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SHORT NOTES

Asians as the model minority: Implications for US Government's policies

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Asian Americans are often perceived as a 'model minority' – an ethnic minority that are high achieving, hardworking, self-reliant, law-abiding, as well as having few social and mental health problems. Although the impact of the model minority image on the US government's redistributive policies is a widely contested topic in public discourses, there has been little research on the association between the model minority image, people's worldviews, and attitudes towards the US government's redistributive policies. In an experiment that measured American participants' worldviews and manipulated the salience of the model minority image, we have demonstrated that those who believed in a malleable social reality were relatively unsupportive of government policies that help the Asian American (*vs* African American) communities. Theoretical and practical implications of this finding are discussed.

Key words: Asian, government policies, lay theory, model minority.

Introduction

One recurrent theme in the political discourses in the USA is that there are 'two societies' in America: 'one Black, one White – separate and unequal' (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968). Research on racialized politics has focused on the Black-White dichotomy (see Sears, Sidanius, & Bobo, 2000), and little attention has been given to Asian Americans. The relative invisibility of the Asian American communities in the research literature is accompanied by the public perception that Asian Americans are self-sufficient minorities that do not need government assistance (Takaki, 1998). For example, in March 2008, due to a major budget deficit, the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Community Development announced budget cuts for 19 community development service programs. The three most affected programs were the ones that provided financial services and full-day childcare to low-income Asian families, and small business development services to Asian Americans (Chin, 2008).

One reason why social service programs and other services that would benefit low-income Asian American families are often denied funding is due to the 'model minority' image – the over-generalized belief that Asian Americans are ethnic minorities that are self-sufficient, high achieving, hardworking, as well as having few social and mental health problems (Kim, 1973; Takaki, 1998). Although the

influence of the model minority image on Americans' reactions to the government's redistributive policies is a widely discussed topic, there has been little empirical research on the topic. Drawing from the unimodel theory of persuasion and attitude formation (Kruglanski & Thompson, 1999a, b), the current research examines the impact of Americans' worldviews and the salience of the model minority image on Americans' attitudes toward the government's redistributive policies by investigating how attitudes are formed based on assumptions and shared representations about Asians as a model minority.

Model minority

The term 'model minority' romanticizes Asian Americans as a hardworking, successful, and law-abiding ethnic minority that overcome hardship, oppression, and discrimination to achieve great success (Lee & Joo, 2005; Alvarez, Juang, & Liang, 2006). The term first emerged in the 1960s around the time of the Civil Rights Movement. Since then, it has invited fierce criticisms from the learned community. First, the model minority image has been criticized for its failure to recognize the diverse ethnocultural backgrounds of the Asian groups. A common concern is that the model minority image homogenizes members of over 30 ethnic groups who speak more than 300 languages into one category (Kim, 1973; Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & Mcdonough, 2004).

Second, the 'model' minority image is mythical; it glorifies Asian American success and disregards well-documented achievement disparities (Hu, 1989; Takaki,

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1998; Lee, 2001), mental health problems (Sue, Sue, Sue, & Takeuchi, 1995; Gee, 2004), substance abuse (Varma & Siris, 1996; Berganio, Tacata, & Jamero, 1997), and physical health issues (Sy, Chng, Choi, & Wong, 1998) within the Asian communities. For instance, although Asian Americans are often depicted as a hardworking, financially successful model minority with above national average household income, most Asian American families live in metropolitan cities with higher-than-average costs of living. Moreover, compared to other American families, Asian American families tend to have larger family sizes and more members working longer hours; thus, the household income that appears to be above average does not translate into higher standards of living for most Asian American families (Takaki, 1998). The romanticized depiction of Asian Americans also masks the heterogeneity of Asian American families—although Asian American families are more likely than White American families to have a household income of \$75 000, they are also more likely to have an income of less than \$25 000. Furthermore, Asian American elderly and children are more likely to be poor than their counterparts from other racial groups in the population (Gupta & Ritoper, 2007). For example, whereas 0.6% of seniors and 9.3% of children live in poverty among non-Hispanic White Americans, 12.3% of Asian American seniors and 13.6% of Asian American children live below the poverty line (Gupta & Ritoper, 2007).

In terms of educational attainment, the high achieving model minority image also conceals the needs of many underprivileged Asian Americans (e.g. Hmong, Cambodians, and Laotians), leading to the exclusion of Asian Americans from the federal affirmative action regulations (Suzuki, 2002). In the domain of mental health, the low service utilization rate among Asian Americans appears to be consistent with the model minority image that Asian Americans are a self-reliant and resilient minority that can overcome great difficulties to succeed. However, a recent study revealed that Asian American females between the ages of 15–24 have the highest suicide rate, and teenage Asian females are more likely to have depression, compared with their peers in other racial groups (Calvan, 2008). A recent report by the College Board (2008) also found that in an elite public university, Asian students committing suicide accounted for 13% of all student deaths in 1995 and the number increased to 46% in 2000. Furthermore, Asian Americans often underreport their mental health problems due to feelings of shame and stigma (Sue & Sue, 2008), and only 28% of Asian Americans who have been diagnosed with psychological problems would seek treatment, compared to 54% in the US general population (Calvan, 2008).

The quiet, law-abiding image of the model minority flies in the face of Asian American youth's involvement in crime and delinquency. A Federal Bureau of Investigation report (1999; cited in Tsunokai, 2004) showed that, in 1997, Asian

American youth were more likely than their counterparts from other racial groups to be arrested for criminal offences (e.g. murder, robbery, counterfeiting, and vandalism). In addition, Asian American college students who have become gang members often exhibit problem behaviours (e.g. academic suspension, skipping school) and cherish anti-social attitudes (Tsunokai, 2004).

In short, there is considerable evidence for great disparities within the Asian American communities (e.g. Hu, 1989; Sue *et al.*, 1995; Varma & Siris, 1996; Berganio *et al.*, 1997; Sy *et al.*, 1998; Lee, 2001; Gee, 2004), suggesting the model minority image is a socially constructed myth. Despite this, the news media in the USA continue to depict Asian Americans as 'America's super minority' and 'America's greatest success' and celebrate 'the triumph of Asian-Americans' and the 'success story of one minority group in the USA' (Takaki, 1998). The partial media coverage of Asian Americans' success propagates the model minority image (Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998), hiding those Asians who live below the poverty line and those who suffer from physical health, mental health, and substance abuse problems (e.g. Kim, 1973; Crystal, 1989; Tang, 1997; Leong & Lau, 2001) behind the glamour of the 'Asian American successes'.

Some writers have queried whether romanticizing Asian Americans' successes is an attempt by the American ruling class to legitimize the 'American Dream' and the 'bedrock values' of America, including hard work, fiscal responsibility, religious faith, community spirit, and tolerance (Takaki, 1998). Other writers have further suggested that the model minority image was an elite class invention during the Civil Rights Movement to disunite African Americans and Asian Americans, to justify social inequality by holding African Americans and other disadvantaged groups to the model minority standard (Omatsu, 1994; Kawai, 2005), and to dissolve the multiculturalism ideology (Takaki, 1993).

It is debatable whether the propagation of the model minority image is the American ruling class's strategic means to promote the American 'bedrock values', justify social inequalities, and/or disunite Asian Americans and African Americans. However, the evidence is clear that the model minority image propagated by the news media in the USA has set up a 'model standard' for the American people to self-evaluate and to evaluate other disadvantaged groups (Chao, Chiu, & Kwok, unpubl. data). For instance, in one study (Study 3), Chao, Chiu, & Kwok (unpubl. data) found that reading an Asian American success story in a news report can fortify European Americans' perceptions that the model minority standard is widely shared among their peers, and that their peers have more favourable attitudes towards Asian Americans versus African Americans. This result suggested that reading about Asian American successes in the news media can increase the perceived consensual validity of the model minority stereotype, and the

tendency to use the model minority standard as a yardstick to evaluate African Americans and other minority groups.

Attitude towards redistributive social policies

The impact of the model minority image in the USA goes beyond interracial perceptions. The romanticized model minority image can reinforce the misperception that Asian Americans have few, if any, physical and mental health concerns (Kim, 1973; Leong & Lau, 2001) and, hence, conceal the great disparities within Asian communities. The glamour of the model minority image may also render some disadvantaged groups within Asian American communities, such as poor families living in a single-room-occupancy unit in Chinatown, invisible. Consequently, Asian American communities are not considered for many federally supported demonstration projects, Educational Opportunity Programs, and other social services that are intended to help low-income families (Takaki, 1998; Yu, 2006).

It is important to note that the people who formulated these social policies are elected government officials. As such, the policies may reflect the sentiment of the voters. Thus, it is important to examine how exposure to the model minority image in the news media can influence Americans' attitudes towards government redistributive policies, which are policies that aim to address social inequalities by redirecting resources and opportunities from the dominant groups to the disadvantaged groups. The present study represents an initial attempt to address this important issue. In the present study, we focused on Americans' attitudes towards redistributive policies that serve the Asian American and African American communities, because these two ethnic minority groups are often pitted against each other in the public discourses (Omatsu, 1994; Kawai, 2005).

Unimodel theory of persuasion

Previous research has found consistent evidence for the link between individuals' attitudes towards racial policies and such psychological factors as personal beliefs and social status (e.g. Sniderman & Carmines, 1997; Sidanius, Singh, Hetts, & Federico, 2000). Thus, in the present research, we focus on the joint influence of Americans' lay beliefs about the social reality and the salience of the model minority image.

The unimodel theory of persuasion (Kruglanski & Thompson, 1999a, b) provides a useful framework for understanding this joint influence. The unimodel theory is an outgrowth of the Lay Epistemic Theory (LET; Kruglanski, 1989). It views persuasion as a process whereby attitudes are formed based on key assumptions and pertinent

evidence. Attitudes are subjective knowledge or conclusions about an attitude object, whereas evidence is the input information relevant to the attitude object. People perform syllogistic reasoning (*given* [major premise], *if* [evidence for minor premise] . . . *then* [conclusion]) to form an attitude toward a certain attitude object. For example, an individual may believe that 'only disadvantaged people need government support'. This belief is the *major premise* in the syllogism. Affirmative evidence of a particular instance – for example, Asian Americans are a rich and successful model minority; African Americans are a disadvantaged minority – is the *minor premise* in the syllogism. Together, the major and minor premises would lead to the conclusion that Asian Americans need less government support than do African Americans.

When reasoning about minority groups' need for public assistance, a key influential factor is the individuals' lay theory of the social reality. Lay people construct theories to grasp their experiences. Although these theories are not always well articulated, they can colour people's perceptions of and reactions to other people (e.g. Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Chiu, Dweck, Tong, & Fu, 1997a; Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997b; Dweck, 2000). For example, research on lay theories has shown that individuals who believe that the social world is malleable (incremental theorists) tend to desire changes in the status quo (Chen, Chiu, & Chan, 2009). When they register the presence of social inequalities in the society, they favour progressive social programs to offer equal opportunities to the needy disadvantaged groups (Chiu *et al.*, 1997b). In contrast, people who believe that the social world is fixed (entity theorists) do not prefer the use of progressive redistributive policies to address social inequality (Chiu *et al.*, 1997a). Thus, when judging the government's redistributive policies, whereas incremental theorists would accept the major premise that 'the government should help the needy minority,' entity theorists would not.

As noted, the news media often depict Asian Americans as model minorities that have worked hard to overcome their social and economic hardships in the USA (Takaki, 1998; Lee & Joo, 2005; Alvarez *et al.*, 2006). To incremental theorists, the romanticized successes of the Asian Americans indicate that Asian Americans are not a needy minority. Thus, according to the unimodel theory, when the model minority image is salient in the judgment context, incremental theorists, who believe that only needy minorities need government support, would decide that compared to other disadvantaged minorities (e.g. African Americans), Asian Americans are not a needy minority and, hence, would be relatively unsupportive of government policies that help the Asian American (*vs* African American) communities. In contrast, entity theorists, who reject the major premise that public assistance should depend on the neediness of the disadvantaged groups, would have the same attitude toward redistributive policies regardless of whether

the model minority image is salient or not. The present study was designed to test these predictions.

Hypotheses. Incremental theorists would be relatively unsupportive of government policies that help the Asian American (*vs* African American) communities if the model minority image is salient in the judgment context; whereas, entity theorists would be unaffected by the salience of the model minority image.

Method

Participants

The participants were 155 students from a public university in the US Midwest. Among them, 80 were Asian Americans and 75 were European Americans (60% female; average age = 19.46 years). Among the 80 Asian American participants, 50 were of Chinese descent (e.g. Chinese, Taiwanese, Indonesian-Chinese, or Cantonese), 14 were of Korean descent, five self-identified as Indian American, three as Filipino American, two as Japanese American, and six as other Asian descent. The participants either received course requirement credits or \$8 in exchange for their participation in the experiment.

We included an Asian American sample and a European American sample because previous studies have shown that majority (*vs* minority) group members are more motivated to maintain the existing status quo and hence tend to oppose policies that would redistribute resources from the dominant group to the disadvantaged group (Sidanius *et al.*, 2000). We expected that compared with Asian Americans (the minority group), European Americans would be less supportive towards redistributive policies. However, there is no theoretical reason to believe that majority versus minority status would moderate joint influence of lay theories and model minority image on attitude toward redistributive policy. Thus, we expect to find evidence for such joint influence among both Asian Americans and European Americans.

Experimental manipulation

The participants were informed that they would participate in a writing evaluation study and several 'unrelated' survey studies. In the writing evaluation task, the experimenter presented a newspaper article to the participants and told them that 'we are interested in how readers evaluate the quality of journalistic writings' and that the article they received was a news article randomly selected from widely circulated local newspapers in Illinois. We constructed three news articles for the purpose of this study: one article was about a successful Asian American, one about a successful European American, and one about a topic unre-

lated to success. The participants were randomly assigned to read one of these newspaper articles.

The Asian American article described the success story of an Asian American (Yoshi Kashima) who had received recognition from the State of Illinois for his achievements. The European American article was identical to the Asian American article except that the protagonist's name was changed to Dave Ashford (an Anglo-Saxon name). We included a successful European American condition to demonstrate that, according to the model minority discourses, it is reading an Asian American success story, not just any success story, that would influence individuals' attitudes towards redistributive policies. The control article described the work of a dream analyst and its contents were unrelated to success.

The participants were instructed to read the article carefully, rate the article's clarity (clear-unclear) and tone (positive-negative), summarize the article in a few sentences and discuss the article's key message. At the end of the experiment, participants were also asked to rate the article's credibility. No group differences were found across the three conditions on any of these ratings, indicating that the three articles were seen as similarly clear [$F(2, 145) = 1.43, ns$], positive [$F(2, 145) = 1.20, ns$] and credible [$F(2, 145) = 0.42, ns$].

Assessment of lay theories

Participants' lay theories about the malleability of the world were assessed by the implicit theories of the world measure (Chiu *et al.*, 1997a). The measure consisted of four items (e.g. 'Some societal trends may dominate for a while, but the fundamental nature of our world is something that cannot be changed much'). Participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed with each item on a six-point scale, from 1 (very strongly agree) to 6 (very strongly disagree). We used the mean rating of the four items to form a measure of the lay theory of the world (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$). Higher scores on the summary measure indicated stronger beliefs in the malleability of the social reality. Extensive evidence pertaining to the scale's reliability, validity, and factor structure can be found in Dweck *et al.* (1995) and Chiu *et al.* (1997a). For example, the entity theory of the world as measured by the scale predicts attitudinal and behavioural commitment to maintaining the status quo (Chiu *et al.*, 1997b), and the tendency to align personal attitudes and qualities with the dominant ideology or role expectations (Chen *et al.*, 2009; Chiu & Hong, 1999). The scale does not correlate with socially desirable responding, self-presentation concerns, and political liberalism. It also does not correlate with measures of cognitive styles, such as close-mindedness or need for cognition (Dweck *et al.*, 1995).

Attitude toward retributive policies

We assessed the participants' support of redistributive policies by adopting a measure that has been used in previous research (Sidanius *et al.*, 2000). The measure consisted of five items with Asian Americans as the beneficiary of the policy and five items with African Americans as the beneficiary. An example item is: 'Government should do what it can to improve the economic condition of poor [Asians/Blacks].' Participants responded on a seven-point scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) to indicate their attitude towards the government policy. For each target group, we used the mean rating of the five items for that group to form a measure of support for redistributive policies favouring that group (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$ for both measures). Higher scores on these measures indicated stronger support for redistributive policies favouring Asian Americans or African Americans. Sidanius *et al.* (2000) have reported evidence pertaining to the reliability and validity of this measure. For instance, the support towards redistributive policies measure is associated with political ideologies and values, and social dominance orientation; however, it is not associated with general attitudes towards ethnic minority (Sidanius *et al.*, 2000).

Procedure

Upon arrival, a female experimenter greeted the participants and told them that they would participate in several studies. The participants first completed the lay theory measure. Next, they were given the writing evaluation task (the between-subjects experimental manipulation). After reading and responding to the article, the participants completed a filler survey before taking the dependent measures. The dependent measures were presented to the participants as part of a student preference survey.

Results

We carried out a 3 (News Condition: Kashima, Ashford, or Dream Analyst) \times 2 (Participant Ethnicity: Asian or European) \times 2 (Policy Target: Asian or African American; within-subjects) \times Lay Theory (mean-centred) General Linear Model (GLM) on the participants' attitudes toward redistributive policies.

The results revealed a significant main effect of policy target, $F(1, 142) = 4.99$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$. This main effect is qualified by the interaction of news condition, policy target, and lay theory, $F(2, 142) = 3.184$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$. To understand the nature of this interaction, we have conducted a Policy Target \times Lay Theory GLM for each of the three experimental conditions. The interaction of policy target and lay theory was significant in the

Kashima condition only, $F(1, 47) = 4.61$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.09$ [$F(1, 49) = 1.95$, *ns*, in the Ashford condition, and $F(1, 46) = 4.43$, *ns*, in the Dream Analyst condition].

Simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991; West, Aiken, & Krull, 1996) was carried out to understand the interaction of policy target and lay theory in the Kashima condition. As shown in Figure 1, the effect of policy target was significant when endorsement of a malleable world was high – when it was centred at one standard deviation

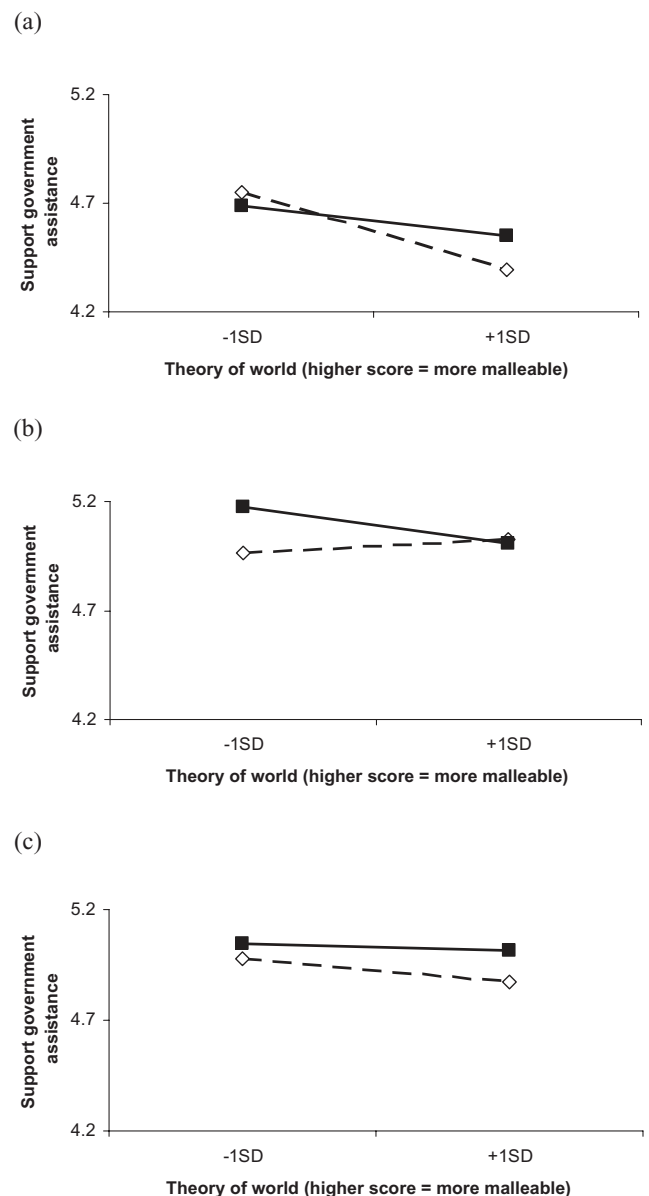


Figure 1 Support of redistributive government policies favouring Asians and Blacks as a function of lay theory of world in the (a) Kashima Condition (b) Ashford Condition, and (c) Dream Analyst Condition. —◇—, Asian; —■—, Black.

above the sample mean, $F(1, 47) = 5.23$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.10$. Consistent with our hypothesis, after reading an Asian American success story in the news media, participants who believe in a malleable social reality favoured redistributive policies that helped the needy African Americans more than policies that helped the presumably successful Asian Americans. In contrast, when the endorsement of a malleable world was low – when the measure was centred at one standard deviation below the sample mean, the policy target effect was not significant, $F(1, 47) = 0.89$, *ns*.

Also consistent with our hypothesis, the main effect of participant ethnicity was significant, $F(1, 142) = 22.45$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.15$. Compared to Asian Americans (the minority group), European Americans (the majority group) were less supportive of redistributive policies ($M_{Asian} = 5.38$, $SD_{Asian} = 1.27$; $M_{European} = 4.36$, $SD_{European} = 1.19$) in general. However, the four-way interaction involving participant ethnicity was not significant, indicating that participant ethnicity did not moderate the joint effect of lay theories and exposure to the model minority image.

Discussion

The current study applies the unimodel theory to understand racialized politics in the news media. The results revealed that among individuals who believe in a malleable reality, exposure to the model minority image could result in differential support for redistributive policies that benefit Asian Americans (*vs* African Americans). Incremental theorists are motivated to change the existing status quo and address social inequality (Chiu *et al.*, 1997a). This motivation makes them vulnerable to the influence of the model minority image the mass media have propagated. Reading vivid stories depicting the successes of a few Asian Americans leaves the incremental theorists with the impression that Asian Americans need less support than other disadvantaged groups, and leads the incremental theorists to withdraw support for social programs that address Asian Americans' needs. In contrast, for individuals who believe in the fixed reality, they are not concerned with addressing the needs of the needy disadvantaged groups and are not influenced by the model minority image.

In the present study, we also found that compared with ethnic minorities (Asian Americans), the majority group (European Americans) is less supportive of redistributive policies that would channel resources to the ethnic minorities. This majority-minority difference in policy support is open to two alternative interpretations. First, the lack of support from majority group members can be interpreted as a form of group-serving bias, motivated by the desire to maintain their dominant status. Second, our finding may reflect the minority group members' greater understanding

of the needs of their own community. Future studies can tease apart these two possibilities by manipulating perceived social mobility and exposure to information (knowledge) about the needs of ethnic minority groups.

Theoretical implications

As noted, previous research that examined racialized politics has focused almost exclusively on the Black-White dichotomy (see Sears *et al.*, 2000). The present study represents an initial effort taken to understand American racialized politics beyond this dichotomy. Our findings highlight the need to examine the racial tension in the USA by revealing how the image of an ethnic minority can be manipulated (intentionally or unintentionally) to influence interracial dynamics.

More importantly, the present study empirically examined the questions of whether and how the model minority image might influence individuals' support towards government redistributive policies – a question that has long been discussed in the academic and political discourses (e.g. Kim, 1973; Takaki, 1998; Leong & Lau, 2001; Yu, 2006). Consistent with the arguments that have been put forth in these discourses, our results demonstrate how popularization of a glamorous image of Asian Americans can lead to withholding of attitudinal support from both European and Asian Americans for public policies that would address the needs of underprivileged Asian Americans. Ironically, this effect was particularly pronounced among those who believe in addressing prevailing racial inequalities in the society.

The current paper also illustrates how basic psychological principles can be applied to understand complex social political phenomena. Consistent with the unimodel theory of persuasion, we found that lay theories about the malleability of the world frame the major premises people use to construct attitudes on redistributive policy. People then use the contents of the model minority image as evidence for the minor premise to determine whether Asian Americans are a needy community. The conceptually driven major premise and the salience of evidence for the minor premise jointly determine the attitudes toward redistributive policies. For individuals who subscribe to the incremental belief of the world, the salience of the model minority image influences their support towards government redistributive policies; whereas, for individuals who do not subscribe to the incremental belief, the salience of the model minority image does not impact their attitudes towards redistributive policies.

Future research is needed to determine whether our results can be generalized to sociocultural environments outside of the USA. We speculate that in countries (e.g. Australia) where Asians belong to a positively evaluated minority group, stories of a successful Asian and lay beliefs

about the malleability of the world would jointly influence individuals' support for redistributive policies. In Asia, we speculate that similar processes would influence the mainstream society's responses toward a specific social group. For example, in Indonesia where Chinese Indonesians, but not Asians in general, are perceived as a model minority group, we expect that the image of a successful Chinese Indonesian would elicit response patterns that are similar to those towards Asian Americans in the USA. Furthermore, in China, success stories about the enterprising grassroots entrepreneurs in some coastal regions in Southern China may lower the perceived need for government intervention to address regional inequality in wealth distribution. These possibilities merit future studies.

The present research focuses on the model minority image of Asian Americans and its influence on attitudes towards redistributive policies. One limitation of the present investigation is that we did not examine the effects of success images of other positively evaluated minority groups (e.g. Jewish Americans) or the effects of public discourse on a successful member from a stigmatized group (e.g. African Americans). With the changes in the interracial dynamics after the historic 2008 US Presidential Election, it is important to investigate in future research how the success image of other minority groups may impact racialized politics in the USA. Another limitation of the present study was the generalizability of its finding from a college student sample. Although the principles of syllogistic reasoning and persuasion proposed in the unimodel theory are assumed to be general social cognitive principles (Kruglanski & Thompson, 1999a, b) that operate similarly among college students and in the general population, future studies are needed to verify this assumption and to identify the boundary conditions of these principles.

Practical implications

Previous research has documented the prevalence of the model minority image of Asian Americans (Wong *et al.*, 1998), and how the model minority image can influence people's perception of ethnic minorities (Chao, Chiu, & Kwok, unpubl. data). The present study examines the potential impact of the model minority image on political attitudes, and illustrates how socially constructed (mis)representations of Asian Americans could legitimize neglect of the needs of underprivileged Asian Americans. Thus, as positive as the model minority image appears to be, it homogenizes all Asian Americans into one category (Lee, 2002) and hides the problems and needs of a sizeable population of disadvantaged Asian Americans under the carpet (Kim, 1973; Vo, 2004; Yu, 2006). The model minority myth also renders those Asian Americans who live below the poverty line, and those who suffer from mental health and other social issues (e.g. domestic violence), invisible.

For instance, substance abuse issues within Asian American communities have been a largely ignored topic (Uba, 1994; Niv, Wong, & Hser, 2006). The model minority myth justifies withholding of social services provided to Asian communities and pressures Asian American substance abusers to hide their problems to avoid bringing disgrace to the family. Indeed, Asian Americans are less likely than European Americans to receive and seek medical and psychiatric treatment for substance abuse (Niv *et al.*, 2006). As a result, the burning concern about substance abuse problems within the Asian communities (Mercado, 2000) is often left unexposed (Sakai, Ho, Shore, Risk, & Price, 2005; Niv *et al.*, 2006).

The model minority image also presents challenges to non-profit or community-based organizations that serve the Asian American communities. First, it justifies denial of funding for social services programs that serve Asian Americans (Kim, 1973; Takaki, 1998). Second, Asian Americans' underutilization of services (Calvan, 2008) further legitimizes the denial of funding and limits the availability of services to Asian American communities. Similar issues have surfaced in the domain of domestic violence. Many victims of domestic violence in Asian American communities who desperately need emotional counselling have not been able to receive services and assistance (Grossman & Lundy, 2007). Every year, the San Francisco-based Asian Women's Shelter was forced to turn away 75% of battered Asian women seeking shelter due to lack of resources (Gupta & Ritoper, 2007).

Furthermore, the educational needs of Asian American students are often placed on the back burner because the model minority image de-legitimizes Asians and other racial minorities to campaign for racial equality (Yu, 2006), and directs attention away from struggling Asian American students (Lee, 2002; Nance, 2007). For instance, Asian Americans were not initially included as a protected minority under the federal affirmative action regulations (Suzuki, 2002), although many Asian American students had to struggle with academics. The US Census 2000 data revealed that, in the USA, 53.3% of Cambodians, 59.6% of Hmong, and 49.6% of Laotians over 25 years of age have less than a high school education. These figures stand in stark contrast with the national figure of 19%. The failure of these Asian Americans to conform to the model minority expectation might lead to unjust treatments by their teachers (Chang & Sue, 2003) and have a negative impact on their self-esteem (Lee & Joo, 2005). Apparently, the glamour of the model minority image overshadows those Asian American students who are struggling with life and academics. By drawing attention to the impact of the model minority image on racial (mis)perceptions and social policies, we hope our results can bring to light the needs of struggling and neglected Asian Americans.

Conclusion

Previous studies have documented the influence of the model minority image on interracial perceptions. The present study built on this result and further examined the joint effects of the model minority image and people's lay beliefs on attitudes towards redistributive policies. Although the impact of the model minority image on redistributive policies has been a widely discussed topic, little research has been conducted to systematically examine it. The present study addresses this topic through uncovering the connection between the model minority image, people's worldview, and attitudes towards government redistributive policies. Our results show that exposure to the glamour of the model minority image can reduce support for needy Asian Americans, at least from some individuals. Specifically, exposure to the model minority image can increase the reluctance to support government redistributive policies that help Asian American communities among those who believe in a malleable social reality and welcome social change. We hope that our results can inspire future research on this topic that can have tremendous impact on the well-being of Asian Americans and on their relations with other ethnic groups in the USA.

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