

Mainstream Versus Ethnic Media: How They Shape Ethnic Pride and Self-Esteem Among Ethnic Minority Audiences

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This article explores the underlying processes that influence the ways in which mainstream and ethnic media shape ethnic minority audiences' self-concepts. Ethnic minorities are often underrepresented and presented in stereotypical and negative ways in mainstream popular U.S. culture, while ethnic media tend to represent them in more diverse and auspicious ways. This study uses survey methodology to simultaneously assess the differential effects of mainstream and ethnic media on ethnic minorities. Specifically, it tests the role of mainstream media and ethnic media in influencing ethnic pride, self-esteem, and ethnic performance (behavioral expression of one's ethnic identity) among Indian Americans. Results from path analyses reveal that whereas mainstream media is associated with decreased self-esteem, ethnic media use is associated with increased ethnic pride and ethnic performance. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Keywords: ethnic media, stereotyping, diasporic communities, Indian Americans, survey

Media are powerful social agents through which individuals from minority groups learn about themselves and their group identity, in comparison with that of the majority group (Berry & Mitchell-Kernan, 1982). Research in the U.S. media context documents that contemporary popular mainstream media narratives routinely represent ethnic minorities in negative ways (Aoki & Mio, 2009; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Greenberg, Mastro, & Brand, 2002). Negative portrayals in popular culture can increase identity salience and negative self-evaluations in minority members (Fujioka, 2005; Ward, 2004). Not surprisingly,

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Date submitted: 2016–10–05

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minority audiences often report greater sensitivity to their group's self-referencing information (Appiah, 2002) and use coping mechanisms such as social distancing to shield themselves from negative impact (Fujioka, 2005; Somani & Doshi, 2016).

In contrast to mainstream media, ethnic media cater to ethnic audience interests and often challenge cultural stereotypes by providing more auspicious and diverse portrayals of minority groups. Ethnic media refer to media that are "produced for a particular ethnic community" (Matsaganis, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach, 2011, p. 5) and often include transnational media consumed by diasporic communities. Engagement with ethnic media by minority audiences has primarily been studied from an acculturation perspective to understand how immigrants navigate mainstream culture in the host country (Dalisy, 2012; Hwang & He, 1999; Moon & Park, 2007). Ethnic media such as Bollywood films help Indian Americans¹ negotiate their ethnic identity in their host country and also stay connected to their homeland (Desai, 2006; Mallapragada, 2006; Punathambekar, 2005). The current investigation focused on Indian Americans, whose engagement with ethnic media,² especially Indian popular films that are easily accessible, have been studied by several media scholars (Aksoy & Robins, 2003; Hossain & Veenstra, 2015; Mallapragada, 2006, 2013; Punathambekar, 2005; Raman & Harwood, 2008; Somani, 2011).

What is often missing from the literature on media and identity is the simultaneous examination of how mainstream and ethnic media consumption differentially influence ethnic minority audiences (see Johnson, 2010, for a similar critique). Indeed, ethnic minorities usually consume both mainstream and ethnic media (Allen, 2001; Durham, 2004; Jeffres, 2000; Mora & Kang, 2016; Seo & Moon, 2013; Somani, 2011), and these sources vary drastically in the ways in which they represent one's ethnic group (Aoki & Mio, 2009; Greenberg et al., 2002; Ramasubramanian, 2005; Wolock & Punathambekar, 2014). It is, therefore, likely that mainstream media and ethnic media exposure vary greatly in the ways in which they shape audience members' attitudes toward themselves and their ethnic group. The current research attempts to take a step toward addressing this gap by examining the differential effects of mainstream and ethnic media use on Indian Americans's individual self-esteem and collective ethnic pride as well as their behavioral expressions of ethnic identity (also known as ethnic performance). It explores the

¹ In our survey, we asked participants to self-identify as "Indian Americans or people of Indian descent living in the U.S." Thus, in the context of our study, "Indian Americans" refers to anyone living in the U.S. who claims ties to India by virtue of citizenship, immigration status, and family ties. There are many subgroups within the Indian diaspora in the United States. Because our study was interested in understanding Indian ethnic identity, we classified in-group as anyone within the Indian diaspora and out-group as those who do not belong to the diaspora. This classification does not preclude the existence of different subgroups and affiliations within the Indian diaspora. However, these internal groupings were not the focus of our study and therefore, the participants in our study were not grouped along those lines.

² In our study, *ethnic media* refer to films and television produced in India. We did not include mainstream U.S. media that depicted Indian Americans because such content is featured on major networks and is designed to appeal to a generic U.S audience beyond those in the diaspora. Since we were interested in understanding if media played a role in expressing an ethnic identity that is still considered "foreign" in the context of American culture, we restricted our definition of ethnic media to media produced in India.

possibility that for Indian Americans, while mainstream media might have detrimental effects on their sense of self, ethnic media help boost ethnic pride and positive self-concept.

Mainstream Media Representations

Content analyses of mainstream representations in popular American entertainment media have documented that Indian characters are often represented as part of an ensemble or as side characters rather than the main protagonist in popular American culture (Nijhawan, 2015). For instance, representations in popular films reveal Eurocentric, Orientalist biases by depicting Indians in stereotypical ways as deprived, exotic, and uncivilized (Mitra, 1999; Ramasubramanian, 2005; Shome, 1996). Wolock and Punathambekar (2014) point to MTV-Desi and *Outsourced* as examples of American TV networks making attempts to increase representation of Indians in mainstream content. However, the quality of representation still leaves much to be desired. Previous negative stereotypes of Indians in U.S. media involved emphasizing Indians's immigrant status through "accents," (e.g., Apu in *The Simpsons*; see Davé, 2013) and portraying them as having menial jobs (Indians as gas station owners), asexual or sexually incompetent, and without personal lives (e.g., Lawrence Kutner in *House*; Davé, 2013; Nijhawan, 2015). Although Indians are sometimes portrayed as professionals such as doctors or scientists, the characters are sexually ambiguous and lacking in social competencies (e.g., Raj in *The Big Bang Theory*; see Lee, 2015; Shetty, 2015).

Such limited media representations ultimately constrain the ways in which minorities think about themselves. Underrepresented groups may be motivated to identify with any available representation simply because a few portrayals are better than no representation at all (Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Fryberg, 2015). Media, like other social cues, can influence minorities' self and group-based perceptions. Intergroup comparisons in mainstream media are likely to increase identity salience and identity threat (James, 1993; Turner, 1985). For example, studies reveal that African Americans are well aware of the negative mainstream media stereotypes of their in-group, and this awareness in turn predicts negative public perceptions (i.e., metaperceptions of how others view one's in-group) of their in-group (Fujioka, 2005; Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997).

Even subtle implicit stereotypical cues in the media can potentially lead to long-lasting effects on ethnic minority audiences' self-concepts and self-esteem. Prior research has shown that such negative messages can have self-disabling effects, including lower self-esteem (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). For instance, research on African American adolescents shows that exposure to mainstream media stereotypes can lead to lower self-esteem (Ward, 2004). Exposure to media stereotypes can induce stereotype threat, which leads members of stereotyped group to underperform in various tasks (Appel & Kronberger, 2012; Aronson, Burgess, Phelan & Juarez, 2013; Ward, 2004). It can affect negative self-concepts in terms of performance, social interactions, and racial identification (Appel & Kronberger, 2012).

In sum, past research on the effects of media stereotypes suggest that media are important socializing agents through which racial and ethnic minorities learn about their in-group vis-a-vis the majority White outgroup. Given that ethnic minorities are often underrepresented and negatively

represented in mainstream U.S. media, exposure to such mainstream media content can negatively influence individual and group-based esteem for minority audience members. However, what is missing in this literature is a systematic analysis of *both* mainstream and ethnic media effects on ethnic minority audiences. This gap is crucial to fill because ethnic minority audiences not only expose themselves to mainstream media but also include ethnic media as part of their media diet (Jeffres, 2000; Mora & Kang, 2016; Seo & Moon, 2013).

Ethnic Media Use

Ethnic media refers to media that serve a specific racial/ethnic group. Although not identical, due to global movement of labor and media convergence, previously distinct terms such as international media, immigrant media, and minority media are now largely overlapping with the literature on ethnic media (Georgiou, 2006; Johnson, 2010). Prior research shows that when minority audiences have more varied media choices, they prefer media that are produced for and by their in-group (New California Media, 2005). Ethnic media play important roles in immigrant lives by fulfilling entertainment and information needs (Chaffee, Nass, & Yang, 1990; Zhou & Cai, 2002) as well as in maintaining their ethnic identity (Deuze, 2006; Johnson, 2010; Viswanath & Arora, 2000).

In a digital convergence culture, especially since the mid-1990s, the diasporic audiences for Indian cinema and television programming has increased drastically. Indian Americans' use of ethnic media is complex, often involving critical responses to the content while also appreciating their role in helping negotiate hybrid ethnic identities (Aksoy & Robins, 2003; Somani & Doshi, 2016). One of the reasons for engagement with home country media could be that mainstream American portrayals of Indians continue to be stereotypical and exaggerated (both positive and negative; Mitra, 1999; Nijhawan, 2015; Ramasubramanian, 2005; Shome, 1996). Given the relatively scarce representations of Indians in mainstream popular U.S. media, ethnic media become important alternative spaces for diverse media representations for Indians.

Prior research on Indian Americans suggested that Indian films (especially popular Bollywood films) and television serials are popular forms of mass media to consume for this group (Desai, 2006; Pillania, 2008; Punathambekar, 2005; Somani, 2011). Studies reveal that ethnic media help strengthen cultural identity by creating a sense of nostalgia (Bandyopadhyay, 2008), providing an avenue to learn about Indian culture (Gillespie, 1993) and strengthening ties within the Indian-American community (Durham, 2004; Punathambekar, 2010). Moorti (2007) found that ethnic media narratives emphasize cultural distinction, which could help people of Indian descent strengthen ethnic pride. More recently, ethnic media such as Bollywood movies have begun to centralize issues specific to diasporic Indians such that major characters and plots now involve nonresident Indians (Ganti, 2004). Such media strengthen the cultural citizenship of Indians living abroad by affirming their Indian identity and relevance in India (Punathambekar, 2010). Thus, ethnic media continue to perform multiple important functions in the lives of Indian Americans and play a salient role in shaping their ethnic identity.

Much of the recent literature on the role of ethnic media in shaping minority audiences is from a qualitative and/or ethnographic perspective. While Kim's (1988, 1994, 1995) work has focused on the

underlying mechanisms of cross-cultural adaptation, the role of ethnic media exposure in this process needs further attention. For example, work by Subervi-Velez (1986) and Rios and Gaines (1998) centers the role of mass media on acculturation. More recently, a panel study by Jeffres (2000) showed that "ethnic media appear to act as vehicles that help ethnics retain attachment to their culture over time" (p. 522). Many studies have used survey methods to adapt the uses and gratifications approach to understand the motivations for seeking ethnic media versus mainstream media (Abrams & Giles, 2007; Aksoy & Robins, 2003; Harwood & Vincze, 2015). Abrams and Giles (2007), for example, take a social identity gratifications approach to elaborate why African Americans seek out ethnic media content.

Other researchers show that minority group members' perceptions of their group's vitality and perceived status in society are influenced by the role of ethnic media in a multicultural social context (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977). Television consumption by Hispanics has been linked to their level of ethnic identity and perceptions of group vitality (Abrams & Giles, 2009). Further, minority Hungarian speakers in Slovakia who were heavy consumers of media that portrayed their group positively had high perceptions of their group's vitality (Vincze & Harwood, 2012). Additionally, a recent study by Harwood and Vincze (2015) showed that Hungarian minorities in Romania preferred ethnic media for diversion, presumably because ethnic media provided a positive alternative to the group's negative portrayals in mainstream media. While there is literature on the motivations of minority audiences to seek out ethnic media content, further examination of the social-psychological processes and effects of ethnic media content is needed in the current media environment characterized by increased access to ethnic media content.

Affective and Behavioral Consequences of Ethnic Media Use

Another concern with prior literature on the effects of ethnic media on ethnic minorities is that it tends to conflate affective and behavioral outcomes by measuring the extent to which ethnic minorities talk about, feel good about, and learn about their ethnic group within the same scale (see, e.g., Kong et al., 2012). Theoretically, the emotional component of one's social identity is distinct from behavioral expressions of one's social identity (Nakayama & Martin, 2007; Verkuyten, 2010). As an example, an individual may identify as and feel proud to be an Indian yet not engage in the behavioral expression of this ethnic identity (e.g., attend Indian festivals or communicate with others in their group in Indian languages). Thus, to fully understand how ethnic media affect ethnic minority audiences, it is important to isolate affective and behavioral outcomes. Making such distinctions could be helpful in designing appropriate media-based interventions for ethnic minorities.

Ethnic pride taps into the affective component of ethnic identification and measures the feelings of pride and admiration that one feels toward their in-group because of group affiliation. It refers to the subjective sense of belongingness to one's ethnic group (Phinney, 1992) and is linked to empowerment and positive self-concepts (McCreary, Slavin, & Berry, 1996). In contrast, the behavioral dimension of ethnic identification can be conceptualized as ethnic performance. Prior research in the context of acculturation and ethnic identity literature has indicated that the behaviors through which minorities actively communicate their ethnicity reflects the salience of this identity in their lives (Phinney, 1992; Verkuyten, 2010). With respect to Indian Americans, ethnic performance is discussed by media

ethnographers in terms of the significance of food, language, and other markers of cultural heritage (Durham, 2004; Hegde, 2014; Ramasubramanian & Doshi, 2017;). It is important to examine how the affective (ethnic pride) and behavioral (ethnic performance) dimensions of ethnic identification shape ethnic media exposure.

Examining the Simultaneous Effects of Mainstream and Ethnic Media

Based on the review of literature presented thus far, it is clear that a limitation of the existing scholarship is that mainstream media and ethnic media have been examined in isolation without being examined simultaneously. Research within media stereotyping literature has largely focused on how mainstream media affect majority audiences' attitudes about minorities. Even when effects on ethnic minorities are examined, the focus has primarily been on the negative effects of stereotypical mainstream media portrayals of minorities. In contrast, the existing literature on ethnic media has mostly employed critical-cultural and ethnographical approaches to understand the motivations of immigrants to use ethnic media.

Very few studies have attempted to understand the effects of ethnic media on minority self and group perceptions. This is unfortunate as both mainstream media as well as the ethnic media serve as influential sources of information about one's in-group (Allen, 2001). We argue that it is important to examine both mainstream and ethnic media simultaneously as they are likely to influence in-group perceptions in different ways. Examining these differential effects help us better understand the ways in which stereotypical and counter-stereotypical media portrayals of the same group can reinforce, negate, or nullify their effects when the same individual viewer is exposed to them. Such information will help shape effective media-based strategies to empower ethnic minorities to have a better sense of self within the context of a multicultural, transnational mediated context. Moreover, most of the existing scholarship on ethnic media and identity has mostly focused on the role of community-oriented ethnic newspapers among immigrant communities (Deuze, 2006; Subervi-Velez, 1986; Viswanath & Arora, 2000). This study expands the scope of this scholarship to also include ethnic entertainment such as popular films and television shows.

This study seeks to explore how exposure to mainstream media and ethnic media correlate with Indian Americans's ethnic pride, ethnic performance, and self-esteem. The review of prior research on media stereotyping processes has suggested that mainstream media images can have a negative relationship with ethnic minorities' self-esteem. In contrast, research on ethnic media from an acculturation perspective suggests that ethnic media exposure is likely to increase ethnic pride and encourage ethnic performance for minority group members. Therefore, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

H1: Mainstream media will be negatively correlated with ethnic pride, ethnic performance, and self-esteem for Indian Americans. In contrast, ethnic media will be positively correlated with ethnic pride, ethnic performance, and self-esteem.

Method

Overview

This study examines how the engagement of people of Indian descent in the United States with mainstream media and ethnic media influences their ethnic pride, ethnic performance, and self-esteem. We used the same data set used in Ramasubramanian and Doshi (2017), which examined how Indian Americans' use of popular movies is driven more by ethnic performance than language proficiency and acculturation indices. The analyses of this study differed from the original study in three ways. First, this study compares mainstream and ethnic media, whereas the original one focused only on ethnic media. Second, we examine the effects on self-esteem and ethnic pride, which were not included in the earlier study. Third, the emphasis of the original study was in determining the motivations for ethnic media use, whereas the current study examines the differential effects of mainstream and ethnic media use on self-esteem, ethnic pride, and ethnic performance.

Participants

Participants who self-identified as Indian Americans were invited to take part in a Media and Ethnic Identity survey. Specifically, the survey used a prescreening question about self-identifying as Indian American or a person of Indian origin living in the United States to participate in the survey. Those who did not self-identify as Indian Americans were excluded from the analysis. After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, participants were recruited from 15 organizations from various geographic areas to reach a broad spectrum of people of Indian descent and from the United States. These included student organizations at universities, professional organizations (for doctors, motel owners, and engineers), and religious/cultural organizations. Links to the survey were shared via LISTSERVs, social networking sites such as Facebook, and through personal networks via e-mail. A few paper copies of the questionnaire were also shared with local Indian organizations in Southwestern United States to complement online surveys.

Of the 306 participants who followed the survey link to start the questionnaire, 255 completed it. This survey went beyond traditional college-age student samples to reach a broader spectrum of participants. The participants were largely male (54%), in the age group of 18 to 76 years ($M = 34.14$, $SD = 11.6$), and with a length of stay in the United States ranging from one to 48 years ($M = 12.77$, $SD = 10.85$). They represented several ethnic groups from India based on their mother tongues (20% Tamil, 14% Hindi, 14% Telugu, and 5%–10% each for Gujarati, Bengali, and Kannada, apart from other languages). They were more educated than the average Indian American (22% had a PhD or higher degree; 54% had a master's or professional degree, and 17% had a bachelor's degree). Annual household income varied (31% less than \$35,000; 27.5% between \$35,000 and \$100,000; and 41.5% more than \$100,000). They represented multiple occupation backgrounds including students (39%), engineers (16.6%), scholars/scientists (15.6%), and homemakers (4.8%).

Procedure

After obtaining permission from the Indian organization, a link to the survey was distributed via their LISTSERVs with an introductory note that explained the purpose and goals of the study. Participants were told that the purpose of the survey was to understand media use patterns of people of Indian descent. Participants read the online consent form and agreed to participation before starting the questionnaire. Similar consent procedures were also followed for paper questionnaires that were distributed in a few local organizations. In this case, the paper questionnaires were handed out during an informational session and then collected during the next meeting. E-mail reminders were sent to all LISTSERVs one week after the start of the surveys to ensure greater participation. The survey took about 30 minutes to complete and was voluntary in nature. The questionnaire included sections on demographic information, cultural orientation, ethnic identity, language use, media use, and self-esteem. Participants were requested to provide honest feedback and also to skip any questions that they did not want to respond to. To increase response rates, participants were entered into a drawing for a gift card from Amazon for \$25. The link to the gift card drawing was separated from the main survey instrument to maintain anonymity.

Survey Measures

The survey used in this study measured ethnic pride, ethnic performance, self-esteem, mainstream media exposure, ethnic media exposure, and demographic information. The reliabilities, means and standard deviations for all variables are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities for Primary Measures.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	...	-.173**	.52**	.72**	.05	.03	.30**	-.06	.24**
2. Gender		...	-.02	.04	.03	.09	.05	.02	-.11
3. Income		53**	-.07	.03	.22**	-.03	.19**
4. Years in U.S.				...	-.03	-.11	.26**	-.15*	.23**
5. Mainstream media				28**	.16*	.10	-.15*
6. Ethnic media					15*	.37**	-.06
7. Ethnic pride						09	.12
8. Ethnic performance								...	-.08
9. Self-esteem									...
Mean					4.05	3.67	4.86	4.26	4.87
SD					1.06	1.24	1.04	.69	.37
Cronbach's α					.85	.62	.85	.82	.86

Note. $N = 255$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Ethnic Pride

To assess the affective component of ethnic identity, we adapted the ethnic pride construct from prior research (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999). Participants were asked to indicate their feelings and emotions when thinking about Indian Americans (people of Indian origin in the United States) on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) rating scale. Specifically, they were asked to respond to the following question: "Please check the appropriate box to indicate your feelings and emotions when you think about Indian Americans (people of Indian origin in the U.S.)." The ethnic pride index included three items. These were feelings of pride, admiration, and respect toward their in-group, Indian Americans.

Ethnic Performance

A 14-item Ethnic Performance Index (Ramasubramanian & Doshi, 2017) was used in this study to measure the extent to which Indian Americans performed their ethnicity in social settings through language use, food, celebrations, and observing Indian customs and festivals (Ramasubramanian & Doshi, 2017). A 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) was used by participants to indicate their responses. It included three items about language use (e.g., use Indian language in family gatherings), four items about food consumed (e.g., eat Indian food during outings with friends), and seven items about adherence to Indian rituals (e.g., celebrating Indian festivals, celebrating American festivals [reverse coded], and adhering to Indian values and customs). Sample items included "Indians should celebrate their Indian religious festivals" and "Indians in the U.S. should preserve their cultural heritage."

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (also see Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001, for an update). This scale has been previously used in other research studies in the contexts of ethnic identity and acculturation processes (Branscombe & Wann, 1994). However, within media stereotyping scholarship, self-esteem has primarily been applied to the study of gender stereotypes, especially in understanding media's contributions to thin beauty ideals among adolescent girls (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006; Fernandez & Pritchard, 2012). In the current study, participants responded to 10 statements relating to self-esteem using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965), which included items such as "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others" and "I take a positive attitude toward myself." A Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) was used by participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statements.

Type of Media

As for the Ethnic Media measure, a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*regularly*) was used to gauge how often participants watch Indian television programs and movies since these were the more popular media forms for this population. There are very few studies within

entertainment media contexts that have explicitly measured ethnic media exposure, although the valence of media content as positive or negative has been measured in the past (Fujioka, 2005; Tan, Fujioka, & Tan, 2000). Based on previous research (Desai, 2006; Pillania, 2008; Punathambekar, 2005; Somani, 2011), Indian films (especially popular Bollywood films) and television serials are the most popular forms of mass media consumed by Indian Americans. For instance, Pillania (2008) reported that Indian movie exports have seen recent growth of up to 60%, with 30% of the exports going to the United States and Canada and several hit movies making over 50% of their overall gross profit from the diasporic audience. Therefore, our ethnic media measure focused on these two types of media.

Previous research on mainstream media has primarily focused on making a distinction between genres of media exposure such as news versus entertainment (Armstrong, Neundorf, & Brentar, 1992; Fujioka, 2005). In our study, we adapted these measures to ask participants to indicate the extent to which they learn about their group from the following mainstream sources: movies, TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, and the Internet. The mean scores from each of these categories were then combined to form a single index for the final analysis called Mainstream Media. Respondents used a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) to indicate the extent to which they learned about their in-group through these sources.

Results

After running preliminary analyses relating to descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations, the main hypothesis was tested using path analyses to examine the simultaneous effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables.

Preliminary Analyses

The descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and bivariate correlation matrix for the primary variables in the model are summarized in Table 1. As expected, there was a positive correlation between ethnic media exposure and ethnic pride ($r = .15, p < .05$). Similarly, ethnic media use was also positively related with ethnic performance ($r = .37, p < .01$). Interestingly, ethnic media use and mainstream media sources were also correlated with one another ($r = .28, p < .05$). In line with expectations, the mainstream media measure was negatively correlated with self-esteem ($r = -.15, p < .05$). None of the demographic variables (age, gender, income, or length of stay in the United States) were correlated with mainstream media or ethnic media. Age was positively correlated with ethnic pride ($r = .30, p < .01$) and self-esteem ($r = .24, p < .01$). Gender was not correlated with any of the outcome variables. Income was positively correlated with ethnic pride ($r = .22, p < .01$) and self-esteem ($r = .19, p < .01$). Length of stay was positively correlated with ethnic pride ($r = .26, p < .01$) and self-esteem ($r = .24, p < .01$) and negatively correlated with ethnic performance ($r = -.15, p < .05$).

Path Analyses

To simultaneously examine the direct and indirect effects of mainstream media and ethnic media, a path analysis was conducted while controlling for demographic variables: age, gender, income, and

length of stay in the United States. The analysis modeled the relationships among key variables to assess how mainstream and ethnic media exposure influence participants' ethnic pride, self-esteem, and ethnic performance. For these analyses, ethnic media and mainstream media were entered simultaneously as exogenous variables. Given the correlational nature of this study, we were more interested in modeling correlations among various variables rather than establishing causality. A chain of relationships was hypothesized, where ethnic media and mainstream media influenced ethnic pride, ethnic performance, and self-esteem.

Correlations among various variables modeled in the final path analysis are illustrated in Figure 1. Following Hu and Bentler (1999), the goodness of fit was determined using the following considerations: the chi-square value, a comparative fit index (CFI) greater than .90, and a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) value of less than .08. The model was consistent with data as indicated by chi-square value ($df = 1, p = .589$) of .292, CFI of 1.000, and RMSEA of .000, 90% CI [.000, .135].

Figure 1 represents the final integrated model that tested the hypothesized model while controlling for demographic variables. The hypothesized model is juxtaposed against the final integrative model. Solid lines represent the final model that emerged. Dotted lines indicate nonsignificant links. Numbers indicate standardized coefficients. * stands for $p < .05$ and *** indicates $p < .001$. As predicted by the research hypothesis, mainstream media use was negatively correlated with self-esteem ($\beta = -.05, p < .05$). Additionally, as expected, ethnic media use was positively and significantly associated with ethnic pride ($\beta = .10, p < .05$) and with ethnic performance ($\beta = .20, p < .001$). These statistically significant relationships are represented with bold lines in Figure 1. Mainstream media use was not associated with ethnic pride, and ethnic performance, as indicated by the dotted lines in the Figure.

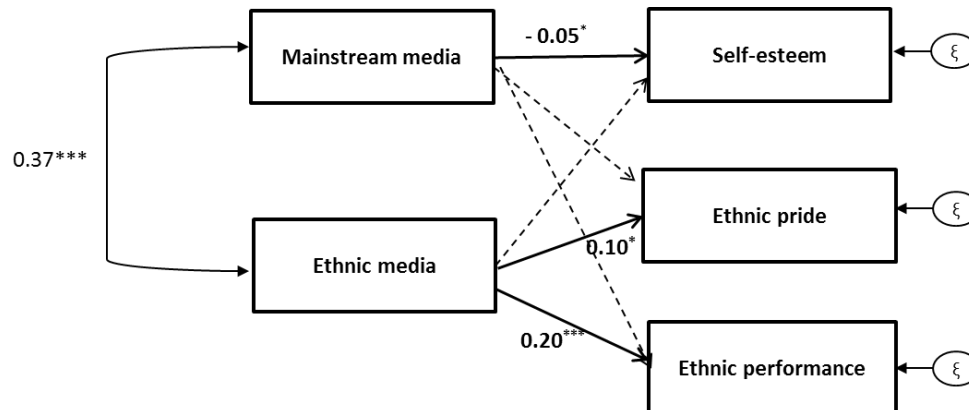


Figure 1. Model illustrating how mainstream media and ethnic media exposure are related to ethnic pride, ethnic performance, and self-esteem, controlling for demographic variables.

These results suggest that for those individuals who rely on mainstream media as the main source of information about their in-group, there is a tendency toward self-stereotyping as evidenced by

significant relationships with self-reported lower self-esteem. In contrast, exposure to ethnic media was associated with several positive outcomes at the collective level through higher ethnic pride and increased ethnic performance.

Discussion

Previous work exploring the effects of mainstream media and ethnic media on minorities is often done in isolation. This is an unfortunate limitation as minority members are exposed to both forms of media, and mainstream and ethnic media influence minority members in theoretically different ways. This study tested the simultaneous effects of mainstream and ethnic media on Indian Americans' self- and group-based beliefs. Results revealed that exposure to mainstream media was associated with lower self-esteem. In contrast, exposure to ethnic media was associated with ethnic pride and ethnic performance. These results reveal that mainstream and ethnic media influence minority members' self and group-based perceptions in different ways. Another contribution of this study is that it examines the relationship between entertainment media use and identity. Prior work on identity and media, especially in the context of ethnic media, has largely focused on the role of ethnic newspapers among diasporic communities.

Results reveal that exposure to mainstream media can influence negative self-concepts for minority members by decreasing their self-esteem. The findings are consistent with prior research, which suggests that minority members who are exposed to negative media representations of their in-group are likely to adopt the attributes and traits associated with such representations, which in turn can perpetuate self-stereotyping (Spears et al., 1997; Turner, 1985). The negative associations of mainstream media with lower self-esteem and unfavorable in-group perceptions are also consistent with scholarship on the White racial frame (Feagin & Cobas, 2008), which suggests that discourses in American society have historically been framed in ways that racial/ethnic minorities often internalize the majority White perspective toward their in-group, which could lead to self-oppression and self-stereotyping, thus legitimizing White superiority.

Given the limited representation of minority groups in mainstream media, these stereotypical portrayals may be the only reference points through which minority members understand and negotiate their identity with others. From a group vitality perspective, intergroup comparison of one's minority group with the majority, which is largely represented positively, may further lead minority members to feel devalued and excluded from mainstream culture. For example, past studies suggest that minority members who perceive media bias against their in-group are likely to report feelings of exclusion and ostracism from mainstream society (Tsfati, 2007). These findings are of concern because lower self-esteem can lead to other negative outcomes such as reduced academic performance, impaired social skills, and psychological as well as physiological health issues among minority audiences (Appel & Kronberger, 2012; Aronson et al., 2013; Ward, 2004). Since mainstream media hardly ever portray ethnic minorities in a positive light, it is likely that such content was not seen as relevant to shaping one's ethnic pride or ethnic performance.

Whereas the representation of minority members in mainstream media is largely negative, ethnic media often provide more diverse and positive representations. This is significant, as prior research

suggests that social contexts in which one's identity is positively represented should lead to positive effects (Sinclair, Hardin, & Lowery, 2006). Results suggest that ethnic media provide minority members with an alternative and relatively more positive source of information about one's ethnic identity, which subsequently make minority members feel more positive and secure about their ethnic identity by increasing their ethnic pride and ethnic performance. Exposure to ethnic media provides norms for behaviors that are associated with category membership, which would increase minority members' ethnic performance. Indeed, our results reveal that ethnic media exposure was positively and significantly associated with ethnic performance. Whereas media activists have focused on improving the representations of minority groups in mainstream media, our results suggest that access to ethnic media could be an additional point of advocacy. However, it has to also be noted that ethnic media are not free of weaknesses. For instance, they could still marginalize certain subgroups (e.g., lighter skinned compared with darker skinned members or indigenous voices) even while portraying lesser stereotypes compared with mainstream media.

Although exposure to ethnic media in our study did not increase self-esteem for participants, it did increase ethnic pride and ethnic performance. Some researchers have argued that the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) measures personal self-esteem and not collective self-esteem. In other words, study participants reported increase in more group-level variables such as ethnic pride and ethnic performance, but not individual self-esteem. Future research could include measures of both collective and individual self-esteem to understand the effects of ethnic media on individual and social outcomes. Additionally, self-esteem had a surprisingly low bivariate correlation with ethnic media and a low standard deviation in our study, which is something that future researchers should look into examining in-depth.

In terms of methodological contributions, prior research in the context of diasporic, immigrant, and transnational media has largely been theoretical and descriptive in nature (see Johnson, 2010, for a detailed critique). When empirical, they have relied on ethnographic and/or qualitative research, especially in the context of Indian American diasporic media use. Even within empirical research within media stereotyping literature, studies have mostly used student samples in predominantly White institutions. This study uses a survey-based approach and includes people from diverse occupational and income levels within this minority group by going beyond university students, thus allowing for greater generalizability of the study findings.

Another contribution of this study to the scholarship on ethnic media and social identity is to go beyond ethnic newspapers and bilingualism to also focus on ethnic entertainment media such as popular films and television shows. This study also adds to the scholarship on ethnic media and its effects on Indian Americans using empirical research methods that complement existing qualitative and ethnographic studies. In contrast to prior research on ethnic media that has focused on American immigrants with limited English proficiency, this study focused on bicultural, bilingual (often multilingual) people of Indian descent for whom English proficiency was quite high. As our survey revealed, our participants were exposed to both mainstream and ethnic media. Thus, ethnic media consumption in the case of such bilingual minority members cannot be reduced to being a substitute for mainstream media. Rather, we must acknowledge that mainstream and ethnic media may have complex relationships with audiences' identity and self-esteem.

Given that this is a correlational study and several bivariate correlations were modest, it is not possible to draw causal inferences from it. Further experimental research needs to be conducted to determine the cause-effect relationships between type of media use and ethnic performance, ethnic pride, and self-esteem. Another limitation was that the reliability for ethnic media was quite low in our sample. Other types of media, such as Internet, magazines, and radio shows, could also be included in the future. In terms of sampling, future studies should aim to expand their sample to increase representativeness. In particular, increasing recruitment from cities with high immigrant populations would be beneficial. Another limitation is that because our questionnaires were in English, participants who were not comfortable with English were unable to participate in the survey. The survey was administered in English because many Indian Americans can communicate in English, and because within the Indian diaspora, many ethnic languages are used, making it impractical to translate into all ethnic languages. However, multilingual personal interviews should be used, if possible, in future studies. Future research should include other ethnic minority groups so that the findings are generalizable beyond this sample.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings suggest that ethnic media likely have positive effects on ethnic minorities by boosting their ethnic pride and increasing ethnic performance whereas reliance on mainstream media to learn about one's ethnic group can lead to decreased self-esteem. It is possible that ethnic media exposure might mitigate the negative effects of mainstream media stereotypes for ethnic minorities. Further, we get a deeper understanding of the mechanisms by which ethnic identity gratifications related to ethnic pride and esteem are fulfilled. Future research should directly test this hypothesis using experimental methods to explore the possibility that ethnic media exposure is able to serve as a strategy for internalized prejudice reduction among minorities and as a way to increase group vitality in the context of increasingly multicultural societies. These findings have practical implications for scholars, educators, and community members who are committed to supporting policies that encourage positive and diverse content. They suggest that while it is important to counter negative mainstream portrayals of ethnic groups, it is equally important to create and nurture alternative spaces where diasporic communities can create, consume, and share ethnic media. These alternative mediated spaces can help improve group vitality, boost collective ethnic pride, and increase willingness to engage in ethnic performance for minority groups. Eventually, having strong diasporic communities is crucial to ensuring that ethnic minorities become active and engaged citizens in a multicultural, transnational, and global media context.

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