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Social Identity Theory as a Framework for Understanding the Effects of Exposure to Positive Media Images of Self and Other on Intergroup Outcomes

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Based on the tenets of social identity theory, a two-study experimental design was conducted which examined the influence of exposure to positive Latino media exemplars on ingroup (Latino) and outgroup (white) consumers. Specifically, the impact of exposure on interethnic evaluations as well as perceptions of self and other was evaluated. Results from Study 1 and Study 2 suggest that although exposure to positive media depictions of Latinos can prompt more favorable evaluations of ingroup and self among Latinos, the same cannot necessarily be said for the effects of exposure to affirmative messages on judgments about Latinos among outgroup members (i.e., whites). Instead, these data indicate that for whites, ingroup (racial/ethnic) identification is a potent factor in media-related interethnic evaluations.

Keywords: social identity, Latinos, entertainment, media effects

Although Latinos have had a longstanding presence in U.S. media, in the main these images have been infrequent and characterized by their stereotypical and unfavorable nature (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Ramírez Berg, 2002). In recent years, however, the surge of chart-topping Latino artists such as Shakira and Jennifer Lopez alongside the tremendous success and popularity of Latino Major League Baseball players such as Miguel Cabrera and Yadier Molina has led to what many in the popular press have termed a “Latin explosion” in U.S. mainstream media (Roberts, 1999). One important upshot of this growing visibility can be seen in the enhanced opportunity for audience members to view the talent and achievements of Latinos in a media environment generally void of such representation (Mastro &

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Date submitted: 2013–05–31

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Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Ramírez Berg, 2002). Based on the assumptions of social identity theory, such exposure is particularly meaningful as consumption of affirmative portrayals has the potential to positively influence perceptions of both self and other for Latino (ingroup) and white (outgroup) consumers, respectively. As such, the present two-study design investigates this relationship by experimentally examining the effects of both media exposure and racial/ethnic identification on perceptions of self and other among Latino and white audiences.

Social Identity-Based Processes and the Media

Social identity theory posits that a portion of one's self-concept is dependent on the importance and relevance placed on the group membership(s) to which an individual belongs (Turner & Oakes, 1986). The theory suggests that individuals' drive for positive identity and esteem influences the social comparisons they make (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In particular, group/category comparisons that accentuate group distinctiveness in favor of one's ingroup over a relevant outgroup are privileged. As a result, when a particular group becomes salient, the features associated with that group guide one's attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, differences across groups are highlighted and disparities within categories are trivialized. This process is explained more fully within self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Ultimately, the categorization process stresses perceived similarity between stimuli (i.e., people) within the same category and differences between stimuli of separate groups. When categorized into separate groups, people are "depersonalized," or seen as embodying a relevant group prototype (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). This process assists in the maintenance of self-concept and esteem alongside increasing confidence in existing cognitions by providing support via consensus (Hogg & Abrams, 1988, 1999). Not surprisingly, the desire to maintain positive ingroup status is enhanced by the personal relevance of the particular ingroup to one's identity such that the greater the degree of identification one has with an ingroup (i.e., race/ethnicity), the more motivated one will be to protect the status and interests of that group (Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963; Verkuyten & Brug, 2004).

Needless to say, this type of social comparison process often results in stereotype-based comparisons (e.g., Turner, 1981; Hogg & Adams, 1988). Brewer (1979, 1999) argues that ingroup-outgroup distinctions typically consist of pro-ingroup bias rather than anti-outgroup bias, and therefore even when outgroup members are perceived positively, ingroup members are perceived and treated even more positively. While not highlighted directly here, this assertion suggests that although people often seek out stimuli that leads to more favorable perception of one's ingroup, favorable representations of outgroup members can, in fact, promote *overall* positive attitudes about the group. Thus, while people are motivated to maintain distinctions between their in-group and the out-group, that does not necessarily prevent these individuals from developing positive impressions of the outgroup. Indeed, findings in the domain of media effects generally support this contention; however, the exact nature of the relationship is unclear. On the one hand, research suggests that exposure to positive media images can improve majority group member's attitudes about minority outgroups (e.g., Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005) along a variety of outcomes ranging from general support and positive judgments (Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Wanke, 1995; Power, Murphy, & Coover, 1996) to sympathy regarding issues of discrimination (Bodenhausen et al., 1995). On the other hand, the findings in this domain additionally

indicate that when exposed to affirmative portrayals of minorities (i.e., blacks) white consumers report more favorable evaluations of minorities, but attribute these positive outcomes to external or situational factors rather than the internal/personal characteristics of the outgroup (Power, Murphy, & Coover, 1996). Moreover, results from both Coover (2001) and Mastro, Tamborini, and Hullett (2005) suggest that, to a degree, favorable intergroup outcomes based on media exposure are contingent upon the extent to which the media depictions of race/ethnicity (even when positive) accommodate majority group norms and attitudes. Thus, the nature of the relationship between exposure to positive images of outgroup members and intergroup outcomes requires further scrutiny. Still, the implication is clear: consuming favorable characterizations of race/ethnicity should produce more favorable racial/ethnic judgments about that group among outgroup members. Overall, while media portrayals of outgroup models may lead ingroup members to perceive these media personas as prototypes for that group, this depersonalization process may actually promote broader favorable impressions of the relevant outgroup.

The relationship between media exposure and intergroup outcomes is further played out when it comes to the media's role in creating commonly held norms and conventions. In order for intergroup comparisons to operate, the comparative dimension must be recognized by both ingroup and outgroup members (Turner & Reynolds, 2003). In other words, the point of comparison is not merely the group itself (e.g., gender, race, etc.), it is the relevant dimension in the immediate context. As such, by promoting certain representations (which feature particular aspects of groups) and ignoring others, the media play a role in creating shared norms and activating the use of these constructs in subsequent evaluations (see Harwood & Roy, 2005). In particular, media messages have the potential to (1) influence the importance/relevance of, and ability to prime, different group memberships; (2) contribute to viewers' perceptions about the features/dimensions that characterize different groups; (3) provide norms of treatment for different groups; (4) define the status and standing of different groups; and ultimately (5) normalize these notions by suggesting that media representations are consensually accepted.

For consumers, then, the specific features/group dimensions associated with different groups in the media are of import. Specifically, the need for quality depictions of one's ingroup appears to be so important that audiences may actively reject and select media content in order to manage social identity needs and protect perceptions of group vitality (Abrams & Giles, 2007). Of course, for whites, positive media depictions are readily available across a variety of media genres and types (as decades of content analytic research bear out). The same cannot be said for media characterizations of Latinos, which have long been found to be both infrequent and somewhat stereotypical (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005).

Accordingly, the recent upsurge in images of successful Latinos in the music industry and in Major League baseball is particularly relevant as these favorable media images provide more affirming characterizations of Latinos in a media environment largely absent of positive portrayals. It is important to acknowledge that while favorable depictions of Latino athletes and musicians should, overall, help promote more positive impressions of this group, these portrayals can also contribute to prevailing stereotypes linking well-known minority celebrities to their "performance" rather than intellect (Valdivia, 2010).

However, although these representations may reinforce certain stereotypical perceptions, those celebrities/entertainers portrayed favorably (e.g., applauded for their achievements, promoted rather than criticized) are likely also perceived by viewers as successful and possessing numerous desirable attributes. In particular, prior research suggests that the effective use of celebrity endorsers underscores how these individuals serve as a symbolic reference group one wishes to aspire to (Lafferty, Goldsmith & Newell, 2002). In addition, prior studies have shown that viewer connection to well-liked minority celebrities may be associated with more responsible health decisions (Basil, 1996). Research also suggests that white's exposure to well-known and well-liked celebrities (i.e., Michael Jordan) is linked to reduced discrimination and more favorable overall attitudes toward outgroup members (Bodenhausen, Schwartz, Bless, & Wanke, 1995). Finally, while exposure to exemplars who are less associated with physical performance (e.g., educators) could ideally produce more favorable attitudes toward Latinos while also increasing counterstereotypical beliefs, it would likely not be indicative of more "mainstream media" Latino models depicted most prevalently on screen (Roberts, 1999).

Overall, in this context, media consumption should provide the necessary elements for more auspicious intergroup behaviors, at least along a particular set of features. In order to test this relationship among both ingroup (Latino) and outgroup (white) members, the present two-study design was conducted. Study 1 examined the influence of exposure to positive media depictions of Latinos on Latino consumer's interethnic evaluations and self-esteem. In this study, videos from current popular musical artists were used as positive exemplars. To clearly isolate the impact of media exemplar's group membership on Latino consumers, only female artists (white and Latino) and female participants were used. This was expected to provide insight into the distinct means by which ethnic group membership in media influences viewers' self-esteem. Study 2 assessed the influence of exposure to positive Latino images in the media on outgroup consumer's (i.e., white men and women) ethnic attitudes and judgments. In Study 2, newspaper articles featuring successful (and fictitious) baseball players were utilized.

Hypotheses Study 1

Hypothesis 1

Viewer ethnic identification and video condition will interact in predicting intergroup comparisons (i.e., musical and rhythmic ability) such that as ingroup identification increases, Latinas who view a positive Latina musical performer on television (vs. a white musical artist) will attribute greater musical and rhythmic ability to Latinos than to whites.

Hypothesis 2

Resultant from this process of intergroup comparison favoring the ingroup, Latinas will report higher self-esteem.

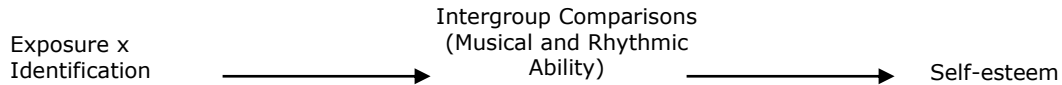


Figure 1. Conceptual model of relationship between media exposure and intergroup processes predicted in Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Method: Study 1

Participants

A total of 62 Latino American female (Latina) undergraduate students at a public university in the Southwest took part in this study on a voluntary and confidential basis. Students were recruited based on membership in existing Latino organizations on campus. Because the experimental hypotheses were premised on Latino-specific ingroup characteristics (and utilized female musical artists in the induction), only Latina students were included. Twenty participated exclusively in pilot testing the induction, and the remaining 42 Latinas took part in the experiment.

Pilot Testing

Prior to the start of the experiment, pilot tests were conducted with 20 Latina students outside the experimental group both to examine the salience of musical ability as a positively valued dimension for intergroup comparisons and to assess the comparability of the music videos to be used in the experiment.

Musical ability. To ensure that musical and rhythmic ability were positively evaluated ingroup dimensions for Latinas along which favorable intergroup comparisons could be made, measures of musical and rhythmic/dance ability were assessed. On a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *very much* (5) to *not at all* (1), participants were asked to evaluate women, men, college students, Caucasians, and Latinos in terms of their embodiment of the following characteristics: athleticism, intelligence, musicianship, rhythm, and cooking ability. Only responses for musical ability and rhythmic ability were of interest. T-tests comparing evaluations of Latino ($M = 3.45$) and white ($M = 2.95$) musical ability revealed significant differences in favor of Latinos on this characteristic ($t = 3.68, p < .01$). Mean comparisons of Latino ($M = 3.25$) and white ($M = 2.95$) dance/rhythmic ability also were significantly different ($t = 2.85, p < .01$). No statistically significant differences were revealed for athleticism, intelligence, or cooking ability in pilot tests.

Music videos. Having identified musical and dance/rhythmic ability as valued Latina ingroup traits for intergroup comparisons, music videos were selected for their equivalence—except in terms of the race/ethnicity of the artist. Contemporary, top-10 videos from popular female artists were chosen. The Latina performer was Shakira, and the white performer was Britney Spears. The study was conducted

while each was at the height of her fame, prior to any recent scandals associated with the latter performer. T-tests comparing the two videos revealed no significant differences between Shakira ($M = 3.2$) and Britney Spears ($M = 3.3$) in ratings of ability ($t = -1.0, p = .33$). On evaluations of popularity, no differences emerged ($t = .44, p = .67$) between Shakira ($M = 3.75$) and Britney Spears ($M = 3.70$). In evaluations of age, all 20 participants identified both performers to be in their twenties.

Independent Variables

Video condition. Participants were exposed to either the Latina artist's video (Shakira) or the white artist's video (Britney Spears).

Ethnic ingroup identification ($\alpha = .90$). Seven items were used to assess the importance of Latino group membership. They were rated on a 5-point scale from *very much* (5) to *not at all* (1), with higher numbers indicating greater ethnic identification. Sample items included, "Compared to the other characteristics which define you, how much do you value your race/ethnicity?" and "How strong a sense of belonging do you have with your race/ethnicity?"

Dependent Measures

Musical ability. To assess the musical (singing) ability of Latinos compared with outgroup members, a scenario was designed in the questionnaire requiring participants to compare the potential outcome of a competitive performance between groups. The instructions read,

This year, the popular TV show *Star Search* will be airing a special college edition of their competition. On the program, representatives from existing campus organizations will compete in the categories of Dancing, Singing, and Comedy. To date, ten teams have advanced to the next round of auditions. The teams are listed alphabetically below, along with descriptions of their organizations and their university affiliation.

Within the selection of groups, two teams were clearly identified to be composed of Latinas, two teams were plainly identified to be predominantly made-up of whites, and the remaining teams consisted of a variety of possible members (including those from African American organizations and mixed racial/ethnic groups).

After reviewing the teams, the participants were then asked to compare groups in terms of their winning potential on the TV program. A subset of the teams was designated into pairs who were given the following instructions to read:

If the following teams were to compete against one another in the Singing Competition, how do you think each would perform? Please assign points to each pairing from 0 (worst) to 100 (best). The points you assign each pair cannot total more than 100.

An example was then provided. It is important to note that only one of the pairs matched a Latino team against a white team.

Next, to calculate intergroup comparisons on musical ability, the score for the white team was subtracted from the corresponding paired score for the Latino team. This provided a range of scores (from -100 to 100) evaluating the ability of the Latino team in relation to the white team. More specifically, higher scores indicated a greater discrepancy between the groups, favoring Latinos.

Rhythmic ability. The same procedure used to determine intergroup comparisons on musical ability identified above was utilized in the assessment of rhythmic (dancing) ability. As such, the instructions specifically referred to the dancing competition.

Self-Esteem. A modified version of Heatherton and Polivy's (1991) state self-esteem measure was used to assess current self-appraisals. Items were scored on a 5-point scale ranging from *not at all* (1) to *extremely* (5), with higher numbers indicating greater esteem. Based on confirmatory factor analysis including tests for internal consistency and parallelism, two esteem measures emerged. The first, *appearance self-esteem* ($\alpha = .91$), included five items such as, "I am pleased with my appearance right now." The second measure, *social self-esteem* ($\alpha = .85$), consisted of five items including, "I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure."

Manipulation Check

A manipulation check was included in the experimental questionnaire to ensure that variations in evaluations of group members and/or esteem were not a result of differential enjoyment of the videos. To this end, t-tests were employed, which revealed no significant differences between the Shakira video ($M = 3.86$) and the Britney Spears video ($M = 3.50$) in terms of enjoyability ($t = .149, p = .36$).

Procedure

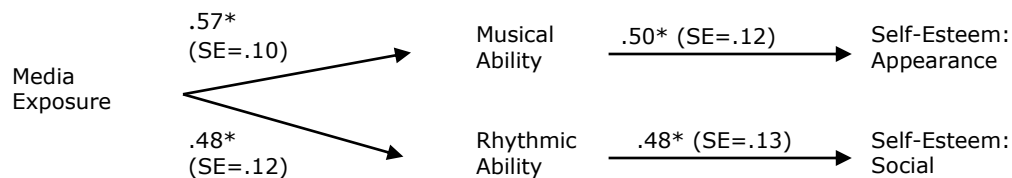
Forty-two Latina students were involved in the experimental portion of this study. Among these, 22 participants were assigned to the Latina music video condition and the remaining 20 to the white condition. The students were told that the purpose of the investigation was to gather audience feedback about a number of popular musical artists and to assess characteristics of audience members who may be viewers of this type of media.

After viewing the music video, the students were asked to complete a short survey. They were informed that they would be asked to (1) evaluate the video and the artist featured in it, (2) respond to a few questions about viewers of music videos, and (3) answer a few questions about themselves. Participants viewed the music video in groups of no less than two and no greater than five. Upon completion of the study, students were fully debriefed.

Results: Study 1

Path analysis using ordinary least squares regression (Hunter & Gerbing, 1982) was used to examine the model of media-based intergroup comparisons and esteem management predicted in Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Based on these criteria, the model predicted in Hypotheses 1 and 2 (and conceptually described in Figure 1) was not supported. Although the overall test of the model was not significant, $\chi^2(8) = 8.11$, $p = .42$, and residuals were not significant based on z scores, examination of the path coefficients revealed no interaction between media exposure and ethnic identification (or direct effect of ethnic identification) in predicting intergroup comparisons in musical and rhythmic ability. Given that these participants were selected based on memberships in Latino campus organizations, in hindsight it is not surprising that ethnic identification was universally high among this group ($M = 4.5$ on a 5-point scale, $SD = .46$), potentially obscuring effects associated with varying degrees of ethnic identification. As such, a revised model was proposed in which media exposure served as the sole exogenous variable (see Figure 2).



* $p < .01$

Figure 2. Revised model of media exposure and intergroup processes.

Data were consistent with the revised model. As Figure 2 reveals, path coefficients were substantial, and in the predicted direction, residuals were explainable by sampling error, and the overall test of the model's residuals was not significant, $\chi^2(6) = 11.25$, $p > .05$. As postulated, exposure to the Latino media condition predicted greater intergroup differentiation in favor of Latinos. Consequently, group distinctions favoring the ingroup resulted in increased self-esteem. In particular, exposure to positive ingroup media exemplars (via music video) predicted ingroup favoring responses in terms of musical ability and rhythmic ability. In turn, group-based comparisons favoring the ingroup on musical ability resulted in greater appearance esteem while ingroup favoring responses on rhythmic ability led to enhanced social self-esteem.

Given this preliminary evidence suggesting that positive media depictions of one's ingroup may be associated with ingroup favoring responses that facilitate esteem management, the question then becomes, how might favorable characterizations of a minority outgroup impact majority group member's overall evaluations of that group? Study 2 addresses this issue.

Hypotheses Study 2

As previously noted, the research on media and intergroup outcomes fairly consistently indicates that exposure can provoke intergroup behaviors, favoring the ingroup—particularly when it comes to exposure to negative comparative dimensions of outgroup members (Mastro, 2003; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008). In terms of the implications of consuming favorable images, the results are

somewhat mixed. Positive depictions of minority outgroup members appear to have the potential to prompt more favorable evaluations by majority group members (Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Wanke, 1995; Power, Murphy, & Coover, 1996). That said, factors such as the level of ingroup identification of the viewer as well as the specific features of the representation also seem to impact the extent to which exposure to such images has a positive effect. To lend further insights into this relationship, Study 2 looks at the influence of exposure to successful Latino baseball players on white's subsequent attitudes and judgments.

Hypotheses 1a–d

The race of a player depicted in a newspaper article and the racial identification of the consumer will interact in predicting evaluations of the player's (a) future success, (b) likability as a player, (c) likability as a person, and (d) attitudes about Latinos in general.

Method: Study 2

Participants and Procedure

A total of 336 adults participated in this study on a voluntary and anonymous basis. Among these, 174 were college students from a large university in the Southwest, and 162 were individuals attending jury duty in the same southwestern city¹. Because hypotheses were premised on specific racial/ethnic responses, only the results from the 260 white respondents were used in analyses. On average, the age of participants was 31.19 years ($SD = 15.03$). Women comprised 63 percent of the sample ($n = 165$) and men 37 percent ($n = 95$). The participants were assigned to one of the three newspaper conditions by randomizing instruments prior to distribution. The articles varied only in terms of the race/ethnicity of the player depicted in the newspaper story. All participants completed two tasks. First they were asked to read a short newspaper article about an ostensibly up-and-coming local baseball player. Next, they were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing recall about the article, perceptions of player success, personal interest in the player, baseball fan identification, ethnic identification, attitudes about Latinos in general, and demographics. The procedure was identical for all participants; however due to constraints regarding topics that may be addressed with jury pool participants, these subjects did not complete items pertaining to attitudes and affect toward Latinos (i.e., Hypothesis 1d). Otherwise, the process was equivalent.

Pilot Tests

Results from pilot tests showed that 100 percent of respondents correctly identified the players as being white or Latino in their respective condition. Although only 60 percent of respondents correctly

¹ Participants were recruited from the jury pool to increase the generalizability of results, as jury pool attendees are randomly selected from the city population. In order to ensure the equivalence of these groups (on pertinent attributes) prior to aggregating data, *t*-tests were performed to evaluate responses on all outcome measures and on key attitudinal variables. Based on these results, the samples were deemed comparable and appropriate for combination.

noted the absence of racial/ethnic information in the no race condition, a manipulation check in the experiment proper (discussed in the results section) revealed greater accuracy. In terms of attributes of the newspaper articles, they were identical in all aspects other than race².

Independent Variables

Newspaper condition. Three levels of newspaper condition were used (Latino, white, no image), varying only in terms of the race/ethnicity of the player depicted. The article featured a fictitious local minor league player who was likely to be recruited into the majors next season. A story about a mock athlete was used because this allowed for maximal control over the stimulus, creating an exemplar that was both highly positive and accommodating. The news story provided the player's statistics, noted awards received, and addressed likely future accolades. The name of the white player was Johnny Duran. The name of the depicted Latino player was José Duran. The player's name in the control (no image) condition was J.R. Duran.

Racial identification. To measure racial identification among these white participants (a group membership that is commonly low in importance for whites) the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) scale was used (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). This scale consists of seven Venn-like diagrams, which vary in their degree of overlap between various circles. This overlap represents the level at which a particular group membership or identity is included in oneself (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991). Respondents were asked to identify the diagram that best represented their level of identification with their race. Responses ranged from 1 (low racial identification: self and group circles completely separate) to 7 (high identification: self and group circles completely overlap).

Dependent Variables

Success ($\alpha = .88$). To examine predicted success of the player, items were created that gauged accomplishment along several benchmarks of Major League Baseball success. The eight items included: Rookie of the Year, All-Star selection, career longevity, individual performance, individual success, team success, improving team performance, and Major League Baseball awards. All items were measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale.

Likability as player ($\alpha = .88$). A five-item player fandom scale was included to assess likability of and interest in the player. Items were measured on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale. An example player fandom item was, "I would like to read about this player's career."

Likability as person ($\alpha = .81$). A three-item person interest measure, on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale, assessed interest in the player as a person, outside the domain of baseball. An example personal interest item was, "This person seems interesting."

² No significant differences emerged across conditions for player attractiveness, $F(2, 24) = 1.89, p = .17$, player appeal, $F(2, 24) = .98, p = .39$, article typicality, $F(2, 27) = 2.01, p = .15$, level of understanding, $F(2, 27) = .49, p = .62$, enjoyment, $F(2, 27) = .44, p = .65$, and boredom, $F(2, 27) = .09, p = .91$.

Attitudes toward Latinos. Three individual, semantic differential items (excluded from the jury pool questionnaire) examined white respondents' stereotypical attitudes toward Latinos in general. Items were measured on a 7-point scale with higher numbers indicating more positive attitudes. They included: violent/not violent, lazy/hardworking, and family oriented/not.

Control Variable

Baseball fan identification. Because sports have become a source of social identity that provide group norms that contribute to one's self-concept (Deschesne, Greenberg, Arndt, & Schimel, 2000), the Other in the Self scale again was used to control for sports identification (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). Responses ranged from 1 (self and fan circles completely separate, representing low identification) to 7 (self and fan circles completely overlap, representing high identification).

Analyses

Separate regression analyses (all controlling for baseball fan identification) were performed to examine the two-way interaction between newspaper condition and racial identification predicted in Hypotheses 1a–d. For use in the regression, newspaper condition was dummy coded such that the no race (control) condition was the comparison group.

Results: Study 2

Manipulation Check

Prior to examining the hypotheses, it was necessary to demonstrate that participants correctly identified the race/ethnicity of the player as well as the sport addressed in the article. In the white player condition, 91 percent of those noting the player's race correctly identified the player as white. In the Latino player condition, 99 percent of those noting the player's race correctly identified the player as Latino. In the no race condition, 82 percent of respondents correctly noted that player race was not applicable. A full 100 percent correctly identified the player's sport as baseball.

Hypotheses 1a–d

In examining Hypothesis 1a, regression analyses revealed a significant interaction between player race/ethnicity and consumer racial identification in predicting player's future success, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F = 3.75$, $p = .025$. In particular, decomposing the interaction demonstrated that for those exposed to the white player, as racial identification increased so too did perceptions of the player's future success compared to the no race condition, $\beta = .18$, $t = 2.47$ (see Figure 3).

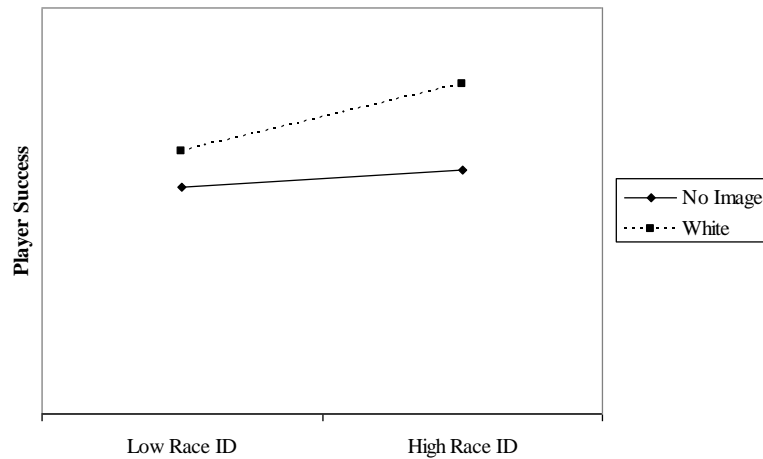


Figure 3. Interaction between player race/ethnicity and consumer racial identification in predicting player's future success.

The same pattern uncovered in Figure 3 (above) was revealed in regression analyses examining Hypotheses 1b. Here, player race/ethnicity and consumer racial identification were found to interact in predicting likability as a player ($\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F = 3.31$, $p < .05$), such that as racial identification increased in the white player condition so too did ratings of the player's likability compared to the no race condition, $\beta = .12$, $t = 1.90$.

The interaction between player race/ethnicity and consumer racial identification only approached significance in predicting likability of the player as a person (Hypothesis 1c), $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $\Delta F = 2.60$, $p = .076$. Once again, as the consumer's racial identification in the white player condition increased, so too did evaluations of the likability of the player as a person, compared with the no race, control condition.

In terms of the extent to which media exposure and consumer racial identification influenced evaluations of Latinos in general (Hypothesis 1d), no statistically significant interactions emerged in regression analyses for the criterion variables under investigation: work ethic $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\Delta F = .44$, $p = .64$, criminality $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\Delta F = .95$, $p = .39$, or family-oriented nature $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F = 2.02$, $p = .14$.

Discussion

The goal of present two-study design was to provide insights into the effects of exposure to favorable media representations of Latinos on both ingroup (Latino) and outgroup (white) consumers. To this end, the assumptions of social identity theory were applied. Elucidating this relationship is critical to harnessing the potentially constructive and/or prosocial effects of media on intergroup outcomes. To date, the lion's share of research in this domain has focused on the unfavorable consequences associated with majority group consumers' exposure to negative media portrayals of minorities, such as stereotyping and

prejudice (see Mastro, 2009 for review). The influence of viewing positive exemplars has received little attention. When taken together, data from Study 1 and 2 speak to this issue, demonstrating that exposure to positive media depictions of one's own race/ethnicity (whether one's group is in the majority or minority) may promote ingroup favoring responses. Further, as the results from Study 1 indicate, these intergroup behaviors may ultimately serve esteem needs. What was unexpected (but theoretically explicable) about these results was the failure of exposure to positive depictions of Latinos in Study 2 to generate more advantageous evaluations of that group among white viewers (compared with a no-race control condition). Instead of promoting more favorable assessments of outgroup members, these results seem to suggest that the media are most effective at prompting group members to think more positively about themselves—in a pro-ingroup manner analogous to ideas advanced by Brewer (1979, 1999). Conceivably, exposure to these positive Latino exemplars may have actually promoted greater individuation (seeing this Latino model as distinct from his ethnic group membership), rather than viewing him as a prototype for this out-group. However, because only a narrow range of outcomes was explored in Study 2, further research will be needed to parse out this relationship.

Study 1

Study 1 tested the assumptions of social identity theory in application to understanding the effects of exposure to positive representations of self in the media on subsequent intergroup processes. The results found here provide initial support for this media-based social identity framework. As predicted, Latinas who viewed affirming Latina media models were more likely to favor their ingroup over the outgroup along relevant comparative dimensions. As a result of these ingroup favoring comparisons, levels of esteem were enhanced. Unfortunately, it is not clear why advantaging the musical ability of one's ingroup predicted elevated appearance esteem whereas rhythmic ability increased social esteem. It could be argued that rhythm and dance are perceived to be more collective, public activities and as a result impact on the social value of the individual. Alternatively, perhaps musical and singing ability are seen as more individual-based activities and thus more reflective of attractiveness. Further research will be needed to lend clarity to these questions.

Additionally, the results from Study 1 are notable as they underscore the fact that the *quality* of media representations of race/ethnicity is meaningful for racial/ethnic minority consumers. What little is currently known about the relationship between media depictions of race/ethnicity and the effects on minority consumers is focused nearly exclusively on consuming negative images of one's ingroup—and these findings are mixed. Some have found exposure to unfavorable media representations of one's ingroup to have a negative effect on group concept (Fryberg, 2003) whereas others have found this only to be the case along certain dimension of self-esteem (Rivadeneyra, Ward, & Gordon, 2007). Still others found no association (Subervi-Velez & Necochea, 1990). The results from the present study contribute to our knowledge in this area by identifying the important role that exposure to *positive* media exemplars may play in processes related to the effects of media images on self-evaluation. When it comes to negative images, it may be the case that viewers actively work to buffer themselves from the harmful effects of exposure to negative images of their ingroup in the mass media (Abrams & Giles, 2007) using a variety of intergroup mechanisms (see Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner & Reynolds, 2003). This self-

protection is unnecessary when consuming favorable depictions of ones ingroup, thereby allowing these messages to positively impact on self-concept and self-esteem, as demonstrated in the current study.

Study 2

Study 2 attempted to determine if exposure to positive depictions of Latinos could lead to more favorable evaluations of Latinos among white consumers. Here, the results were counter to expectations, although not antithetical to social identity-based assertions regarding pro-ingroup bias. Specifically, when exposed to a newspaper article depicting a white baseball player, as levels of white identification increased, so too did favorable evaluations of the white player in terms of future success, likability as a player, and likability as a person. No such positive evaluations emerged when exposed to the Latino baseball player. Consequently, no positive evaluations were generalized to Latinos as a whole.

Although this outcome was unanticipated, in retrospect the result is less than surprising. These results support the same social identity theory-based predictions regarding ingroup favoring responses revealed in Study 1 (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and further establish the role that media play in prompting such outcomes. Still, the results remain somewhat disconcerting given that exposure to highly favorable, accommodating exemplars (such as the one utilized here) would be expected to boost subsequent judgments about the group. Instead, exposure appeared to have no impact on judgments of Latinos, as evaluations were no more favorable than those reported in the control condition. Thus, even in a professional sport that offers significant racial/ethnic diversity, whites with higher ethnic identification find a white baseball player particularly appealing.

Theoretical Implications

Overall, this study offers additional understanding of how social identity processes may explain media effects involving race and ethnicity. Although many of the findings support previous theoretical and empirical investigations, this study highlights distinct differences in how ethnic/racial identification contributes to media influences on ingroup vs. outgroup members. Prior research suggests that race is the most important social category among minority group members (Phinney, 1992). While ethnic identification was not a significant factor among Latina participants in Study 1, exposure to the Latino musician led to more favorable in-group evaluations that in turn predicted increased self-esteem. Thus, race as either an ingroup or outgroup designation likely acted as a significant media prime for Latinos, contributing to favorable self-evaluations. In contrast, past research suggests that race does not substantially factor into how whites develop their self-concept (McGuire, McGuire, Child, & Fujioka, 1978; Phinney, 1992). Recent findings further indicate that whites do not hold preferences for news stories depicting white characters (Appiah, Knobloch-Westerwick, & Alter, 2013). Surprisingly, the results of Study 2 suggest that race may indeed be a relevant social category for whites, as white identification was an important moderating factor when examining the influence of exposure to a white media exemplar on subsequent player evaluations.

Finally, while prior research indicates that exposure to favorable representations of minority outgroup members can lead to more positive evaluations among the majority group (Bodenhausen,

Schwarz, Bless, & Wanke, 1995; Power, Murphy, & Coover, 1996), in this investigation, white participants reported no significant increase in evaluations of Latinos following treatment. Existing research indicates that although priming certain situational cues may increase the salience of certain attributes when making overarching evaluations, this may not definitively lead to more favorable assessments (Wheeler & Petty, 2001). Furthermore, Reed (2004) argues that even if specific social identities (i.e., race/ethnicity) are primed, this may not be used as a benchmark for more favorable judgments. Ultimately, the social identity under scrutiny must have relevance to the object of evaluation. In the present study, white participants may not have perceived Latino race of the fictional baseball player as relevant when making judgments about the player and broader evaluations of Latinos. Alternatively, when white participants with high ethnic identification were exposed to the fictional white player, the white race prime was perceived as a salient social identity used as a basis for evaluating various attributes of the player. In sum, it appears that both Latinos and whites hold pro ingroup bias that can be activated by media primes involving same-race/ethnicity models. Ingroup bias may in turn lead to more favorable judgments of ingroup members, and, in the case of Latinos and other minority groups, improved self-concepts.

Practical Implications

These findings address how media persona within two industries—music and sports—can promote greater race/ethnic ingroup favoritism. While it is discouraging to find that the presentation of a prototypical Latino baseball player had no influence on white viewer's perceptions of that player and Latinos overall, it is promising that Latina's self-esteem can be boosted through a brief exposure to favorable images of a Latina musician. The underrepresentation of Latinos in entertainment media has been well-documented (Mastro & Behm-Morowitz, 2005; Monk-Turner, Heiserman, Johnson, Cotton, & Jackson, 2010) and could influence broader perceptions regarding the social status and relevance of this ethnic group in American society. However, the achievements of Latino musicians, such as Shakira, coupled with their promotion across various media may motivate Latino citizens to achieve similar success in their respective careers. Television programs such as *LatiNation* highlight the successes of Latinos in the United States and may be a valuable source of inspiration for the younger generation. In addition to promoting Latinos in the performing arts, media advocates must press producers of media content to find additional ways to showcase the achievements of Latinos across a range of professions (e.g., entrepreneurs, scientists, politicians). In addition, educators must train young people to be more critical consumers of media that depict certain stereotypical images of Latinos and other ethnic minorities. Finally, in an era of user-generated content, educators must also encourage ethnic minorities, such as Latinos, to create their own media that presents counterstereotypical representations of these ethnic groups and further promotes a positive self-concept among other viewers.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

There are a number of issues with the current study that should be addressed. The first concern involves the application of specific entertainment media persona as experimental stimuli. In particular, while the representations of Latinos in Major League Baseball has stayed relatively consistent (roughly 28-29%) from the time Study 2 was conducted to present (Lapchick, Bernstine, Nunes, Okolo, Snively, & Walker, 2013), Latino athletes are making inroads in other major American sports. For example, Mark

Sanchez (NFL quarterback) and Manu Ginobili (NBA guard) are two well-known Latino professional athletes who have experienced success in sports other than baseball. In addition, the musical artists used in Study 1—Shakira and Britney Spears—had arguably peaked (in terms of musical success/popularity) during the period this study was conducted. Since that time, both artists have ventured into other endeavors (i.e., competition show judges). Thus, it is important to place these findings in their proper historical context. Most important, however, are the increased numbers of nationally recognized Latinos holding high-status positions in government, including Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, and Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, to name a few. Consequently, while overall, Latinos continue to be underrepresented in U.S. entertainment media (Monk-Turner, Heiserman, Johnson, Cotton, & Jackson, 2010), images of these well-known Latinos in government may have a greater impact on both Latino and non-Latino perceptions of this ethnic group. Clearly, additional research is needed to assess the influence of counterstereotypical images of recognizable political/government leaders on individuals' perceptions of Latinos.

Although a more complete test of the relationships posited here is certainly necessary, future examinations would be well-served to additionally consider the implications of both contact theory (Pettigrew, 1998) and the parasocial contact hypotheses (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005). The research on real-world intergroup contact reveals that contact can reduce biases that people have toward other groups, regardless of whether they are majority or minority group members (Pettigrew, 1998). In particular, under favorable contact conditions, similarities between groups are more likely to be uncovered and tendencies to unfavorably stereotype are reduced. Thus, media consumers who have experienced more favorable real-world contact with Latinos might be particularly open to positive media messages regarding Latinos. As such, by incorporating measures of contact, the unique impact of the media may be more readily uncovered.

The features of the media messages themselves must also be given greater scrutiny. The stimuli in Study 1 was targeted strictly to female participants. Thus, future research should explore the impact of Latino and white male music performers on Latino male self-perceptions. In addition, although these inductions were pilot tested, it remains possible that the characters created in the newspaper condition (Study 2) simply were not perceived as sufficiently appealing or prototypical to impact on white consumer's evaluations. Consistent with the parasocial contact hypothesis, if a character is not perceived to be representative of the group, then the positive effects of exposure will not generalize to the outgroup as a whole. Put differently, for positive changes based on exposure to be applied to both the outgroup character and the entire outgroup, the character must be deemed archetypical of the group. When this is the case, even a single exposure can lead to improved attitudes about the outgroup (Schiappa et al., 2005).

Although the data provided here are simply initial observations, the results allude to a variety of possible applications of social identity theory to the effects of positive media exemplars on minority and majority groups and reinforce the importance of a diversity of favorable images in the media.

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