Social Identity Motivations and Intergroup Media Attractiveness

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Abstract

In this experiment we manipulated three features (intergroup social comparison; outgroup character stereotypicality; intergroup intimacy) of an intergroup TV pilot proposal. We examined how two underlying social identity motivations (social enhancement; social uncertainty reduction) were gratified by the above features, and whether this gratification predicted media attractiveness. Findings indicate that when social comparison was manipulated to advantage the ingroup, intergroup media gratified existing social enhancement motivations and led to audiences rating the show as more entertaining and attractive. This finding was most clearly evident in the absence of intergroup romance. The gratification of social uncertainty reduction motivations was also shown to increase audience perceptions of intergroup media attractiveness, but outgroup stereotypicality was weakly associated with the gratification of this motivation. These results are discussed in terms of both theoretical implications as well as applications to pro-social media campaigns.

Keywords: intergroup communication, mass communication, media selection, social identity, uses and gratifications

Social Identity Motivations and Intergroup Media Attractiveness

When an audience member observes a character with whom they socially identify or have a positive interaction with a character from another social group it can improve their attitude (Joyce & Harwood, 2014), reduce social uncertainty, and increase desire for future interaction with that social group (Mazziotta, Mummendey, & Wright, 2011). Referencing an American sitcom that aired between 1998 and 2006, Vice President Biden commented on the idea that media can improve attitudes towards social groups, saying, "I think *Will & Grace* probably did more to educate the American public than almost anything anybody has ever done so far. And I think people fear that which is different. Now they're beginning to understand" (Biden, 2012). Although this statement is perhaps exaggerated, it contains an important kernel of truth. Exposure to shows with positive homosexual portrayals like *Will & Grace* (Ortiz & Harwood, 2007; Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2006), *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, and *Six Feet Under* (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005) have been shown to improve attitudes toward homosexuals. Similarly, exposure to positive interactions between members of different national (Joyce & Harwood, 2014) and ethnic groups (Mazziotta, Mummendey, & Wright, 2011; Ortiz & Harwood, 2007) have produced parallel effects. Despite the apparent effectiveness of these messages in reducing prejudice, little research has addressed what can be done to make intergroup media attractive. This study examines how identity-related media features can make intergroup media more desirable to viewers (*media attractiveness*). We begin by defining and discussing the relevance of intergroup media before discussing how social identities may change the way we perceive and select intergroup media. Finally, we introduce several media features that are theoretically linked to social identity, and thus are hypothesized to influence the attractiveness of intergroup media to audiences.

Intergroup Media

Intergroup narratives—narratives in which members of different social groups interact—are not uncommon in modern media. In fact, for certain types of narratives (e.g., the buddy cop genre) the group-based differences and interplay between characters are driving forces for the narrative. Movies and television programming such as *Rush Hour* (Black and Chinese), *Lethal Weapon* (Black and White), *Red Heat* (Russian and American), *Alien Nation* (Human and Extraterrestrial), *Hollywood Homicide* (Young and Old), and *Bad Boys* (Rich playboy and Middle-class family man), pair characters from different demographic groups. Roger Ebert described these as "wunza" movies: films that focus on the relationship between characters where "one's a member of one group, and one's a member of another" (Ebert, 1998).

At the core of these intergroup interactions are salient group memberships, common goals, cooperation, and developing friendships, all of which increase the effectiveness of intergroup contact to reduce intergroup biases (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). While contact theory (Allport, 1954) was originally applied to face-to-face interactions, the theory has been extended to both knowing about and observing intergroup interactions, often referred to as *extended contact* (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997). Some research on extended contact has focused on observations of intergroup interactions through media, sometimes referred to as *vicarious contact*. A review of correlational and experimental studies has shown that vicarious contact can reduce intergroup anxiety, change intergroup stereotypes, improve both explicit and implicit intergroup attitudes, increase historical perspective taking, and increase intentions for and likelihood of future intergroup interactions for both adults and children (Vezzali, Hewstone, Capozza, Giovannini, & Wölfer, 2014). While exposure to intergroup narratives may be less

impactful than face-to-face contact (e.g. Fujioka, 1999), it remains a powerful prejudice-reduction tool that can be used in a wide variety of intergroup contexts.

While we know from this literature that intergroup media can reduce prejudice in some circumstances, what draws people to consume intergroup media is less clear. Below we propose three media features that may be related to the perceived attractiveness of the media: (a) intergroup social comparisons, (b) intergroup intimacy, and (c) stereotypical outgroup portrayals. We propose these features because of their theoretical linkages to media selection and social identity. We discuss the links between media and social identity next, before moving to discuss the specific media features.

Social Identity Gratifications

The social identity perspective represents a collection of theories concerning how belonging to groups is fundamental to our identity and the way we understand our social world. People are motivated to think of themselves in terms of the groups that they belong to, not just their individuating characteristics (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Belonging to positively-regarded groups can enhance group-based self-esteem (Abrams & Hogg, 1988) and group categorizations can reduce group-related uncertainty about the world (Hogg, 2000). These social identities influence how we process and respond to media (Harwood & Roy, 2005; Mastro, 2003).

The uses and gratifications theoretical framework explains how viewers' underlying motivations impact media selection (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). These motivations are often conceptualized in terms of individual needs (e.g., entertainment or escape). However, research suggests that people also select media because of group-based needs. Harwood (1997) found that participants presented with fake *TV guide* descriptions were more likely to choose shows that heavily featured their age group. He proposed that, similar to individual-based

gratifications such as entertainment, audiences might also find that a particular media program gratified a social identity. Subsequent work shows that audiences choose media that prominently feature people from ingroups (e.g. groups that they belong to) based on ethnicity (Knobloch-Westerwick, Appiah, & Alter, 2008), political party (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009), and sex (Knobloch-Westerwick & Hastall, 2006). Cross-sectional studies examining media selection patterns of African Americans (Abrams & Giles, 2007), Asian Americans (Abrams, 2010), Hispanic Americans (Abrams & Giles, 2009), and Hungarians (Harwood & Vincze, 2015) demonstrate that both media selection and avoidance (i.e., avoiding shows prominently featuring outgroup members) can be influenced by identity gratifications. Collectively these studies suggest that audiences' social identities are an important component of how they select and evaluate media.

While the idea of a social identity gratification has so far been treated as unidimensional (Harwood, 1999), in this research we seek to differentiate between two subconstructs of social identity gratifications, each reflecting underlying social identity driven motivations: *Social enhancement* and *social uncertainty reduction*. The former reflects a desire to consume media that makes the ingroup "look good," thereby improving collective self-esteem. Collective self-esteem reflects having a positive social identity, which is distinct from positive personal identity (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990), therefor to distinguish it from the individual self-enhancement endemic to self-esteem, we refer to this construct here as social enhancement. The latter reflects a desire for media that support our understanding of how groups work and what members of different groups are like, which we refer to here as social uncertainty reduction.

While these motivations are predicated on the influence of social identification, the social identification gratifications literature that has measured identification has not found a consistent

relationship. Studies have shown that identification is related to avoidance but not selection

(African Americans; Abrams & Giles, 2007), selection but not avoidance (Asian Americans;

Abrams, 2010), or both selection and avoidance (Latino Americans; Abrams & Giles, 2009).

These inconsistencies may contribute to the unique patterns of media consumption observed in

different minority groups (Mastro & Atwell Seate, 2012). In addition, the strength of minority

racial identification is variable and sometimes serves as a moderator of media effects (e.g.

Mastro, Tukachinsky, Behm-Morowitz, & Blecha, 2014). As a result, there is variance in the

way that identification affects media selection at the level of both group and individual.

Whether White Americans' media selection is driven by explicit racial identification is

unclear. Whiteness is a unique identity in that many White Americans are reluctant to admit that

race is central to their self-concept (Frankenberg, 1993; McIntyre, 1997), and may associate

reflecting on racial identification with being racist (Perry, 2001). Additionally, many Whites

explicitly eschew racial identification in favor of pan-humanism as a way of ignoring racial

privilege and the discomfort that stems from it (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Based on this we might

assume no explicit relationship between social identification and social identity motivations to

consume specific media. Indeed, studies attempting to link explicit White racial identification to

media effects have often found inconsistent and weak results (Mastro, 2003). However, White

social identity can be meaningful even as it is dismissed by its possessor (Nakayama & Krizek,

1995), and is related to many of the same cognitive processes as other social identities (Knowles

& Peng, 2005). For example, the influence of White social identity is clearly visible in how

White individuals classify other races as outgroups (Rowe, Behren, & Leach, 1995). As a result,

in this study we examined whether strength of racial identification would predict social

enhancement or social uncertainty reduction motivations (**RQ1**). However, our primary goal was

to examine whether media message characteristics would influence social identity gratifications, and hence media attractiveness.

Intergroup Media Features and Social Identity Gratifications

In this study we experimentally manipulated three aspects of media message content that are potentially linked to social identity gratifications. To affect social enhancement gratifications, we manipulated the *intergroup social comparison* by either portraying a more socioeconomically advantaged ingroup or outgroup character. To affect social uncertainty reduction gratifications, we manipulated the *outgroup character stereotypicality* by adjusting the number of stereotypical traits associated with them. We also manipulated *intergroup intimacy* through changing the portrayal of the ingroup and outgroup characters' relationship, which we believe might relate to a number of intergroup mechanisms and taboos. Thus, we see each of our manipulations as potentially related to media attractiveness and social identity, as we elaborate below.

Intergroup social comparison. Audiences tend to like and select media that casts their group in a positive light (Abrams & Giles, 2007; Harwood, 1997; Harwood, 1999). For example, social identity gratifications from media are stronger when a *lead* character is depicted as an ingroup member (Harwood, 1997). This suggests that the implicit or explicit social comparisons between ingroup and outgroup members may be tied to social identity gratifications, specifically a social enhancement motivation. Individuals exposed to an intergroup social comparison demonstrate a stronger relationship between self-esteem and identification (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008). In this way social comparisons serve a dual function regarding social identities. First, social comparisons make specific social identities salient. Self-categorization theory suggests that while we have many social identities, it will be the one that is most salient that guides our cognitions and behaviors (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, &

Wetherell, 1987). Second, the social comparison will influence collective self-esteem. The psychological importance of positive group distinctiveness and relative ingroup status can be traced back to the earliest origins of work on intergroup relations in social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), and a social comparison that favors the ingroup will be socially enhancing, gratifying the motivation of social enhancement. Therefore, audiences should be more attracted to media in which their own group is presented as having relatively higher status.

However, the preference for high status ingroup portrayals is only likely to happen when two conditions are met. First, the audience member must be motivated to socially enhance. The motivation to socially enhance is variable across individuals. For example, individuals demonstrate less need to engage in advantageous social comparison if their individual-level self-esteem has recently been bolstered (Fein & Spencer, 1997). Thus, not all individuals are likely to have the same amount of social enhancement motivation. Second, if the audience member is motivated they must believe that the intergroup media can gratify this motivation. Taking both of these ideas into account we hypothesized a conditional indirect effect: media portraying the ingroup as higher status (a more advantageous social comparison) should be more attractive to viewers, and that effect should occur *through* increased perceived social enhancement gratifications from the message. However, this indirect effect would exist most strongly for audience members with the strongest baseline social enhancement motivations—for viewers unconcerned with enhancing their social group's status (i.e. low motivation), the social enhancement gratifications stemming from the narrative would not be relevant to or predictive of media attractiveness **(H1)**.

Outgroup character stereotypicality. In addition to being motivated to socially enhance, people are also motivated to reduce social uncertainty about both ingroups and

outgroups (Hogg, 2000). Individuals want to know more about the nature of intergroup

differences, and find out more about how "we" should behave as well as who "they" really are.

Social uncertainty reduction gratifications have so far not been considered in the social identity

gratifications literature. Early literature on uses and gratifications did highlight how individuals

used the media to learn about other groups of people (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973), and more

general information seeking gratifications might actually reflect information seeking about social

groups (Harwood, 1999). Seeking media because "it helps me to learn more about others and

myself" or "to find out about issues affecting people like myself" (items used to measure general

information seeking) could involve specifically seeking *group*-based uncertainty reduction.

Similarly, some of the initial social identity gratification items (e.g., "to see young people in

situations like those I experience") may reflect a desire to reduce social uncertainty more than

seeking social enhancement: indeed, early research on social identity gratifications (Harwood,

1999) noted an $r = .30$ between social identity gratifications and the "learning" gratification.

While there may be many facets to social uncertainty reduction, this evidence, along with

research on social identity motivations more broadly, suggests that reducing uncertainty about

group traits and/or normative intergroup attitudes and behaviors may be a distinct social identity

gratification.

One media feature that may be able to provide audiences with social uncertainty

gratifications is the presentation of outgroup characters who, at least partially, conform to their

expectations. In general, people prefer that which conforms to their social expectations,

including their social stereotypes (Glick & Fiske, 2001). In addition, social uncertainty is

theoretically linked to a desire to stereotype (Hogg & Abrams, 1988): stereotypes reduce

uncertainty by providing heuristics that simplify our understanding of what to expect in our

social world. As a result, presenting audiences with an outgroup character who conforms to their pre-existing beliefs may provide the audience with a simpler and less uncertain world and thus provide a social uncertainty reduction gratification. Inversely, the presentation of a significantly idiosyncratic or counterstereotypical outgroup character might make audiences more socially uncertain. Interestingly, the "wunza" narratives described earlier have been criticized for providing audiences an avenue to consume racist stereotypes (Oh, 2012; Park, Gabbadon, & Chernin, 2006; Pham, 2004). Our discussion here suggests that such stereotypes might be precisely what make these narratives attractive.

However, not all individuals will be equally motivated to seek social uncertainty gratifications from media. Some people might not believe the media are a good source of information, while others might have a relatively higher sense of social certainty. Individuals who are less motivated to reduce social uncertainty through their media choices are therefore less likely to be gratified by the presentation of a stereotypical outgroup member. Following the logic of H1, we hypothesized a conditional indirect effect of social comparison on evaluations of the media, such that a more stereotype-consistent outgroup character would improve evaluations of the media through increasing perceptions that the media would gratify a social uncertainty reduction motivation, and would do so most strongly for audience members with the strongest underlying social uncertainty reduction motivations (**H2**).

Intergroup intimacy. Third, we were interested in the intimacy of media-portrayed intergroup relationships. The depiction of intergroup romances (i.e. highly intimate intergroup relationships), much like other forms of extended contact, can improve intergroup attitudes (Paterson, Turner, & Conner, 2015). However, intergroup romantic relationships, especially interracial ones, while more common than they once were, appear less frequently in media than

their real-life analogues and almost never include married couples (Bramlett-Solomon, 2007).

Interracial relationships tend to be portrayed as having incomplete intimacy; either they are

presented as a committed relationship lacking sexual intimacy, or a relationship that is solely

based on sex (Washington, 2012). Interracial romances are more likely to be disapproved of then

intraracial ones (Paterson et al., 2015), and the treatment of interracial relationships in media

reflects this societal trend. Weaver (2011) found that audiences only demonstrated a preference

for media containing all White casts when the media was classified as romance. So, while

individuals may be open to certain types of intergroup media, intergroup media featuring

significant intergroup intimacy may be especially unattractive for some potential viewers. As a

result, we were interested in how the presence of intergroup romance might moderate the

effectiveness of our other media features in gratifying social uncertainty reduction (**RQ2**) or

enhancement motivations (**RQ3**).

Study Summary

Research has begun to integrate the social identity theoretical framework with media

selection (Knobloch-Westerwick & Hastall, 2010), media avoidance (Abrams & Giles, 2007),

and the underlying gratifications that drive those decisions (Harwood, 1999). Much of this

research has focused on the presence or absence of ingroup members as the primary media

feature. While minority leads, directors, and producers are still under-represented (Hunt, Ramon,

& Price, 2014) and arguably under-appreciated, media are trending towards greater diversity

(Breger, 2014), and are thus becoming more intergroup. So while the question of ingroup

absence or presence is certainly still important, this research advances theory by asking what

representational and relational elements involving both the ingroup and outgroup in a narrative

will make intergroup media more or less attractive to audiences. We propose that intergroup

media should be seen as more attractive as a result of gratifying two underlying social identity

motivations: Social enhancement and social uncertainty reduction. We test these ideas through

the creation of an intergroup television pilot summary in which we experimentally manipulate

narrative features that are theoretically related to each of these social identity motivations.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

Participants were told that they would be evaluating a potential television pilot.

Participants first filled out an online survey a week before the main study, which asked them

questions about viewership patterns and motivations as well as demographic information.

Because we would be manipulating outgroup stereotypicality and needed to keep a consistent

ingroup and outgroup, we targeted the White participants from this survey for exposure to the

experimental materials (all other students were funneled into an alternative study). A week later,

participants were contacted again with a proposed television pilot to evaluate. The pilot, titled

Out of Bounds, was created from scratch for this experiment using elements from existing

popular TV shows. It involved a White FBI agent who teams up with Black CIA agent to catch

criminals who have fled overseas. Participants gained access to the materials and embedded

questionnaire online. Participants were first given the biographies of the characters to reinforce

the intergroup nature of the media, followed by a description of the plot and main characters'

relationships. These materials were text-based, but were accompanied by an auditory

presentation of the written stimuli, read by a male narrator. This audio track served the purpose

of increasing stimulation and keeping participants from moving through the stimuli too fast.

Visual media might have provided a stronger stimulus, but text allowed us to more tightly

control the experimental variables than if we had relied on pre-existing media. Additionally, text

is reflective of the ways in which many individuals seek out information about new television (e.g. through blogs, internet reviews, TV Guide/Netflix listings). To make sure that participants stayed engaged and were not skipping over material they were asked multiple-choice attention check questions. Participants were 208 White college-aged students from a large public university in the US Southwest who successfully completed the entire study and passed the attention checks (Age: $M = 20.24$, $SD = 1.45$; 26.4% Men, 73.6% Women).

Experimental Manipulation

All participants were exposed to a version of *Out of Bounds* with the same basic plot and structure. However, the social comparison between the characters, stereotypicality of the outgroup character, and relational intimacy of the ingroup and outgroup characters were each independently manipulated, resulting in a 2x2x2, full factorial, between-group design. All conditions included roughly equivalent plot elements (e.g. both include a prison escape, a double cross, a gunpoint kidnapping, and last-minute rescue), as well as consistent length and complexity of story.

Social comparison was manipulated by altering the relative socio-economic status of the two characters. Within the narrative, the advantaged character had prestige and wealth while the other did not, and often had to cover expenses or help the disadvantaged character get into a fancy restaurant. We manipulated whether the Black or White character was the one with the socio-economic advantage, hence clearly manipulating relative in- versus outgroup status. This manipulation potentially primes socio-economic status as a group membership, although that was not the intention. It is difficult to manipulate relative status of racial group members without raising the salience of SES. However, given the factorial nature of our design, the experimental effects that we are concerned with would not be affected even if status was inadvertently

manipulated; there is a high status White character in one condition and a high status Black character in the other condition, so main effects for character SES are independent of effects for White status specifically.

Outgroup character stereotypicality was manipulated through the inclusion or exclusion of stereotypical traits when describing the Black character. The stereotypical Black character (Malik) was involved with gangs as a child and described as athletic, dynamic, aggressive, and violent. The non-stereotypical Malik was not involved in gangs and was described using several idiosyncratic traits that did not relate to African American stereotypes (e.g. cerebral, careful, passive, and cowardly). In both stereotypical and non-stereotypical cases an equal mix of positive and negative traits were used.

Relational intimacy between the ingroup and outgroup characters was manipulated by including/excluding romantic elements in the story line. The romantic condition featured a heterosexual romance between the main characters (hence avoiding invoking confounding social identities based on sexual orientation). For consistency, the ingroup (White) character was always portrayed as female and the outgroup (Black) character was always male—this type of intergroup couple often experiences the most prejudice (Miller, Olson, & Fazio, 2004), and is therefore the most relevant type of intergroup romance to examine. The no-romance condition retained the same character gender, but additional elements were included to reinforce the perception that this was a strictly platonic relationship (i.e., the characters were presented as being in other satisfying romantic relationships and seeing the other like a sibling).

Pilot Test. The materials, including the manipulations, were extensively pilot-tested with a separate sample from the same population. First, we tested whether the script with and without romantic elements was of equivalent quality. We did so without providing pilot respondents with

descriptions of the characters or their ethnicity, so as to remove the *intergroup* quality from the narrative. Participants rated the quality of the plot on the same media attractiveness measure used in the main study (detailed below), with one representing highly unattractive and seven representing highly attractive. We found no difference between the quality of the "romantic" script (M = 4.25, SD = 1.51) and "platonic" script (M = 4.80, SD = 1.25), $F(1, 51)$ = .06, p = .81. We also exposed participants to the sections of the script that manipulated social comparison, once again separated from any mentions of ethnicity. Participants rated the advantaged and disadvantaged characters on single-item measures of likeability and competence on a 1 (low) to 7 (high) scale. The advantaged (M = 4.70, SD = 1.44) and disadvantaged (M = 4.70, SD = 1.25) characters did not differ in terms of likeability, $t(52)$ = 0, p = 1, d = .00, or (more surprisingly) competence (advantaged M = 5.00, SD = 1.21; disadvantaged M = 4.74, SD = 1.20, $t(53)$ = -1.59, p = .12, d = .22). Hence, when all intergroup elements were removed, the different narrative arcs developed for this study were not seen by our audience as significantly dissimilar in terms of quality. Thus, when we add racial identities to the character and narrative, any differences we observe in terms of the attractiveness of the media are likely due to this intergroup information.

Manipulation Checks. We tested whether the intergroup intimacy manipulation was successful in several ways. First, participants in the main study evaluated the potential for the two main characters to "become lovers by the end of the first season" (measured on a seven-point scale where higher numbers represent a higher likelihood). Participants in the high intergroup intimacy condition (M = 6.47, SD = 1.38) perceived a much higher likelihood for the characters to become lovers than participants in the low intergroup intimacy condition (M = 3.72, SD = 1.12), $t(206)$ = 12.38, p < .001, d = 1.73. Additionally, we asked participants to classify the narrative as romance, drama, or comedy; participants could select more than one. While the

intergroup intimacy manipulation did not affect classification of the intergroup narrative as drama (χ^2 (1, N = 208) = .71, p = .47) or comedy (χ^2 (1, N = 208) = .46, p = .50), participants in the high intimacy condition were significantly more likely to classify the narrative as romance (69%) than those in the low intimacy condition (10%), χ^2 (1, N = 208) = 75.93, p < .001, ϕ = .61.

To check the stereotypicality manipulation, participants were asked to "rate Malik in terms of his stereotypicality" (higher numbers represent a more stereotypical character). Participants in the stereotypical outgroup character condition (M = 4.65, SD = 1.64), viewed him as significantly more stereotypical than participants in the non-stereotypical condition (M = 3.83, SD = 1.40), t(204) = 3.66, p < .001, d = .51.

To check the status (social comparison) manipulation, participants rated the characters' relative wealth (1-5 scale; low numbers indicated that the *outgroup* character was wealthier, high numbers that the *ingroup* character was wealthier). Participants in the ingroup advantage conditions judged the ingroup character as wealthier (M = 4.81, SD = .54), while participants in the outgroup advantage conditions judged the outgroup character as wealthier (M = 1.59, SD = .91), t(206) = 30.96, p < .001, d = 4.31. The three manipulation check measures were orthogonal (maximum $|r|$ < .07).

Measures

Identity Importance. The importance of the participant's ethnic identity was measured in the preliminary survey. Participants responded to three items asking to what extent their ethnic group fulfilled their need for: Achievement, connectedness, and sense of identity. Each item was measured on a 1 (low amounts) to 7 (high amounts) scale and averaged to create a highly reliable identity importance scale (α = .97, M = 5.15, SD = 1.83).

Social Identity Motivations/Gratifications. Participants' general motivations to consume media were measured in the preliminary survey. A scale was created for both social enhancement and social uncertainty reduction motivations. To measure social enhancement motivations, participants were asked how well the following motivations for watching described them: "To see people that I identify with", "to feel good about the groups that I belong to", "because I enjoy watching shows that depict people like me positively". Each of these items was adapted from a longer scale on social identity gratifications (Harwood, 1999), and rated on a seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The scale was reliable in the preliminary survey ($\alpha = .85$, $M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.39$). In the post-experimental survey, after being exposed to the television pilot, subjects also reported the perceived gratifications they felt they would receive from viewing *Out of Bounds* using this same set of items ($\alpha = .96$, $M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.41$).

A six-item scale was created to measure social uncertainty reduction motivations. Each of the six Likert-style questions was measured on a seven-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree) and asked participants how well the following motivations to watch TV described them: "To see how other people like me interact with other groups", "to see how people from other groups interact with people like me", "to see how people from other groups behave", "to see how people from my group behave", "to know what is socially appropriate in various situations", "to learn new social skills". The resulting six-item scale was reliable when measured as a baseline motivation in the preliminary questionnaire ($\alpha = .92$, $M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.29$). As in the previous paragraph, subjects also reported perceived gratifications from viewing the pilot television show using these same items in the post-experimental survey ($\alpha = .93$, $M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.31$). Conceptually each of these scale items focused on increasing intergroup

knowledge as a way of reducing uncertainty. As a result, we wanted to see if the scale remained

distinct from other potentially related constructs such as need for cognition or surveillance

motivations. We measured need for cognition with items drawn from Cacioppo, Petty, and Koa's

(1984) scale and found no significant correlation between the social uncertainty reduction motive

and need for cognition scales, $r = .03$, $p = .66$. We measured surveillance motivations using items

derived from Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch's (1973) uses and gratifications scale, and found a

small positive correlation, $r = .28$, $p < .01$. Neither of these correlations was high enough that we

were concerned we were tapping into the same construct, suggesting that this measure is not

simply assessing curiosity. Neither of these other variables significantly predicted or interacted

with the experimental manipulations in predicting either gratifications or media attractiveness.

To explore the validity of these two factors, we asked a sample of 300 participants from

the same subject population to rate their motivation to consume media for social enhancement

and social uncertainty reduction. They did this for two distinct social identities (age and

ethnicity), to see if distinctions could be made not just among motivations, but also identities.

We used an EFA with a varimax rotation and found that the items did indeed fit into the four

predicted factors. The fourth factor, age social enhancement, did not reach conventional

eigenvalue levels (.49). However, the two that were most relevant for this study, ethnic social

enhancement (1.13) and ethnic social uncertainty reduction (9.41) did reach conventional levels

of distinction. Social enhancement and uncertainty reduction motivations are certainly strongly

related within specific social identities (see Table 1 for correlations). We would expect them to

be given that they stem from a common psychological process. However, this factor analysis

demonstrates that they are distinct enough to be considered separate factors even within an

identity, and even more so between identities.

Media Attractiveness. To measure the attractiveness of the proposed television pilot, we created a nine-item scale that combined both attitudinal measures as well specific behavioral intentions. Participants rated the extent to which the show was dynamic, entertaining, boring (reverse coded), engaging, bad (reverse coded), good, and the extent to which they were willing to give the show a chance, regularly watch the show, and replace another show with *Out of Bounds*. The items were measured on 1 (low) to 7 (high) scales with higher values indicating a more positive evaluation of the show ($\alpha = .92$, $M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.10$).

Results

Our first research question asked whether ethnic identification would be related to social identity motivations to consume media. Ethnic identity importance was not associated with either the social enhancement motivation ($r = -.01$, $p = .91$) or social uncertainty reduction motivation ($r = -.01$, $p = .84$). Although not explicitly hypothesized, we note that ethnic identity importance did not moderate the hypothesized conditional indirect effects either. Implications of this nonsignificance is addressed in the discussion.

Hypotheses 1 and 2, and RQs 2 and 3 all concerned conditional indirect effects. We conducted these analyses using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). We used model seven, also referred to as moderated mediation, in which the effect of each the independent variables on the mediator (path *a*) is moderated. In this type of bootstrapped analysis, statistical significance of direct and indirect paths is indicated by a 95% confidence interval that does not include zero. We bootstrapped 1000 times, the default of the macro. Because the ingroup character was always female, we ran analyses to see if gender moderated any of the IVs' effects on the proposed outcome variables or mediators. There were no main or interaction effects of

gender, therefore gender is excluded from all the following analyses. A summary of all variables and correlations can be found in Table 1.

For H1, we predicted that the effect of the intergroup social comparison manipulation on media attractiveness might be carried indirectly through social enhancement gratifications, and that the indirect effect would occur only amongst those for whom the initial motivation for social enhancement was strong. While there was no direct effect of the manipulation on the outcome (b = .13, SE = .14, p = .37), the predicted conditional indirect effect was significant, 95% CI [.01, .18], and supported the hypothesis (see Figure 1). When motivation to socially enhance was high (+1 SD), there was an indirect effect wherein ingroup advantage increased general social enhancement gratifications, which in turn improved evaluations of the show, b = .16, SE = .08, 95% CI [.04, .34]. This effect was absent when motivation was low (-1 SD), b = -.05, SE = .07, 95% CI [-.22, .06].

For H2, we predicted that manipulating the outgroup character's stereotypicality might impact media attractiveness indirectly through gratifying social uncertainty reduction motivations. Once again, the direct effect of the stereotypicality manipulation on media attractiveness was non-significant (b = .01, SE = .15, p = .93), while the indirect effect was statistically significant, b = .09, SE = .05, 95% CI [.004, .22] (see Figure 2), such that a more stereotypical outgroup character acted as a social uncertainty gratification which in turn increased the attractiveness of the media. Contrary to our prediction and the pattern found for H1, previously held social uncertainty reduction motivations did not significantly moderate the indirect effect, b = -.15, SE = .14, p = .28. Thus, the indirect effect was as predicted, but the conditional nature of it was not. It should also be noted that the impact of the stereotypicality manipulation on social uncertainty reduction motivations was only marginally significant, b =

.32, *SE* = .19, *p* = .09. Hence, while the indirect effect itself was significant, one of its

component paths fell slightly short of full significance. This does not negate the overall support

for the indirect effect portion of H2, but does indicate that caution should be applied in

interpreting the first component path independent of the overall indirect effect.

There was no main effect of intergroup intimacy on social enhancement gratifications,

t(206) = .12, *p* = .91, *d* = .01, social uncertainty reduction gratifications, *t*(206) = -.60, *p* = .55, *d*

= .08, or media attractiveness, *t*(206) = .45, *p* = .65, *d* = .06, so we did not examine intimacy as

an independent intergroup media feature in the way we did the other manipulations. However,

RQ2 and RQ3 were concerned with how the presence of intergroup intimacy might change the

effectiveness of these other media features in gratifying social identity motivations. These

questions were tested using the same type of conditional indirect effects model described in

hypotheses 1 and 2, only with intergroup intimacy serving as the moderator of the mediated

relationship. We found no significant moderation (*b* = -.56, *SE* = .38, *p* = .14, 95% CI [-1.30,

.18]) of the indirect relationship of outgroup character stereotypicality on media attractiveness

through uncertainty reduction gratifications. However, the effect of outgroup character

stereotypicality on uncertainty reduction gratifications was only significant in the platonic

condition (*b* = .16, *SE* = .08, 95% CI [.03, .35]) and not in the romantic condition (*b* = .02 *SE* =

.07, 95% CI [-.12, .17]). The amount of intergroup intimacy moderated the relation of social

comparison on social enhancement gratifications (*b* = -.97, *SE* = .38, *p* > .05) (95% CI [-1.73, -

.21]) (see Figure 3 for coefficients and Figure 4 for a decomposition of the moderator effect). In

the absence of intergroup romance, more positive social comparisons were associated with more

social enhancement gratifications, subsequently leading to greater media attractiveness (*b* = .21,

SE = .07, 95% CI [.09, .39]), but in the presence of intergroup romance the effect was non-

significant (*b* = -.05, *SE* = .07, 95% CI [-.22, .08]).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of the role that social identities

play in intergroup media selection. We argued that individuals might seek to gratify two social

identity based motivations, social enhancement and social uncertainty reduction, through

selecting intergroup media with specific narrative features. We examined whether the importance

of the audience's identity might be related to the strength of these motivations, and hypothesized

that for individuals with the strongest motivations the presence of these narrative features would

be gratifying and thus make the intergroup media more attractive. We tested this by

experimentally manipulating two narrative features that we believed were theoretically related to

one or the other social identity motivation as well as a feature we believed might disrupt both.

The Role of Identification

Given our theoretical argument that social identity was related to people's media

selection tendencies, it seemed natural to measure the relationship between the importance of our

audience's racial identity and their motivation to consume media that was either socially

enhancing or able to reduce social uncertainty. Some, but not all, past studies had indeed found a

relationship between a more broadly conceived social identity gratifications measure and identity

(e.g. Harwood, 1999). However, in this study we found no relationship between identity

importance and social identity motivations. We have two explanations for this lack of an effect.

First, most of the research on ethnic and racial identity has been conducted on minority

groups (Phinney, 1996), including most of the work on social identity gratifications. In our study,

we focused on White racial identity. As described earlier, research suggests that Whites don't

necessarily think about or admit that their racial identity is important (Frankenberg, 1993), despite its powerful impact (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). Given this, a measure of explicit identification might lack validity for White participants. This is supported by the lack of clear or consistent relationships between explicitly measured White identity and other types of intergroup media effects (Mastro, 2003). Future research on White identity and media might consider employing implicit (Knowles & Peng, 2005) and indirect (Smith & Henry, 1996) measures of identity strength that have successfully assessed White racial identification. Second, there are a number of reasons why someone who is highly identified with a group might nonetheless not have strong identity-related media needs. For example, a strongly identified individual who is deeply involved in identity-related causes might reduce social uncertainty via those non-media activities to the point that they are no longer motivated to seek out additional intergroup information via the media. While the relationship between identity and motivations is certainly theoretically interesting, scholars interested specifically in media consumption patterns might instead look at something more directly related to the audience's decision-making process, such as the social identity motivations measure introduced in this paper. Our study introduced the idea of social identity *motivations* specifically to address the issue of problematic expectations that identity strength and media strength have a direct or straightforward relationship.

The Impact of Social Comparison

We manipulated the power and prestige of the outgroup character in relation to the ingroup character to initiate a social comparison and hence tap social enhancement motivations. A moderated mediation analysis revealed that a positive social comparison (i.e. one in which the ingroup was advantaged) increased social enhancement gratifications, which in turn improved the audience's perceptions of the intergroup media, but only when participants reported having

strong a priori social enhancement motivations for consuming media. These results are the

strongest evidence for the basic premise of this study, namely that intergroup media will be

perceived as more attractive when messages tap into the motives born of the audience's social

identities. Audiences with pre-existing motivations to seek group enhancement will view

portrayals of positive intergroup comparisons as gratifying, and will hence want to consume such

portrayals. Conversely, positive intergroup comparisons do not offer this appeal to people who

are not motivated to socially enhance. To our knowledge, this is the first time that a narrative

feature has been experimentally linked to social identity gratifications, and then to intergroup

media attractiveness.

Social enhancement motivations are linked with prejudice (Hogg & Abrams, 1988), and

the above finding bodes well for those who might wish to use intergroup media as a prejudice

reduction strategy, such as in the extended contact literature. Specifically, our results suggest that

there are intergroup media features that may be *especially* attractive to prejudiced individuals,

and that do not necessarily suppress the prejudice reducing effects of the message. It might be

argued that representing the outgroup as having less prestige might reinforce negative outgroup

stereotypes. Research on stereotypes has found that negatively stereotyped "poor Blacks" are

judged to be less competent and less likeable compared with both Whites and Black

professionals (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Although there was a danger that our social

comparison manipulation might prime poor Black stereotypes, our pilot testing showed that

social comparison could be manipulated without changing the perceived likeability or

competence of the outgroup character, suggesting that this was not a problem within our study.

Rather than fostering negative perceptions about the outgroup, this type of social comparison

manipulation might reduce a perceived threat that might otherwise prevent prejudiced viewers

from engaging with the outgroup characters or the message.

However, one should also consider that outgroup members exposed to what would be a

disadvantageous social comparison for them might perceive their group's vitality as lessened and

thus avoid the same intergroup message (Abrams & Giles, 2007). More broadly, the intergroup

contact literature makes clear that the effects of contact on minority and majority groups can be

quite different. Things that reduce prejudice for majority groups can have ironic effects for

minority groups (Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2010; Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto,

2009). This may be one advantage that vicarious contact has over face-to-face contact. While in

face-to-face contact the needs of two group members might occasionally be in opposition to one

another, media can be specifically targeted towards a single group and designed to be optimally

effective within that demographic. Based on our findings, social comparison seems to be a

feature that helps with both targeting and optimization.

The Impact of Outgroup Stereotypicality

On the face of it, manipulating the stereotypicality of the outgroup character seems to run

counter to the goal of improving intergroup perceptions. Exposure to negative stereotypical

portrayals of minorities that are prevalent in media contributes to the adoption of negative beliefs

systems about those groups (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Ortiz, 2007). On the other hand, the

presentation of positive prototypes and exemplars can improve attitudes (Mastro & Tukachinsky,

2011). Stereotypicality may also make the outgroup characters' group membership salient which

may reduce aversive racist responses (Coover & Godbold, 1998) and lead to generalization from

attitudes about the individual to the entire group (Joyce & Harwood, 2014). Based on these lines

of research we can surmise two things. First, stereotypes activate mental models about outgroups

that organize and shape the absorption of new information based on the perceptions of outgroup

exemplars. Second, the valence of the stereotypical information is important, and most media

portrayals of minorities are unfortunately negative. We believed that we could best examine the

theoretical role of this media feature by using stereotypical (versus non-stereotypical) traits that

were both positive and negative in equal proportion, thus manipulating stereotypicality

independent of valence. Indeed, in our pilot testing we found no significant difference in

likeability between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical versions of the character, which

supported the valence-neutrality of our manipulation. Holding valence constant, we believed that

stereotypical portrayals would be attractive to a certain group of viewers. However, our results

showed the direct effect between more stereotypical outgroup characters and media

attractiveness was not significant, and the direct effect on social uncertainty gratifications was

only marginally so. So we would conclude that increasing outgroup stereotypicality is not the

most effective way of reducing social uncertainty despite the manipulation not necessarily

harming the effectiveness of the intergroup media as a prejudice reduction strategy.

With that said, the *indirect* effect of outgroup character stereotypicality on media

attractiveness through social uncertainty reduction gratifications was significant, although not

moderated by a priori social uncertainty reduction motivations. While we would hesitate to over-

interpret this indirect effect, there is one important take-away message, namely that a social

uncertainty reduction gratification was very clearly tied to media attractiveness. This finding

pushes forward theorizing on social identity and media in interesting ways. If we look at the

items that make up this social uncertainty reduction gratification, they are primarily focused on

learning new information about who groups are, how those groups act, and what is expected of

their own groups. However, this construct grouped together much more tightly with social

enhancement motivations than they did with surveillance (a traditional gratification also focusing on information seeking) or need for cognition scales. This indicates a distinct, social identity-centric, information seeking motivation that affects how we evaluate media.

What is less clear from the present research is what media features will be most strongly associated with this new social identity gratification. If social uncertainty reduction is adaptive it may serve both functional and emotional needs. One particularly relevant emotion here would be intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). In intergroup anxiety research, anxiety is often related to not knowing how to interact (Plant & Divine, 2003); our manipulation may have reduced information about the outgroup target's characteristics, but not so much about how to interact with that person or people like him. Instead it might be plausible that intergroup media with strong intergroup uncertainty (and anxiety) reduction potential would present information more directly related to social *interaction* (e.g., by featuring interactions in which characters from different groups model specific intergroup communication strategies for addressing intergroup differences), including information about norms for intergroup interaction. An example of this might be if a Black and White character were each speaking in different English dialects and the media message presented clear rules for how the appropriation of specific slang should be handled (e.g. under what circumstances, if any, can the White character say "homie" in his intergroup interaction). Less superficially, a media portrayal of an intergroup interaction might make it clear that avoiding talking about race when it is obviously salient can create awkward interactions and negative judgments (e.g. Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008). This type of intergroup media feature might not only make the vicarious contact more attractive through making it more practically informative, but also decrease social anxiety and therefore

increase the attractiveness of future face-to-face contact (Mazziotta et al., 2011). While this

remains postulation at this point, it represents an interesting direction for future research.

The Impact of Intergroup Intimacy

We manipulated intergroup intimacy through the inclusion or exclusion of romance

between the two characters. The presentation of intergroup couples in media can in some

circumstances have a positive effect on intergroup attitudes (Lienemann & Stopp, 2013;

Paterson, Turner, & Conner, 2015). However, intergroup romance has also been shown to be

uniquely unattractive to White audiences (Weaver, 2011), a potentially problematic effect given

that forming more long-term and intimate relationships is a highly effective form of face-to-face

contact (Pettigrew, 1997). As a result, we were interested in whether the presence of romance

would disrupt the ability of the other intergroup media features to gratify their theoretically

linked social identity motivations.

The moderating effect of intergroup intimacy on the relationship of outgroup character

stereotypicality and social uncertainty reduction gratifications did not reach conventional levels

of significance (possibly as a result of the weaker overall effect of this manipulation). However,

we did find a clear moderating effect of intergroup intimacy on the relationship between social

comparison and social enhancement gratifications. Specifically, the social comparison

manipulation had an effect only in the platonic intergroup condition, and not in the intergroup

romance condition. Plausibly, the presence of romance may have made gender identity more

salient than ethnic identity for some of our participants. This makes sense for two reasons. First,

self-categorization theory suggests that social identity salience is a product of the accessibility of

that identity relative to the context and goals of the individual (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, &

McGarty, 1994). The presence of a heterosexual romantic story line would activate thoughts

about gender norms and roles that would make gender identity more salient. Second, there are

still societal norms that suggest that the man should be the breadwinner and the woman should

be taken care of, and when economic and gender identities conflict, gender usually wins out

(Akerlof & Kranton, 2010). As a result, audiences might prefer a show with a high status male

character, regardless of his in/outgroup membership. In our study, both women and men

preferred the message in which the male character had a financial advantage, supporting the idea

that gender norms were active in our audience.

Regardless of the mechanism at play, it is plausible given our results that intergroup

romance functions as a distractor or disruptor of other intergroup features. While we are limited

in making any concrete conclusions in this study given that we did not also manipulate the

gender of the characters, this disruption, if it holds up and is better understood by future research,

might be used strategically. For example, in some contexts romance might facilitate prejudice

reduction by reducing the emphasis on group memberships and focusing attention on issues that

bypass or transcend race, perhaps fostering cross-categorization (Ensari & Miller, 1998).

However, until researchers can support and elaborate on this supposition, media producers

wishing to leverage the pro-social impacts of vicariously depicted intergroup relationships may

wish to stick to the "buddy" typology already so prevalent in the industry.

Limitations in Specification and Generalization

In addition to the limitations already mentioned throughout this discussion section, our

findings raise several questions about both audience and process that we are unable to directly

answer. The first and broadest relates to the generalizability of the sample. Our participants were

White college students. It is not clear that being a college student should radically change the

reasons audiences choose media, but White audiences are likely to be significantly different than

minority audiences in the United States. While minority audiences are in some cases specifically

drawn to ethnic media (e.g. Abrams, 2010), for White audiences most media is "White ethnic

media" by default. This reduces both the agency and necessity of social identity motivations, and

as a result should reduce the effect size of the gratifications in comparison with a minority

sample. Because our sample was mono-racial we are unable to compare majority and minority

samples directly, so this is an important goal for future research.

Other individual-level moderators would also have provided a fuller understanding of our

findings. For example, the effects of mediated contact are typically smaller for those with past

interpersonal intergroup interactions (Fujioka, 1999). It would therefore be useful to know how

past experiences with intergroup interactions and media affect the level and influence of social

identity motivations and gratifications. For example, social identity gratifications relating to

media might matter less for people who had other avenues of intergroup interaction.

Alternatively, some people might be inherently more or less trustworthy of information they see

in media, which would in turn impact social identity gratifications. Beyond moderators, other

variables (e.g., outgroup attitudes) might influence intergroup media attractiveness more directly

(i.e., prejudiced people being less interested in intergroup media in general). Such variables

should be included in the future.

While our relatively small sample size did not allow for large-scale structural equation

models, follow-up research with larger samples could explore these additional variables and

other complexities. A larger sample could, for example, compare the simultaneous effects of

both types of social identity gratifications. In our pilot, social identity motivations and

gratifications were strongly interrelated, but refinements in both the media features and model

complexity should aid in disentangling them.

Closing Comments

Expanding on past theorizing that has suggested a role for social identity in the media selection and avoidance process (Abrams & Giles, 2007; Harwood, 1999; Knobloch-Westerwick & Hastall, 2010), the current research suggests that there is merit in investigating specific social identity gratifications (social enhancement and uncertainty reduction gratifications) as variables that influence the media selection process. In particular, we see merit in examining how pre-existing identities and identity-related motivations facilitate (or close off) gratification-specific pathways towards perceived media attractiveness and enjoyment. By moving away from a monolithic view of the role of identity we lose some theoretical parsimony, but in return make strides in understanding how specific media features relate to different desires and cognitive processes. These steps forward are important in moving theory toward applicability.

We have identified two message features that are tied to intergroup media attractiveness and another feature that seems to disrupt it. We were working with descriptions of shows rather than the actual shows; such descriptions are reflective of materials that sometimes drive the initial media selection process. The summary level information we presented to participants was similar to information found in show reviews, summaries, and trailers, that can play a large role in how agentic media consumers choose specific TV shows or movies. Our findings might not explain the processes by which audiences decide to stick with a show over the long haul, but they do speak to how media producers should promote intergroup media if they wish to reach prejudiced audiences. Specifically, intergroup media seem most likely to appeal to a broad audience, including the prejudiced, when they feature platonic relationships between a relatively high status ingroup member and a lower status (and perhaps mildly but non-negatively stereotypical) outgroup member. These features maximize audience perceptions that the message

will yield desirable gratifications and encourage viewing while maintaining the possibility of improving intergroup attitudes. Convincing media producers to create such messages is another challenge in and of itself, but providing them with evidence that the messages will be attractive to the audience is the first step in that process.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of All Study Variables

	M	*SD*	*α*	1	2	3	4	5
Pre-test measures								
1. Identity importance	5.15	1.82	.97					
2. Social Enhancement Motivation	4.18	1.39	.85	-.01				
3. Social Uncertainty Reduction Motivation	3.79	1.29	.92	-.01	.78*			
Post-test measures								
4. Social Enhancement Gratification	3.83	1.41	.96	.08	.45*	.33*		
5. Social Uncertainty Reduction Gratification	3.81	1.31	.93	.03	.50*	.38*	.82*	
6. Media Attractiveness	4.54	1.10	.92	.14	.10	.01	.34*	.32*

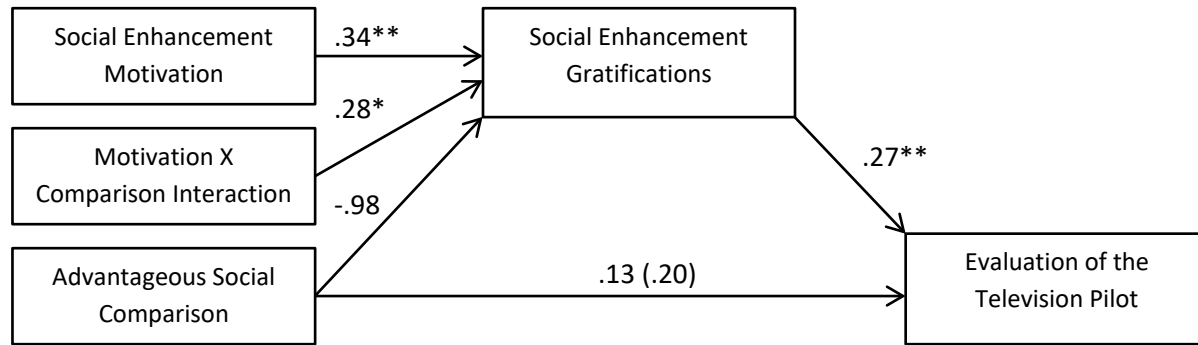*Note. N* = 208, **p* < .01 (two-tailed)

Figure 1. Computational model of the conditional indirect effect of (dis)advantageous comparison on the evaluation of intergroup media described in H_1. The overall model is significant in predicting the mediator ($R^2 = .23$, $F(3, 204) = 20.20$, $p < .001$) and the dependent variable ($R^2 = .12$, $F(2, 205) = 14.24$, $p < .001$). The total effect is in parentheses. All path coefficients are unstandardized.
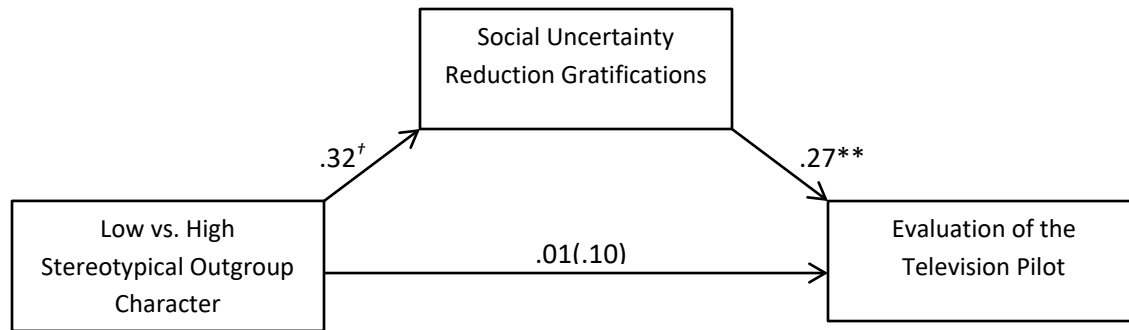
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 2. Computational model of the conditional indirect effect of outgroup character stereotypicality on the evaluation of intergroup media described in H_3. The overall model is marginally significant in predicting the mediator ($R^2 = .01$, $F(1, 206) = 2.98$, $p = .086$) and conventionally significant for the dependent variable ($R^2 = .10$, $F(2, 205) = 11.67$, $p < .001$). The indirect effect depicted is also significant. The total effect is in parentheses. All path coefficients are unstandardized.
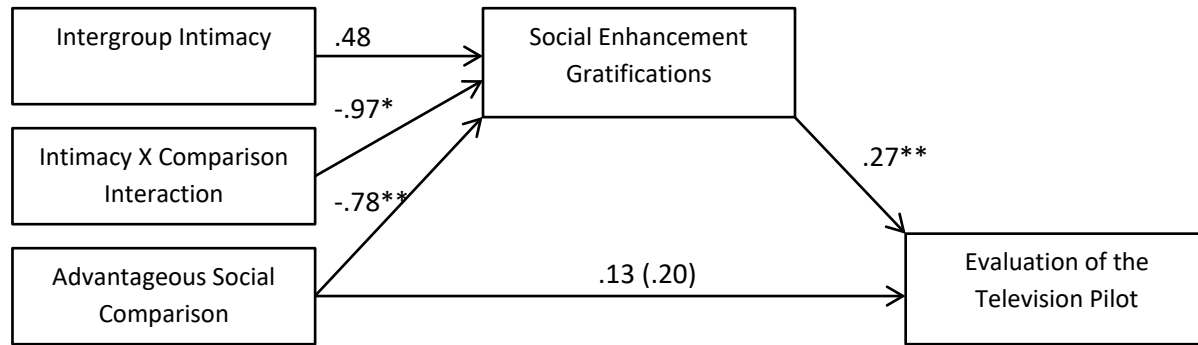
$^†p < .10$ ** $p < .01$

Figure 3. Computational model of the conditional indirect effect model described in RQ$_1$. In intergroup media featuring intergroup romance, disadvantageous social comparisons make intergroup media less attractive by failing to gratify social enhancement motivations. That effect does not occur in non-romantic intergroup media. All path coefficients are unstandardized. Overall, the model is significant in predicting the mediator, $R^2 = .04$, $F(3, 204) = 2.82$, $p < .05$, and the dependent variable, $R^2 = .12$, $F(2, 205) = 14.24$, $p < .01$. Baseline social enhancement motivations, which were included as a moderator in previous analyses, are a significant covariate in this model predicting social enhancement gratifications (95% CI [.31, .56]), but not evaluations of the television pilot. Including the covariate does not affect any of the other associations in the model. The total effect is in parentheses.
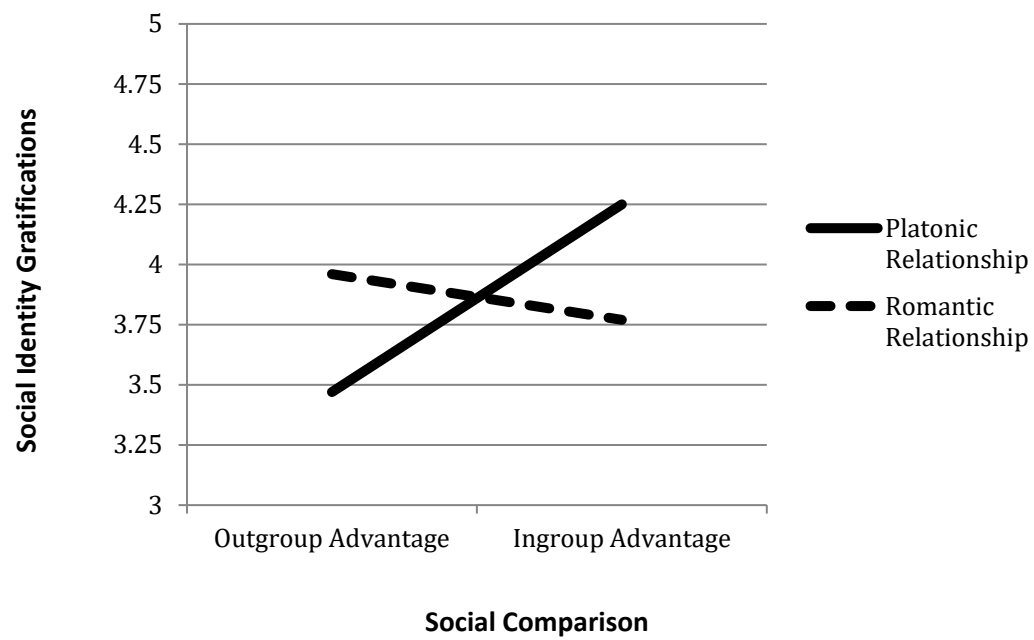
$* p < .05, ** p < .01$

Figure 4. Decomposition of the interaction between the social comparison variable and the intergroup intimacy variable on the social enhancement gratification. The slope is significant for messages portraying platonic intergroup media, but non-significant for romantic messages.