial groups *are* like, and has theorized prescriptive stereotypes, or beliefs about what members of different groups *should be* like, as limited to gender (e.g., Bem, 1974; Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Fiske & Stevens, 1993; Glick & Fiske, 1999; Heilman, 2001; Prentice & Carranza, 2002). The distinction between descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes is important, as individuals who violate a descriptive stereotype of their group may cause pleasant surprise or curiosity, but individuals who violate a prescriptive stereotype of their group are likely to invoke social disapproval and backlash (e.g., Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Gill, 2004; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Rudman, 1998).

A few studies have found that individuals who violate descriptive racial stereotypes suffer negative social reactions (Min & Berdahl, 2009, Study 3; Schimmel et al., 1999, Experiment 3; Phelan & Rudman, 2010, Experiments 1 and 2), which suggests that these descriptive stereotypes may be prescriptive as well (Min & Berdahl, 2009; Phelan & Rudman, 2010). We build on this research to pursue the idea that some descriptive racial stereotypes are pre-

scriptive, and that like prescriptive gender stereotypes (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Fiske & Stevens, 1993), prescriptive racial stereotypes stem from historic social roles and inequalities and function to preserve those roles and inequalities by triggering “hot discrimination” against individuals who challenge them.

Different racial groups have different histories, social roles, and stereotypes in a given geographic context. Our analysis focuses on stereotypes of East Asians in North America, who comprise one of the largest visible minority groups in this region (Statistics Canada, 2001; U.S. Census, 2010). Studies of discrimination and prejudice against East Asians are rare (Cheng & Thatchenkery, 1997), in part because East Asian Americans are considered a model minority (Peterson, 1966) that has achieved social parity with White Americans. However, Asian Americans are subject to negative stereotypes (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Ho & Jackson, 2001; Lin, Kwan, Cheung, & Fiske, 2005; Mok, 1998) and discrimination similar to other racial minorities (Hyun, 2005; Mervis, 2005; Miller, 1992; Ruttimann, 2009; Tang, 1997; Young & Takeuchi, 1998).

We examine how descriptive stereotypes of East Asians have historically developed in North America to depict East Asians as relatively competent, cold, and nondominant. We argue that the threat posed by the ambivalent “competent but cold” stereotype of Asians (Fiske et al., 2002) fuels a prescription for Asians to not be dominant. We further propose that East Asians who violate this prescriptive stereotype suffer negative consequences in the workplace, arguably one of the most important domains for enacting and defining the roles and statuses of different social groups.

We test our predictions with four studies. In Study 1, we expand on previous studies to more thoroughly measure descriptive stereotypes of East Asians’ competence and warmth (e.g., Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007; Fiske et al., 2002; Lin, Kwan, Cheung, & Fiske, 2005) and also to examine descriptive stereotypes of dominance, which we argue is a theoretically and empirically distinct

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third dimension of stereotyping. In Study 2 we test our prediction that of these three dimensions of descriptive stereotypes, dominance is the only one that is prescriptive as well. In Study 3 we use an experimental design to test whether people are less likely to want a dominant East Asian as a coworker than a nondominant East Asian, a dominant White, or nondominant White. In Study 4 we examine the practical implications of these results by testing whether East Asians who violate racial stereotypes are subjected to relatively high rates of racial harassment at work.

This research contributes to the literature on racial stereotyping in several ways. It theorizes relative stereotypes of groups (East Asians and Whites) in a geographic context (North America) by analyzing the history and social roles of these groups in that context. It considers the implications of this history for group stereotypes along the three core dimensions of warmth, competence, and dominance. The current studies represent the first to thoroughly measure all three of these dimensions of racial stereotypes and the first to directly assess prescriptive racial stereotypes. Finally, this research provides the first examination of the real world consequences of violating prescriptive racial stereotypes by examining assessments of potential colleagues and experiences of actual racial harassment in the workplace.

Stereotypes of East Asians in North America

Descriptive Stereotypes

Descriptive stereotypes of East Asians have been both negative and positive in North America based on changing cultural and historical forces. Stereotypes of East Asians stem in part from the values embodied in East Asian (i.e., collectivist) cultures. Confucian traditions found in China, Japan, and Korea (Cheng, 1997; Ho, 1994) emphasize achievement through education and hard work, which likely contributes to the perception that East Asians are highly competent (i.e., qualified, capable, skilled). The perception of East Asians as “cold” (i.e., lacking in feeling or friendliness) may be rooted in the interdependent self of collectivist cultures, which emphasizes loyalty to the in-group and requires adjusting one’s expression to fit social expectations rather than to reveal inner thoughts and feelings (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Stereotypes of East Asians as obedient and nondominant (i.e., not assertive or attempting to take charge) are consistent with the Confucian ethos that values humility and cooperativeness at the expense of individual interests (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Triandis, 2001). These cultural values help explain why East Asians tend to be descriptively stereotyped as competent and cold (Fiske et al., 2002), as well as nondominant.

These cultural traditions and their resulting descriptive stereotypes made East Asians particularly attractive as immigrants when laborers were needed in North America during the mid-1800s to work on plantations, in mines, and on the transcontinental railroad (Fong, 2002). In these roles, East Asians worked for White landowners and capitalists. An aversive reaction to Asian immigrants began to emerge, however, and was reflected by the perception that Asian immigrants posed a “yellow peril”: Asian immigrants became seen as posing an economic threat to Whites and as being intent on destroying the social fabric of White American society (Fong, 2002). These negative stereotypes of East Asians persisted into the mid-20th century.

In the 1960s, this perception of yellow peril was incorporated into a revised interpretation of East Asians as a model minority, a term coined in articles lauding the successful integration of the Japanese and Chinese into American society (Peterson, 1966; Success story of one minority group, 1966). This “success” image of Asian Americans was due in part to immigration quotas that limited East Asians immigrating to the United States to highly educated and skilled professionals and academics (Lee, 1998). Many scholars agree that the model minority stereotype of East Asians as hardworking and thus successful in American society was perpetuated as a propaganda tool against the civil rights movement in the 1960s, when Black Americans organized to end institutionalized and systematic racial discrimination (Fong, 2002; Kim, 1999; Lee, 1998). Pointing to a model minority legitimized the United States as a meritocracy in which anyone who works hard enough could get ahead, and Asian Americans were used as an example for other racial minorities to emulate. Despite the apparent positive nature of the model minority stereotype, it hurt the East Asian American community by allowing society to ignore the social and economic difficulties faced by many East Asians and by engendering competition with other racial minorities (Cheng, 1997; Takaki, 1989; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992).

The current stereotype of East Asians as competent but cold (Fiske et al., 2002; Lin et al., 2005) means that East Asians are respected but disliked and admired but envied (Cuddy et al., 2007; Ho & Jackson, 2001; Lin et al., 2005). The combination of admiration and envy toward East Asians, along with their relatively high educational and occupational attainment compared to other racial minorities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), helps to explain why East Asians are more likely than other groups to be viewed as competition by Whites for valued resources (Maddux, Galinsky, Cuddy, & Polifroni, 2008). Such perceptions of threat, in turn, are likely to lead toward prejudice against East Asians and a desire to see them “stay in their place.”

Racial Inequality

East Asians do remain in relatively subordinate positions in North America. Although East Asians are overrepresented in universities compared to their proportion of the population (The ruling class, 1994), they are underrepresented in leadership roles such as corporate boards and academic faculty positions (Committee of 100, 2005; National Science Foundation, 2000). East Asians also experience lower economic returns on their education compared to Whites (Barringer, Takeuchi, & Xenos, 1990; Friedman & Krackhardt, 1997). East Asians are less likely to be promoted to managerial positions compared to Whites and other racial minorities (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992), even in fields in which they are overrepresented (e.g., sciences, engineering; Mervis, 2005; Miller, 1992; Ruttimann, 2009; Tang, 1997). In addition, a sizable portion of East Asian Americans are concentrated in low-pay and low-status service positions such as cooks, wait staff, cashiers, and textile sewing machine operators (Shinagawa & Kim, 2008).

If East Asians are perceived as more competent than Whites, but also as less warm and less trustworthy, then East Asians pose both economic and social threats to Whites, consistent with the perception of yellow peril. Yet if East Asians remain in relatively subordinate and nonleadership positions, then the threat they pose to

Whites is minimized and the portrayal of East Asians as a model minority justifies the social system as a meritocracy (i.e., system justification; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). In other words, East Asians may be seen as competent and cold, but these characteristics may be tolerated if East Asians are also seen as nondominant. This suggests that nondominance may not only be a descriptive stereotype of East Asians, but a prescriptive one as well.

Prescriptive Stereotypes

We predict that East Asians are descriptively stereotyped as competent, cold, and nondominant and that nondominance is also a prescriptive stereotype of East Asians. It may not be considered desirable (i.e., prescriptive) for East Asians to be more competent than Whites, but it may be considered factual (i.e., descriptive). Similarly, it may not be considered desirable for East Asians to be less warm than Whites, but it may be considered true. Descriptive stereotypes of East Asians as relatively competent and cold pose a threat to Whites, whose relative status, comfort, and safety may be usurped by a shrewd competitor. If this relatively competent and cold group does not try to take charge, however,—if East Asians are nondominant, unwilling to assert their own ideas and viewpoints, and unlikely to seek dominance or positions of leadership—then this threat is quelled. The relative competence of nondominant East Asians becomes useful rather than threatening; their relative coldness supports a social distance and will not turn aggressive. Thus, the perception of East Asians as nondominant is likely to be both a descriptive and prescriptive stereotype.

Prescriptive stereotypes work to maintain status and power differences between groups. Individuals who violate prescriptive stereotypes face social sanctions that encourage conformity with those stereotypes. For instance, women who violate prescriptive gender stereotypes are disliked and are subjected to significantly more “hot” discrimination, such as sexual harassment and active disliking, compared to women who conform to these stereotypes (Berdahl, 2007; Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Dall’Ara & Maass, 1999; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman et al., 2004; Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, & Grasselli, 2003; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001). We expect that East Asians who violate prescriptive stereotypes for their group will be similarly subjected to more “hot” discrimination, such as racial harassment. In this way, prescriptive stereotypes of East Asians may be enforced through social punishment, discouraging East Asians from displaying characteristics that would help them gain status and power at work.

Dominance Versus Competence in East Asians

Competence and dominance are often treated as part of the same construct in studies of gender and in research conducted on Whites. The construct of masculinity (Bem, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), often defined as agency, represents a combination of competence and dominance. We propose that competence and dominance diverge as constructs when applied to East Asians. Perceptions of high competence and high dominance are necessary for status attainment and relate to the social power of a group. Consistent with this view, research by Sy et al. (2010) found that Asian Americans were rated higher on technical competence (for an engineer position), but received lower ratings for leadership ability, compared to White Americans. Our research is the first

attempt to empirically measure the possibility that East Asians are perceived as less dominant, but more competent, than Whites.

Overview of the Current Studies

We conducted four studies to examine stereotypes of East Asians and workplace consequences of violating these stereotypes. Consistent with the stereotype content model (Fiske et al., 2002), we measured the dimensions of warmth and competence. We also measured dominance, which we argue is a theoretically distinct construct. We studied descriptive stereotypes of East Asians in Study 1, prescriptive stereotypes in Study 2, coworker liking as a function of prescriptive stereotype conformity in Study 3, and workplace harassment as a function of prescriptive and descriptive stereotype conformity in Study 4.

Study 1: Descriptive Stereotypes of East Asians

First we set out to establish descriptive stereotypes of East Asians compared to Whites in North America with systematic measures of competence, warmth, and dominance. Prior research has used measures of competence and warmth that contain a small number of items (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002), and research has not specifically examined stereotypes of East Asians with detailed and systematic measures. Consistent with our review of descriptive stereotypes of Asian Americans, we hypothesize that

Hypothesis 1: East Asians are perceived as more competent than Whites.

Hypothesis 2: East Asians are perceived as less warm than Whites.

Hypothesis 3: East Asians are perceived as less dominant than Whites.

Method

Participants. Participants were 152 volunteers recruited from a paid participant pool at a large research university in North America. Of these, 77% were women and 22% were men (1% did not specify). Fifty-seven percent indicated having East Asian ancestry, 20% indicated being European/White, and 23% identified a different ethnic or racial ancestry. The mean age was 21.63 ($SD = 2.74$). The survey was completed online and participants were compensated with a \$5 gift certificate or cash.

Procedure. We used a between-subjects design to assess descriptive stereotypes of East Asians and Whites. Participants were randomly assigned to rate either an East Asian or a White target and were asked to rate the degree to which various characteristics described the target. For example, participants assigned to an East Asian target were asked to indicate the extent to which various characteristics describe “an Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean) . . . in North American society.”

Measures. Competence was measured with 16 items ($\alpha = .86$) (e.g., “intelligent,” “skilled,” “unqualified,” “incompetent;” these last two reverse-scored). Dominance and warmth were measured with 16 items each from the Interpersonal Adjective Scale (Wiggins, Trapbell, & Phillips, 1988). Dominance items included adjectives such as “assertive” and “self-assured” ($\alpha = .86$).

Warmth items included adjectives such as “kind” and “sympathetic” ($\alpha = .87$). Participants rated how descriptive each trait was for the target on a scale from 1 (*not at all descriptive*) to 7 (*extremely descriptive*).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables are presented in Table 1. There were no significant differences in target ratings by participant race or gender; therefore, ratings were combined across participants within target condition. ANOVA was conducted for each personality dimension. To test Hypotheses 1 and 2, which are supported by prior theory and research (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002), we used one-tailed tests of significance; to test Hypothesis 3, we used a two-tailed test.

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, East Asians were rated as significantly more competent ($M = 4.99$, $SD = .75$) than Whites ($M = 4.62$, $SD = .81$), $F(1, 147) = 5.61$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$ (see Figure 1). Consistent with Hypothesis 2, East Asians were rated as significantly less warm ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .99$) than Whites ($M = 4.46$, $SD = .69$), $F(1, 147) = 2.97$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, East Asians were rated as significantly less dominant ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .82$) than Whites ($M = 4.93$, $SD = .57$), $F(1, 147) = 41.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .22$. Thus, Hypotheses 1 through 3 were supported.

Discussion

This study measured descriptive stereotypes of East Asians in North America. Its between-subjects design represented a conservative test of our hypotheses. Consistent with the model minority stereotype, East Asians were perceived to be more competent than Whites. Consistent with the yellow peril stereotype, East Asians were also perceived to be less warm than Whites. This study replicates existing research on descriptive stereotypes of East Asians for the dimensions of competence and warmth (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002) and extends our understanding of descriptive stereotypes by demonstrating that East Asians are perceived to be relatively nondominant. By demonstrating that the construct of dominance is theoretically and empirically distinct from competence (and warmth), our research suggests that dominance needs to be added to the study of core stereotypes of social groups.

Study 2: Prescriptive Stereotypes of East Asians

To test whether stereotypes of East Asians compared to Whites in North America are also prescriptive, we conducted a second

Table 1
Study 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Asian target	.53	—	—		
2. Competence	4.82	.80	.23**	—	
3. Dominance	4.49	.83	-.51**	.00	—
4. Warmth	4.41	.86	-.07	.31**	-.20*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

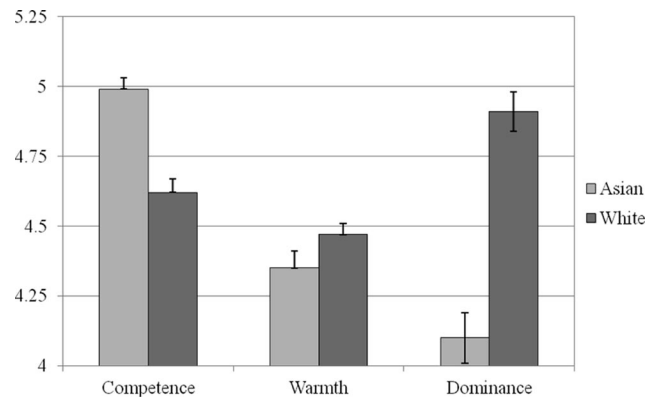


Figure 1. Study 1: Mean differences in descriptive stereotypes of Asians and Whites.

study that asked participants to rate how desirable it is for East Asians and Whites to be competent, warm, and dominant. As explained earlier, we did not expect competence and warmth to be differentially desirable in Asian or White targets, but we did expect dominance to be considered less desirable for East Asians than for Whites:

Hypothesis 4: It is considered less desirable for East Asians than for Whites to be dominant.

Method

Participants. One hundred sixty-nine volunteers were recruited from the same paid participant pool as Study 1. Of these, 48% were female and 52% were male. Fifty-two percent indicated having Asian ancestry, whereas the other 48% indicated a European/White ancestral background. The mean age was 22.26 ($SD = 4.63$). The survey was completed either in a pencil-or-paper format or online. Participants were compensated with a \$5 gift certificate or cash.

Procedure. Following procedures used to assess prescriptive gender stereotypes (Bem, 1974, 1978; Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman, Phelan, Nauts, & Moss-Racusin, 2012), prescriptive racial stereotypes were assessed by asking participants to rate the desirability of each characteristic for an Asian or a White target. For example, participants were asked to “indicate how desirable it is in North American society for an Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean) person to possess each of these characteristics” on a scale from 1 (*not at all desirable*) to 7 (*extremely desirable*). Participants were instructed not to give their personal opinions, but to indicate societal values. Participants were randomly assigned to the race of the target.

Measures. Personality traits were assessed with the same items used in Study 1. Internal reliabilities were good for competence ($\alpha = .89$), warmth ($\alpha = .90$), and dominance ($\alpha = .80$).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables are presented in Table 2. There were no significant differences in target ratings by participant race or gender; thus ratings were combined across participants within condition. An ANOVA was

Table 2
Study 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Asian Target	.52	—	—		
2. Competence	5.47	.88	.12	—	
3. Dominance	4.51	.77	-.35**	.39**	—
4. Warmth	5.19	.94	-.02	.42**	-.09

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

conducted on each personality dimension. There were no significant differences between Asian ($M = 5.57, SD = .78$) and White ($M = 5.36, SD = .97$) targets for competence, $F(1, 168) = .27, p = .61, \eta_p^2 = .002$ (see Figure 2). Similarly, ratings for warmth did not differ between Asian ($M = 5.17, SD = .88$) and White ($M = 5.21, SD = 1.00$) targets, $F(1, 168) = 1.63, p = .20, \eta_p^2 = .01$. Consistent with Hypothesis 4, dominance was rated as significantly less desirable for the Asian target ($M = 4.26, SD = .74$) than for the White target ($M = 4.79, SD = .71$), $F(1, 168) = 21.67, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .13$.

Discussion

These results indicate that the stereotype of East Asians as less dominant than Whites is prescriptive in addition to being descriptive: It was considered significantly less desirable for East Asians than for Whites to be dominant. We did not find a significant difference between Asian and White targets for the desirability of warmth or competence, however, indicating that these descriptive stereotypes are not prescriptive. In sum, these findings suggest that society prescribes East Asians to be similarly competent and warm as Whites, but also to be less dominant than Whites. The discrepancy between the characteristics East Asians are perceived to have (more competence and less warmth than Whites) and the characteristics considered desirable for East Asians to have (similar competence and warmth to Whites) lends support to our idea that a prescription for East Asians to be relatively nondominant helps to mitigate the social and economic threats posed by descriptive stereotypes of East Asians.

Study 3: Coworker Liking

To see if the prescription for nondominance in East Asians is likely to affect their status at work, we conducted an experiment to see if people’s preferences for a coworker are shaped by that coworker’s dominance and race. If prescriptive stereotypes reflect societal values, then people’s preferences for coworkers are likely to be shaped by these values. Therefore, coworkers who conform to prescriptive stereotypes are likely to be more socially accepted and liked than coworkers who violate these stereotypes. If dominance is considered undesirable in East Asians but acceptable in Whites, then people are likely to exhibit aversion to a dominant East Asian coworker compared to a nondominant East Asian coworker and compared to a dominant or a nondominant White coworker:

Hypothesis 5: Dominant East Asians are disliked as potential coworkers compared to nondominant East Asians, dominant Whites, and nondominant Whites.

Method

Participants. One hundred eighty-seven undergraduates enrolled in management courses at the same large research university in North America volunteered to participate in exchange for partial course credit. To be included in the study, participants needed to have lived in the country for at least a year to ensure some familiarity with its norms and stereotypes. Of these, 63% were women and 37% were men. Seventy percent of the participants indicated an East Asian ancestry, 15% indicated a European/Caucasian ancestry, and 5% or less indicated another background (e.g., South Asian, African). The mean age was 19.95 ($SD = 2.34$).

Procedure. The survey was completed online. Participants were randomly assigned to one of eight conditions in a 2 (East Asian, White) \times 2 (male, female) \times 2 (dominant, nondominant) between-subjects design. Participants were asked to peruse the human resource record of an employee at “J&J Consulting,” a company that specialized in business management and advice. The Human Resources (HR) record contained the employee’s name (first name Jane or Mark, last name Sutherland or Wong), title (Associate Consultant), salary level (5 on a scale of 1–10), date and place of birth (1976, Ontario), language proficiency (complete fluency in English), communication skills (excellent), organizational skills (very good), teamwork skills (excellent), level of education (B.A.), tenure with the organization (3 years), prior work experience (2 years), and personal interests (sports, art). In addition, comments about the employee from the employee’s supervisor appeared at the bottom of the HR record. These comments varied by dominance condition. The dominant employee was described as follows:

“[Mr./Ms. last name] is a proficient employee who perseveres until the task is done. [S/he] has a firm and assertive demeanor and likes to take the initiative on ideas and projects. [Mr./Ms. last name] is not afraid to express [his or her] opinions in meetings or make requests of [his or her] team members. [His or her] coworkers report that [s/he] is a considerate colleague.”

In the nondominant condition, the employee was described by his or her supervisor as follows:

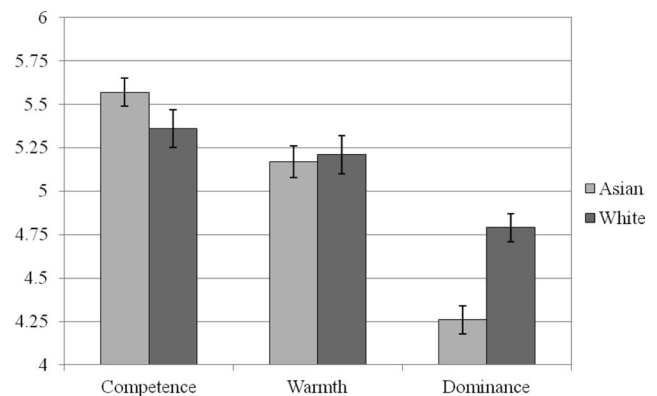


Figure 2. Study 2: Mean differences in prescriptive stereotypes of Asians and Whites.

“[Mr./Ms. last name] is a proficient employee who perseveres until the task is done. [S/he] allows coworkers to take charge in making decisions and goes along with what the team decides. [S/he] rarely expresses disagreement with others is willing to let others take the lead on projects. [His or her] coworkers report that [s/he] is a considerate colleague.”

The vignettes were designed to make employees equally competent and warm, so that they differed only by dominance, race, and gender.

Measures. We included a factual question about the HR record to make sure participants had sufficiently examined it. Twenty-four participants did not answer the question correctly and were dropped from subsequent analyses, leaving a final sample of 163 participants. Participants were asked to rate their impressions of the employee’s dominance, competence, and warmth and also to indicate how much they would like to have the employee as a colleague in their own workplace (from 1, *not at all*, to 7, *extremely*).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables are presented in Table 3. As expected, ratings of employee’s dominance were highly correlated ($r = .75, p < .001$) with dominance condition. Ratings of employee competence ($r = .28, p < .001$) and warmth ($r = -.62, p < .001$) were too, despite our efforts to hold these characteristics constant across conditions. To ensure that effects were driven by our manipulation of dominance rather than by perceptions of warmth or competence, we controlled for warmth and competence in our analyses. We also controlled for participant gender and race, as similarity to the employee could influence liking.

Analyses of variance revealed a significant main effect of employee dominance, $F(1, 161) = 13.50, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$, on liking, with nondominant employees preferred ($M = 5.38, SD = 1.48$) over dominant ones ($M = 3.75, SD = 1.19$). As predicted by Hypothesis 5, dominance interacted with race, $F(1, 161) = 4.86, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .03$: Figure 3 shows that the dominant employee with an East Asian last name received the lowest liking score, below the midpoint (4) of the scale ($M = 3.42, SD = 1.42$). This employee received significantly lower liking scores than the nondominant East Asian employee ($M = 5.61, SD = 1.10$), the nondominant White employee ($M = 5.24, SD = 1.23$), and the dominant White employee ($M = 4.09, SD = 1.48$). There was no

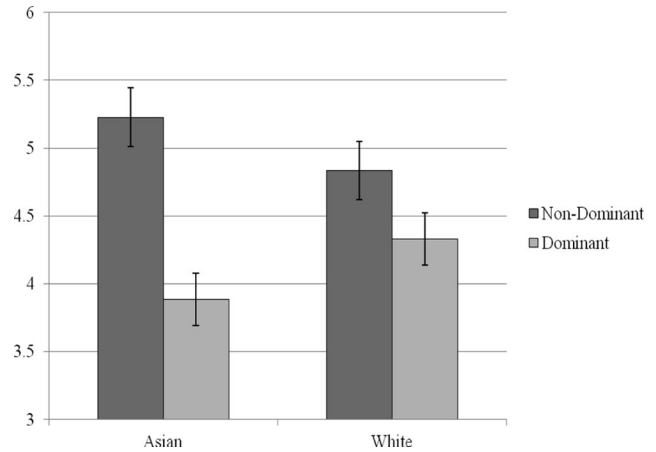


Figure 3. Study 3: Liking of coworker by coworker race and dominance.

main effect of employee race on liking and no main or interactions effects of employee gender on liking the employee as a colleague.

Discussion

Results of this experiment show that coworker preferences are congruent with prescriptive stereotypes. The dominant East Asian employee was relatively disliked as a coworker compared to the nondominant East Asian employee, the nondominant White employee, and the dominant White employee. Even in this majority Asian sample, people preferred a White coworker over an Asian coworker if that coworker had a dominant personality. There were no differences in this preference based on the rater’s own racial background, gender, or the gender of the potential coworker.

These results suggest that dominant East Asians are unwelcome and unwanted by their coworkers. Employees who are unwelcome and unwanted are at greater risk of being mistreated and harassed in their work environments (e.g., Brodsky, 1976; Einarsen, 2000). Prior research has shown that employees who violate prescriptive gender stereotypes are more likely to be sexually harassed (Berdahl, 2007), consistent with the idea that disparate treatment is triggered by the violation of prescriptive stereotypes (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). We propose that the same dynamic is likely to occur for violations of prescriptive racial stereotypes, so that

Table 3
Study 3: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Asian employee	.45	.50	—					
2. Female employee	.47	.50	.00	—				
3. Dominant employee	.55	.50	.13	-.09	—			
4. Competence	5.10	1.21	-.20*	-.09	.28**	—		
5. Warmth	4.40	1.53	-.15	-.01	-.62**	-.06**	—	
6. Dominance	4.41	2.04	.05	-.08	.75**	.44**	-.50**	—
7. Like as colleague	4.49	1.58	-.13	-.01	-.52**	.06	.64**	-.39**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

employees who violate these stereotypes are more likely to be racially harassed at work:

Hypothesis 6: East Asians who are dominant experience more racial harassment at work than East Asians who are not dominant and than other employees.

To test this hypothesis, we moved beyond a young undergraduate population to a group of working adults to see if conforming to racial stereotypes predicted East Asian employee experiences of racial harassment at work. In addition to measuring employee dominance, which Studies 1 and 2 show is both a descriptive and a prescriptive stereotype for East Asians, Study 4 included measures of employee warmth and competence. We therefore explored whether violating these descriptive dimensions of racial stereotypes predicted racial harassment as well, given that recent research has shown that violating descriptive racial stereotypes (i.e., Asian men who know about beer; Black men with “White” fashion and hobbies) triggers backlash (Phelan & Rudman, 2010). Even if it is considered typical but not desirable for East Asians to be cold and competent, observers may dislike having their expectations (e.g., Judice & Neuberg, 1998), if not their desires, violated. This would suggest that merely blurring descriptive group boundaries, or posing a distinctiveness threat (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1999), is enough to trigger treatment discrimination.

Study 4: Racial Harassment Against East Asians in the Workplace

We analyzed data from a survey of employees in government-sponsored community service centers located in the same major North American city. These centers have a relatively large proportion (approximately one third) of workers with East Asian backgrounds. The work performed by these employees involves “white collar” social work that typically requires a college education or above. This occupation is highly female-dominated. Because Study 3 showed that race did not interact with gender to predict coworker liking (i.e., dominance was similarly disliked in East Asian male and female employees), this female-dominated sample seemed as appropriate as any for an initial field study of the role of racial stereotype violations in predicting racial harassment against East Asians in the workplace.

Method

Procedure and participants. Surveys were sent to approximately 500 employees who were members of an international union. The union mailed our survey to employees at their home addresses and included a letter that explained the study, guaranteed participants’ anonymity, and encouraged recipients to complete the survey and return it in a postage-paid envelope addressed to the researcher. Due to the relatively high percentage of employees whose primary language was Chinese, employees were provided with both English and Chinese versions of the letter and survey. Participants were paid \$15 after completing and returning the survey.

One hundred fifty employees completed the survey, for a 30% response rate. This response rate is relatively good for a survey of this length and content (cf. Schneider, Swan, & Fitzgerald, 1997).

Forty-three percent of the respondents indicated a European/White ancestral background, 34% indicated an East Asian one, and 21% indicated another background (2% did not specify). A majority of the respondents were women (132), most were between 30 and 49 years old (65%; 20% were 20–29, 10% were 50–59), and most were college educated, having attended or graduated from university (43%) or graduate school (17%).

Measures. The survey began with questions about the respondent’s employment profile (e.g., tenure and hours worked per week) and was followed by questions about their personality and experiences at work. The survey ended with questions about personal demographics.

Dominance, warmth, and competence. Dominance and warmth were measured with 10 items each (e.g., “assertive,” “dominant,” “forceful”; $\alpha = .78$; “compassionate,” “warm,” “sympathetic,” $\alpha = .82$), similar to items used in Studies 1 and 2. Respondents indicated on a scale of 1 (*never or almost never true*) to 7 (*always or almost always true*) how true of them each characteristic was. To measure competence, we used five items that describe work reliability and conscientiousness (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990): Doing poor quality work, neglecting those tasks that will not affect your performance appraisal or pay raise, letting others do your work for you, being late for work, and being absent from work ($\alpha = .69$). We asked respondents how often they engaged in each of these behaviors in the past year, from 0 (*never*) to 5 (*more than once a week*), and reverse-scored the values so that higher values indicated higher levels of competence.

Racial harassment. Racial harassment was measured with seven items (e.g., “treated you badly because of your ethnicity,” $\alpha = .88$) used in prior studies of ethnic and racial harassment (Schneider, Hitlan, & Radhakrishnan, 2000). Respondents were asked to indicate how often they had been the target of each behavior in the past 2 years at work, from *never* (0) to *most of the time* (4). If they had experienced an item at least once in the past 2 years, they were asked to indicate how negative the experience was, from *not at all* (0) to *negative* (1) to *very negative* (2). The frequency of each experience was multiplied by its negativity and these products were averaged to capture severity of the harassment (Berdahl & Moore, 2006).

Control variables. We controlled for the number of hours worked per week (1 = *10 or fewer*, 2 = *11 to 20*, 3 = *21 to 35*, 4 = *36 to 45*, 5 = *46 to 55*, and 6 = *56 or more*; modal value was 3), as the frequencies of workplace experiences are likely to increase with the amount of time spent at work. We also controlled for three variables relating to informal or formal status, which may affect vulnerability to harassment: age (measured categorically by decade), gender (0 = *female*, 1 = *male*), and tenure in the organization (1 = *less than 6 months*, 2 = *6 months to 2 years*, 3 = *2 to 5 years*, 4 = *6 to 9 years*, 5 = *10 to 19 years*, and 6 = *20 years or more*; modal value was 5).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables are presented in Table 4.

To test Hypothesis 6, which predicts that dominant East Asians are harassed more than nondominant East Asians and than other employees, we conducted an ANOVA that included our control variables warmth and competence as covariates and East Asian

Table 4
 Study 4: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. East Asian	.34	.48	—							
2. Dominance	4.54	.94	-.08	.78						
3. Warmth	5.57	.75	-.19*	.38**	.82					
4. Competence	4.39	.67	.14	.06	.01	.69				
5. Harassment	.30	.86	.14	-.04	.01	-.24**	—			
6. Age	3.44	1.06	.06	.07	-.09	.24**	-.06	—		
7. Male	.10	.30	.09	.08	.09	-.13	-.06	.10	—	
8. Hours/week	3.05	.91	-.04	.20*	-.01	-.05	-.05	.14	.13	—
9. Tenure	3.02	1.12	-.01	.01	.04	-.10	.06	.36**	.18*	.20*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

(0 = not East Asian, 1 = East Asian) and dominance (median-split, 0 = nondominant, 1 = dominant) as independent variables. Being East Asian predicted racial harassment, $F(1, 140) = 10.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, with East Asian employees ($M = .86$, $SD = 1.35$) experiencing significantly more harassment than other employees ($M = .20$, $SD = 2.20$). Dominance almost reached significance, $F(1, 140) = 3.68$, $p = .06$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, with dominant employees ($M = .74$, $SD = 2.45$) experiencing more harassment than nondominant employees ($M = .31$, $SD = 1.05$). Consistent with Hypothesis 6, being East Asian interacted with being dominant to predict harassment, $F(1, 140) = 4.44$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. Figure 4 shows that dominant East Asians ($M = 1.29$, $SD = 4.06$) experienced significantly more workplace harassment than nondominant East Asians ($M = .42$, $SD = 1.71$) and than employees of other racial backgrounds who were dominant ($M = .20$, $SD = 2.49$) or nondominant ($M = .20$, $SD = 1.21$). Follow-up analyses comparing East Asians to Whites only (i.e., excluding non-East Asian minorities from analysis) showed that the interaction between East Asian and dominance remained significant, $F(1, 107) = 4.11$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$.

We also conducted follow-up analyses to see if being dominant and a member of a racial minority other than East Asian predicted racial harassment at work. It is possible that dominance is punished in racial minorities in general, rather than in East Asians specifically. Twenty-one percent of our sample ($N = 32$) belonged to a

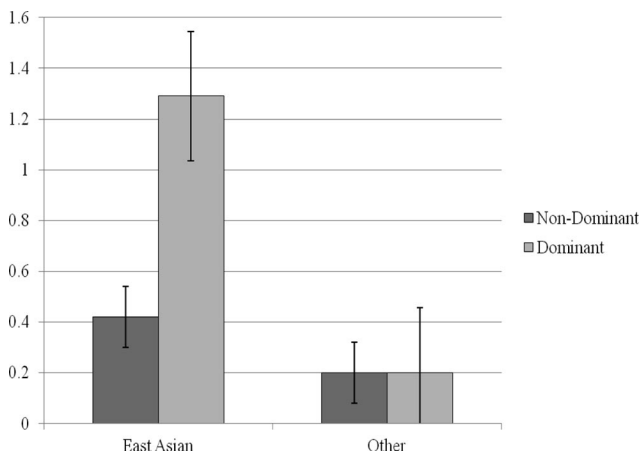


Figure 4. Study 4: Racial harassment by employee race and dominance.

non-East Asian racial minority (e.g., African, Southeast Asian). An ANOVA model with the same control variables, a non-East Asian minority dummy variable, and median-split dominance showed that being a member of a non-East Asian minority group did not predict racial harassment, $F(1, 140) = .04$, ns, and that being a member of a non-East Asian minority did not interact with dominance to predict harassment, $F(1, 140) = .75$, ns. An ANOVA model comparing non-East Asian minorities to Whites only (i.e., excluding East Asians from the analysis) also showed no significant main or interaction effects. In sum, being dominant predicted racial harassment for East Asian employees, but did not predict harassment for other racial minorities.

To examine the possibility that violating descriptive stereotypes for warmth and competence predicts workplace harassment against East Asians, we ran the same ANOVA models replacing dominance with warmth and competence. An ANOVA with control variables, dominance and competence as covariates and East Asian and warmth (median-split, 0 = cold, 1 = warm) as independent variables revealed a main effect for East Asian, $F(1, 140) = 7.08$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, as well as a significant interaction between East Asian and warmth, $F(1, 140) = 5.65$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Figure 5 shows that East Asians who violated the descriptive stereotype of East Asians as cold were racially harassed more ($M = .94$, $SD = 2.69$) than East Asians who conformed to this stereotype ($M = .35$, $SD = 1.96$) and than employees of other backgrounds, who tended to experience less harassment if warm ($M = .13$, $SD = 1.47$) and more harassment if cold ($M = .30$, $SD = 1.59$). This interaction remained significant, $F(1, 108) = 4.23$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, when non-East Asian minorities were excluded from the analysis (i.e., East Asians were compared only to Whites). There was no interaction between being a member of another racial minority and warmth on harassment. The ANOVA model on the effects of violating competence expectations on East Asian experiences of harassment revealed no interaction between being East Asian and being competent.

Discussion

East Asians reported experiencing more racial harassment at work than other employees, highlighting the importance of studying discrimination against East Asians in the workplace despite the portrayal of East Asians as a “model minority” that escapes discriminatory treatment. Importantly, East Asians who violated racial stereotypes were the ones targeted for racial harassment; East

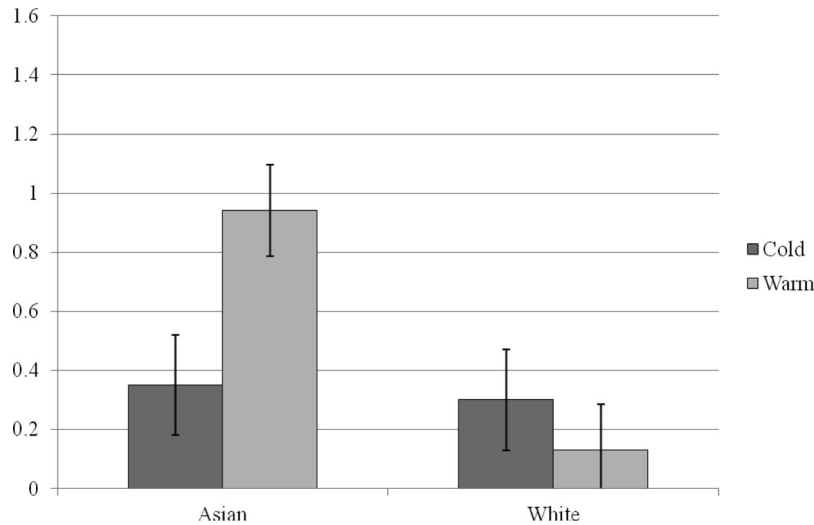


Figure 5. Study 4: Racial harassment by employee race and warmth.

Asians who “stayed in their place” did not experience more racial harassment than other employees. As predicted, East Asians who were dominant, and thereby violated a descriptive and a prescriptive racial stereotype, were subjected to more racial harassment than other employees. East Asians who were warm, and thereby violated the descriptive stereotype of being cold, were also subjected to more harassment. These results suggest that workplace harassment against East Asians occurs when they violate injunctive as well as descriptive norms. The implications of this pattern of mistreatment is that East Asians wishing to avoid harassment should not be dominant, and thereby forego power and leadership, and should also be cold, and thereby forego being liked.

General Discussion

Previous research on prejudice against Asian Americans has focused on the descriptive stereotypes of competence and warmth (Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002; Ho & Jackson, 2001; Lin et al., 2005), finding that East Asians are disliked due to their perceived lack of warmth and sociability (Lin et al., 2005) and envied due to their perceived high competence (Cuddy et al., 2007). The present research demonstrates that in addition to these descriptive stereotypes, East Asians are descriptively (Study 1) and prescriptively (Study 2) stereotyped as nondominant. A lack of dominance is likely to attenuate the threat posed to Whites by stereotypes of East Asians as competent and cold. Descriptive racial stereotypes may lead to anti-Asian sentiment via processes of system justification—e.g., “East Asians are cold and therefore do not need to be treated nicely;” “East Asian competence proves equal opportunity;” or “East Asians are not dominant enough to lead.” Prescriptive racial stereotypes may lead to prejudice against East Asians through processes of ego or self-esteem protection—for example, “East Asians are not dominant and therefore pose no threat;” and “East Asians who are dominant are out of line.”

Negative reactions and consequences to stereotype violators function to maintain existing social roles and power structures, as stereotypes stem from and reinforce these roles and inequalities (e.g., Eagly, 1987; Fiske & Stevens, 1993). Results of our research

show that East Asian employees who violate racial stereotypes face negative reactions and consequences at work. This happened when East Asians violated the descriptive stereotype that they are cold (i.e., warm East Asians were harassed more than others), as well as when East Asians violated the descriptive and prescriptive stereotype that East Asians are not dominant (i.e., dominant East Asians were liked less and harassed more). Similar to a recent experiment in which Asian targets who were knowledgeable about a counterstereotypic domain (beer) were sabotaged (Phelan & Rudman, 2010, Experiment 1), our results show that negative consequences ensue when Asians violate a descriptive stereotype. In addition, our results show that particularly negative consequences ensue when the violated stereotype is also prescriptive.

Importantly, our studies show that negative reactions to dominant East Asians did not depend on their gender and appeared to be unique to East Asians as a racial minority. In Study 3, the desirability of an East Asian coworker was affected by his or her level of dominance, regardless of gender. Thus, dominance appears to be undesirable in East Asian men as well as in East Asian women coworkers. Study 4 showed that dominant East Asians were more likely than other employees to be targeted for racial harassment at work, whereas members of other racial minorities who were dominant were not at increased risk of being harassed. This suggests that dominance is not proscribed for racial minorities in general but rather for East Asians in particular. For example, unlike Asian Americans, Latinos and Blacks are stereotyped as incompetent compared to Whites, and similar to Asians, Jewish Americans are stereotyped as competent and cold (Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999; Fiske et al., 2002). Stereotypes of how dominant these groups are likely to behave should differ as well based on their different histories, roles, and levels of power in North America.

The fact that violating a descriptive stereotype (viewed as typical) that is not also prescriptive (viewed as desirable) predicted workplace harassment against East Asians shows that descriptive stereotypes alone can motivate negative social treatment, or “hot” discrimination—even if the violation is in an otherwise positive direction (being warm). Prior research has interpreted negative

social reactions to the violation of a descriptive stereotype as evidence that the stereotype is also prescriptive, without directly measuring how desirable the characteristic is considered to be for that group (e.g., Heilman et al., 2004; Phelan & Rudman, 2010). Because our results suggest that both descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes can trigger backlash, a fruitful direction for future research would be to examine whether psychological and social reactions to individuals who violate descriptive expectations only are fundamentally different from, or similar to, reactions to individuals who violate injunctive norms for their group.

Our findings have several practical implications. As the proportion of East Asians in North American universities and workplaces continues to rise and as workplaces become increasingly diverse in general, the careful management of both real and perceived cultural differences is important. Only through awareness that racial stereotypes may be acting both descriptively and prescriptively can previously invisible prejudices begin to be addressed. Although changing emotion-laden beliefs is challenging, some experimental evidence suggests that educational interventions can be effective in reducing racial stereotyping and prejudice (Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary, 2001). Thus, organizations are obligated to explicitly communicate through their practices and policies that more subtle racial discrimination and harassment related to prescriptive stereotype violations will not be tolerated. Workplaces need to help their employees understand and prevent racial biases from influencing how they assess and treat each other.

Limitations and Future Directions

Like all studies, the ones presented here have limitations. Our first three studies involved undergraduate samples whose views of societal stereotypes may differ from those of the general public. These three studies had a significant number of East Asian participants, allowing us to test for and rule out racial differences in perceptions of stereotypes. Studies 1 and 2 had small majorities of East Asian participants (57% and 52%, respectively). Study 3 had a larger majority (70%); though there were over 50 participants of non-East Asian backgrounds in this study whose reactions to potential coworkers did not differ from those of participants of East Asian descent, it is possible that results might differ with a sample with a different racial composition.

Studies 1, 3, and 4 had a majority of female participants (77%, 63%, and 88%, respectively; Study 2 had 48%). Men's and women's ratings of targets did not differ in Studies 1–3 despite sufficient numbers to test for this difference, so we do not see this as much of a concern. Study 4, however, had an insufficient number of male employees to test whether gender interacted with race (and with stereotype violations) to predict rates and patterns of harassment. In Study 3, gender did not interact with race (and with stereotype violations) to predict liking of potential coworkers, but it is possible that patterns of racial harassment might differ in a gender-balanced or a male-dominated workplace. Additional research should examine whether these results replicate in different occupational environments.

We used self-rated measures of stereotype violations (personality) and workplace harassment in Study 4. The use of one-time self-rated measures introduces possible common method bias into our results for Study 4, making it possible that workplace harassment leads to dominance or warmth in East Asians rather than the

other way around, or that East Asians (but not others) who describe themselves as dominant or warm are more likely to perceive harassment. Though we think this is unlikely, longitudinal research would help to more firmly establish causal links between these variables. Furthermore, using self-ratings to measure competence may be problematic, and it would be ideal if more objective measures of competence were obtained in future studies.

Research on stereotypes and their outcomes has typically focused on the effects of race or on the effects of gender while neglecting to examine their intersectionality. Multiple social identities define stereotypes, and thus race and gender are best studied in combination (Browne, Tigges, & Press, 2001; Crenshaw, 1991; Pratto & Espinoza, 2001). Participants in studies 1 and 2 may have had men as a default category in mind (cf. Bodenhausen & Peery, 2009), rather than women, when considering how typical or desirable different characteristics are for East Asians in North America. Study 3 found no interaction between race and gender on coworker liking, but other characteristics (e.g., warmth), contexts (e.g., nonwork), or samples might reveal interactions. Future research should seek to theorize and test for such interactions, which seem likely given the literature on double jeopardy faced by minority women (e.g., Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Brown et al., 2001; King, 1998).

Conclusion

Our research shows that racial stereotypes of East Asians in North America are prescriptive in addition to being descriptive and are likely to serve to keep East Asians in subordinate organizational positions and undesirable social roles in the workplace. The perception that East Asians are high in competence and low in warmth and dominance is likely to help perpetuate the idea that East Asians are ideal as subordinate employees, suited for technical competence positions, but are unqualified to be leaders and managers (e.g., Sy et al., 2010). In addition, the prescription that East Asians be nondominant helps to reinforce the glass (or “bamboo”) ceiling. Keeping East Asians “cold” by punishing them when they are warm will help sustain the stereotype of “yellow peril” and justify excluding them from affiliative social networks crucial for career success. Keeping East Asians nondominant should encourage this competent “model minority” to stay in its place. Only through awareness of these stereotypes and how they function can we begin to overcome their deleterious effects. We encourage further research on the nature and operation of racial stereotypes.

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