

Representation Matters:

Entertainment Portrayals as Indirect Identity Threats in Muslim College Students

by

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Presented to the
Communication Studies Department in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors

University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI

May 1, 2019

Author Note

I would like to thank the Department of Communication Studies for hosting the thesis program, and for making this experience possible. A special note of thanks to those in the department responsible for making this opportunity more available to transfer students such as myself. Within the department specifically, I would first like to thank Shevon Desai, the Communication Studies and Information Science librarian, for her help in navigating research databases. I would also like to thank Dr. Caitlin Lawson for helping me formulate my research questions, and for her support in the first steps of constructing my thesis. A big thank you to Dr. Jan Van Den Bulck, for his help and easy going demeanor– when the going got tough, he made it bearable.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Muniba Saleem for her mentorship. Without her support and her research on Muslim Americans and media effects, the completion of my thesis would not have been possible. To Jessica Roden: thank you for your patience and time as we navigated SPSS together, and for your statistics expertise. Additionally, thank you to everyone in my thesis seminar- as confusing as this process got at times, watching everyone overcome their struggles and complete their theses together was an incredibly fulfilling experience.

Finally, I would like to express appreciation to my family, without whose support my success would not have been possible. Thank you to my brothers Anas, Mosaab, and Suleiman. I also extend my deepest gratitude to my parents Talaat Pasha and Nahid El-Agamy; I am forever indebted to you. To thank you for all you have done for me would be a futile endeavour. To keep it brief: thank you for everything, and then some.

Abstract

Both empirical and theoretical evidence suggest that there are strong adverse effects on minorities' personal and group wellbeing as a result of exposure to media portraying their minority group in disparaging or negative ways. The present study contributes to existing research on this topic in two main ways: 1) understanding the effects of Muslim media portrayals on the depicted minority group as opposed to the majority, and 2) examining the role of entertainment media portrayals on the outcomes of interest, as existing research exclusively focuses on news media. This study utilized a cross sectional survey design and Muslim American participants were recruited through student cultural organizations. Significant relationships were found between perceived frequency of negative entertainment portrayals and perceptions of group discrimination as well as Muslim identification strength. Furthermore, there was a significant difference in the extent to which participants perceived negative representation of Muslims in entertainment relative to news media. These results contribute meaningfully to media effects research by illustrating the important role entertainment media play in threatening the social identities of depicted minority groups. Practically, this study suggests that media have a large role to play in the formation of Muslims' perceptions both of themselves and their social groups.

Keywords: social identity threats, Muslims, entertainment media, national identification

Introduction

Media representations of minorities are a particularly relevant topic in today's social and political climate. Minorities are often portrayed in a negative light, with stereotypes of these groups perpetuated through multiple media outlets (Dixon & Williams 2015; Shaheen, 2003). Muslims in particular as a minority group are often portrayed negatively, and frequently in connection with terrorism (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Cagle, Cox, Luoma, & Zaphiris, 2011; Dixon & Williams, 2015). Not only are negative representations of Muslims evident across American media in news coverage (Dixon & Williams, 2015; Nacos & Torres-Reyna, 2007; Powell, 2011), but are also similarly portrayed in entertainment media, such as TV shows and movies (AlSultany, 2012; Shaheen, 2003), and video games (Van Buren, 2006; Šisler, 2008). The sheer prevalence of these negative and stereotypical portrayals raises questions about their potential impact on viewers. Much of existing research focuses on how media representations of Muslims affect the non-Muslim American majority's attitudes towards Muslims.

News and political coverage act as a main source of information for many Americans on Muslim groups, and the biases and prejudices that are often perpetrated through these representations have been shown to adversely influence viewers (Saleem, Prot, Anderson, & Lemieux, 2017; Saleem, Yang, & Ramasubramanian, 2016). Many Americans report having little to no contact with Muslims in daily life, instead relying on media portrayals to understand and gather information on the group (Jung, 2012; Public Religion Research Institute, 2015; Smith, 2013). From a social standpoint, studying and understanding the effects of these overwhelmingly negative media portrayals is especially important considering this coverage is a primary information source on Muslims. Previous research demonstrates that exposure to negative media images of Muslims leads to negative attitudes towards Muslims, and influences

support for public policies known to have a negative impact on them (Saleem, Prot, et al., 2017; Saleem & Ramasubramanian, 2017). Notwithstanding the contribution of this work, little research focuses on Muslims as consumers of these negative representations.

A majority of Muslims report dissatisfaction with representation in mainstream media (Ahmed & Ezzeddine, 2009; Ahmed & Reddy, 2007; Ibrahim & Abdelhalim, 2012). Impact of self representation has been a topic of concern among viewers more generally. In 2017, the hashtag #FirstTimeISawMe went viral on Twitter. The hashtag encouraged viewers to share the first time they saw themselves represented accurately on a screen, sharing different characters from different shows and their unique characteristics. Many of the reactions to this hashtag offer a reflection on the effect of seeing one's ingroup accurately represented, oftentimes sharing an emotional recount. This idea of group media portrayals having an effect on viewers who identify as part of the portrayed group clearly has cultural significance on social media, where viewers express positive sentiments towards accurate group portrayals.

In addition to these dialogues among viewers, theoretical support exists for the idea that viewing one's group portrayed through media has important connections to social identification and media engagement. Social Identity Gratifications is a theoretical framework based in Social Identity Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory that supports the notion that self and group identification act as motivators in media selection and engagement (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Previous research has shown that people tend to seek out media that positively represent identities relevant to one's self concept in facets such as age (Harwood, 1997), ethnicity (Greenberg & Atkin, 1982), and gender (Lickona, 1974). Previous research on African Americans has shown viewers' ethnic identities play an active role in media selection, with TV program selection acting as a form of ethnic identity gratification (Allen & Hatchett, 1986;

Harwood, 1999a,1999b). Considering these findings along with the fact that Muslim media portrayals have been shown to be vastly negative and biased, it is especially important to understand the impact of these portrayals on Muslims themselves.

While accurate and positive group representation in media is both a societally and theoretically relevant concept, media research on the topic is fairly limited. For instance, one experimental study found that Muslim Americans were less likely to desire acceptance by Americans and reported that they were more likely to avoid interactions with them after being exposed to negative news about Muslims (Saleem & Ramasubramanian, 2017). Apart from this work, there is limited understanding of how non-news Muslim media portrayals could influence Muslims.

This is surprising, as cultivation theory strongly supports the idea that social reality judgements may be affected by fictional television (Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1978; Morgan, 2009; Potter, 2014). Strong theoretical support exists for the idea that viewer's conceptions of the world can be impacted by fictional media, and empirical research has shown that entertainment media can have similar effects as exposure to news media, such as affecting political opinions on crime policy and reproductive rights (Donovan & Klahm, 2015; Holbert, Shah, & Kwak, 2004; Slater, Rouner, & Long, 2006; Swigger, 2017). Given these considerations, it is important for research to examine entertainment portrayals in addition to news portrayals in order to more fully understand media effects on minority groups.

This study aims to fill a gap in existing media effects research by connecting previous findings on the effects of media representations of Muslims in news media with entertainment media. Specifically, the present research compares perceived frequency of negative representations of Muslims in entertainment and news media, and examines how these differing

representations affect perceptions of group discrimination, as well as Muslim and American identification. The present study draws on Social Identity Theory and Rejection Identification Model to situate its arguments related to perceptions of group discrimination and American and Muslim identification.

Literature Review

Social Identity Theory

In order to understand why negative group media portrayals might affect perceptions of group discrimination and group identification, this study draws primarily on social identity theory. Social identity theory emphasizes the importance of belonging to a group and ensuring a positive group identity (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Experiencing negative stereotypes about one's group may devalue an individual's identity, or pose what is called an identity threat. Identity threats can have negative effects on stigmatized individuals such as disparaging one's identity (Major & O'Brien, 2005).

Social identity threats can be experienced either directly or indirectly. Related research on ethnic and racial minority groups often focuses on direct identity threats, considering situations such as first-hand experiences of bullying or personal discrimination. However, research has shown indirect identity threats, such as negative group portrayals in media, may have significantly adverse effects on minority populations including low perceived self and group worth, and higher perceived discrimination, ostracism and exclusion by the majority group (Appel & Weber, 2017; Fujioka, 2005; Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Schmuck, Matthes, & Paul, 2017). These negative media portrayals play an important role in informing individuals of their group's status and esteem in relation to the majority group, with quantity and quality of the portrayals acting as indicators of the group's status within the overall society (Abrams & Giles,

2007; Giles & Giles, 2012). Muslim media portrayals, both in entertainment and news, are not only negatively represented but also underrepresented in American media (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). Thus, those who identify as part of the Muslim group and who are exposed to these negative portrayals may experience an indirect identity threat which indicates that their group is not held in high esteem.

The present study is particularly interested in the experience of negative media portrayals of one's ingroup and its relation to perceptions of discrimination. Previous research exposing Muslims to political ads devaluing Muslims found that this exposure led to increased perceptions of discrimination (Schmuck et al., 2017). A survey of Arabs showed those who perceived media as biased against their group also perceived more ostracism from their society (Tsfati, 2007). Based on the theoretical framework and relevant literature discussed above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Greater perceived frequency of negative entertainment and news portrayals of Muslims will be related to greater perceived group discrimination.

Rejection Identification and Disidentification Models

The Rejection Identification and Disidentification Models (RIM; RDIM; Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002), which are formulated upon Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), discuss how perceptions of discrimination affect in-group and out-group relations, personal well being, and national identification. Perceived group discrimination is an important factor to consider in media effects, as research has shown it can have adverse effects on wellbeing. In ethnic minority groups, research has shown perceived discrimination to be a key factor in predicting depression (Finch, Kolody, & Vega, 2000; Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999), distress and anxiety (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams,

1999), and acculturative stress symptoms (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, & Perhoniemi, 2006a; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000a, 2000b). In addition to affecting personal well-being, perceived discrimination has also been shown to have adverse effects on national identification for minority and immigrant groups (Saleem, Wojcieszak, Hawkins, Li, & Ramasubramanian, 2019). This study aims to understand the role negative entertainment media portrayals may play in group identity constructs.

Given that perceptions of group discrimination are expected to increase as a result of greater perceived negative media portrayals, RIM and RDIM would then support the idea that this increased perception of group discrimination would also affect group identification. A three wave longitudinal survey on Muslim Americans showed that exposure to negative news coverage of Muslims at Time 1 led to weaker identification as American at Time 2 (Saleem et al., 2019). This research also supported the notion that indirectly experienced identity threats may have more adverse effects on national identification than first-hand experiences of personal discrimination (Saleem et al., 2019). The present research considers negative representations of Muslims in entertainment media as an indirect identity threat, and proposes that exposure to this media will have a similar relationship with American identification. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Higher perceived frequency of negative entertainment and news portrayals of Muslims will correlate with weaker identification as an American.

Though previous research has shown clear theoretical and empirical support for adverse effects to national identity as a response to indirect identity threats by media, the effect on the threatened social identity (Muslims in this case) is not as clear. Previous research has shown perceived group discrimination may actually have some positive effect on well-being through

creating a stronger identification with one's in-group through the shared experience of discrimination as supported by RIM and RDIM (Bourguignon, Seron, Yzerbyt, & Herman, 2006). These models also propose this stronger identification with the threatened ingroup may be protective, as it may mitigate the harmful effects of exclusion from the majority outgroup, particularly in circumstances where integrating and being accepted into the majority outgroup is not a viable option (Branscombe et al., 1999; Ellemers, 1993).

Though theoretical support exists for a positive relationship between perceived discrimination and stronger identification with one's threatened identity as a protective measure, existing research has not found this link. Longitudinal studies have found that while discrimination experiences have negative effects on national identification for immigrants, there has been no significant effect on strength of identification with the threatened ingroup identity (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009, 2012; Saleem et al., 2019). Given this ambivalence between theory and empirical evidence, the following question is posited:

RQ1: Will greater perceived frequency of negative news or entertainment portrayals correlate with more positive or negative Muslim identification?

News and Entertainment Media

It has been well established in previous research that portrayals of Muslims in news media are often negative and linked with terrorism. Literature on Muslim representation in entertainment media has been shown to contain similar representations (Alsultany, 2012; Baker, Gabrielatos, & McEnery, 2013; Cagle et al., 2011; Dixon & Williams, 2015; Shaheen, 2003). While it has been established that both news and entertainment media contain negative representations of Muslims, it is unclear whether they contain similar amounts of negative representations, or are perceived to by viewers. However, these viewer perceptions of media

representations are likely to be affected by multiple factors, including demographic factors such as age and immigrant status. Those with immigrant experiences have been shown to seek news in places beyond national television, and take a critical stance towards these channels (Christiansen, 2004). This is important to consider with the Muslim American population, where adult Muslim Americans are three times as likely to be immigrants compared to non-Muslim Americans (Pew Research Center [Pew], 2017a).

While content analyses may accurately summarize the state of Muslim media portrayals, this may not necessarily translate directly to viewer perceptions. Although this distinction between actual portrayals and perceptions of these portrayals is important to make, there is a clear lack of equal research into both entertainment and news media. Most quantitative content analyses considering negative representations of Muslims focus on TV news and newspaper portrayals, with few considering fictional portrayals despite its clear cultural and societal significance. Further research into entertainment portrayals of Muslims would help to further understanding of whether this media type uniquely portrays Muslims as compared to news media, and subsequently may have unique effects on both Muslim and majority populations.

RQ2: Are perceived frequencies of negative portrayals of Muslims different in news media as compared to entertainment media?

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study were recruited through university student cultural organizations. Recruitment through cultural organizations, as opposed to through mosques, allowed for more variation in strength of religious identification (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). Participants were asked to take part in a research experiment “focused on understanding the media habits of Muslim

American students”. To qualify for the study, participants had to self-identify as a Muslim, be 18 or older, and have a valid email address ending in “.edu”.

The final sample consisted of 343 participants (123 males and 216 females; 4 did not identify; 100% self-identified as Muslim and were 18 or older). The mean age was $M_{\text{age}} = 20$ years; range was 18 to 45 years ($SD = 2.8$). The majority of participants were born in the United States ($N = 274, 79.9\%$). Racially, the majority of participants were Arab ($N = 211, 61.5\%$) and South Asian ($N = 106, 30.9\%$), which are the two largest racial groups of Muslim immigrants in the U.S (Pew, 2017b). The rest of the participants identified as White, East Asian, Black or African American, or other ($N = 3, 0.9\%$).

Measures

See Appendix for a full list of items used in each measure.

Negative News Media Perception. Participants’ perceptions of news media’s frequency of negative portrayals of Muslims was assessed using a scale developed by Saleem et al. (2017), created to assess exposure to violent media portrayals of Muslims in the news. This scale utilized three items such as “How often have you seen news stories about Muslims perpetrating violence?” ($M = 3.77, SD = 1.28$). Participants rated their agreement on scale 1 (*never*) to 6 (*almost everyday*). These items were averaged for each participant, creating an index of news portrayal perceptions ($\alpha = 0.9$).

Negative Entertainment Media Perception. Participants’ perceptions of entertainment media’s frequency of negative portrayals of Muslims was assessed using a single question: “How often have you seen Muslims represented negatively in entertainment media such as TV shows or movies?”. Participants answered the question on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*always*) ($M = 4.71, SD = 0.946$).

Group Discrimination. We assessed the extent to which participants perceived discrimination against Muslims as a group using three items (adapted from Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002), measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). One of these items, “Muslims are treated just as well as other religious minorities in America” (reverse scored), was dropped due to low inter-item reliability. The remaining two items, “Muslims are often discriminated in America,” and “Muslims are often the victims of hate crimes,” were averaged for each participant to create an index indicating perceptions of group discrimination ($r = .647, p < .01$)

Muslim and American Identification. Identification strength was assessed through four items (adapted from Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995). Participants rated their agreement on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Example items include “I feel strong ties with fellow Muslims” and “I am pleased to be Muslim”. The word Muslim was replaced with American in order to separately assess Muslim and American strength of identification. Cronbach’s alpha for the Muslim identification scale was $\alpha = 0.92$, and for the American identification scale it was $\alpha = 0.88$.

Procedure

This study utilized questions from a larger experimental survey study focused on understanding the effects of exposure to negative news portrayals on Muslim American students, as well as one measure added on behalf of the current study regarding Muslims in entertainment media. Questions analyzed in this study occurred prior to the experimental manipulation. Interested participants completed the survey online through Qualtrics. At the end of the study, qualifying participants received a US \$20.00 Amazon gift card. These procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Results

Group Discrimination

To understand the degree to which either perceived frequency of negative Muslim news or entertainment portrayals influenced perceptions of group discrimination, a multiple linear regression was performed. Hypothesis 1 predicted higher perceived frequency of both negative news and entertainment portrayals would correlate with higher perceived group discrimination. The model was significant, $F(2, 338) = 14.383, p < .000$, with $R^2 = .078$. Perceived frequency of negative news entertainment was marginally positively related to group discrimination ($\beta = .065, p = .1$), whereas perceived negative entertainment portrayals were significantly positively related to group discrimination ($\beta = .205, p < .000$). These results show perceived frequency of negative entertainment media was a highly significant predictor of participants' perceptions of group discrimination, whereas perceived frequency of negative news was a marginally significant predictor.

American and Muslim Identification

It was predicted higher perceptions of negative media portrayals, both entertainment and news, would correlate with lower strength American identification. A multiple linear regression was computed. The overall model was non-significant ($F(2, 338) = 1.861, p = .157$, with $R^2 = .011$). Despite non-significant findings for the model, results show a marginally significant trend in the predicted direction for negative entertainment perceptions, which related to a lower strength of American identification ($\beta = .142, p = .09$). There was no significant relationship between negative news perception and American identification.

In order to understand RQ1, an additional multiple linear regression was computed to understand the degree to which either perceived frequency of negative Muslim news or

entertainment media portrayals might predict Muslim identification strength. The model yielded a marginally significant effect, $F(2, 338) = 1.861, p = .09$, with $R^2 = .014$. Participants' scores on the Muslim identification index increased 0.16 points for each point on the negative entertainment media perception scale, showing a significant positive relationship ($\beta = .16, p = .029$). There was no significant relationship between perceptions of negative news media and Muslim identification as predicted. These results show higher perceptions of negative Muslim entertainment portrayals are a significant predictor of stronger Muslim identification.

News and Entertainment Media

For RQ2, a paired t-test was performed to compare the perceived frequencies of negative Muslim portrayals in both news and entertainment media. There was a significant difference between the perceived frequency of negative portrayals of Muslims between entertainment ($M = 4.7, SD = 0.946$) and news media ($M = 3.78, SD = 1.1.7$); ($t(340) = -13.98, p < .000$). These results suggest that the perceived frequency of negative Muslim portrayals in entertainment media is significantly higher than perceived frequency in news media portrayals.

Discussion

Theoretical and empirical evidence support the claim that media portrayals can have a significant impact on the formation of one's identity and understanding one's group esteem in the context of larger society. Existing research on minorities as consumers of negative media portrayals of their group has shown adverse effects on self worth, and increased perceptions of group discrimination and ostracization by the outgroup (Appel & Weber, 2017; Fujioka, 2005; Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Schmuck et al., 2017). The present study contributes to this literature in two main ways. Firstly, this study considers how negative portrayals of a minority group might affect the portrayed group, rather than an overall majority group. Less literature

exists on negative or biased media effects on minority groups, specifically Muslims. Secondly, by factoring in perceptions of entertainment portrayals, this study is able to more holistically analyze the role media portrayals may play as indirect identity threats, and how this may contribute to both ingroup and outgroup identification strength, as well perceptions of group discrimination.

Results for the first proposed hypothesis showed more perceived frequency of negative Muslim entertainment portrayals to be significantly related to higher perceived group discrimination, but only a marginally significant relationship with news portrayals. These results are particularly interesting, as previous research has shown that exposure to news and politically oriented media has been strongly linked to higher perceived group discrimination (Schmuck et al., 2017; Tsfati, 2007). While it is unexpected that there would be no highly significant relationship between news portrayals and perceptions of group discrimination, results do show a trend in the predicted direction. This difference may be explained by considering two key differentiating factors: sample size and manipulation. The sample used in Tsfati's (2007) survey study differs critically, with the reported median age being 14.5 years older as compared to the median age in the current study's sample. This may indicate some key differences between media preferences, consumption, or interaction for different age groups, or how these media manifest in understanding of group discrimination. Additionally, Schmuck et al. (2017) conducted an experiment where exposure to negative news media was actively manipulated, whereas the current study was limited to a survey. This may indicate some importance in the duration between exposure to negative media and assessing perceptions of group discrimination. Further research accounting for entertainment media in minority representation effects research is likely to help illustrate and define these possible differences. While the findings of neither

Tsfati (2007) or Schmuck et al. (2017) have been adapted to understand interactions between entertainment media and Muslim Americans specifically, these results strongly suggest that perceptions of entertainment media, much like news media, can be highly correlated with perceptions of group discrimination. This is an important finding that adds to media research by connecting previous findings in news media with entertainment media.

Results did not support the second proposed hypothesis which predicted that higher perceived frequency of Muslim portrayals in both entertainment and news media would correlate with lower strength American identification. A marginally significant relationship was found between entertainment media and American identification in the predicted direction. This finding is peculiar given both empirical and theoretical support for the predicted hypotheses, however this may point to some inherent differences in how distinct groups interact with identity threats. The sample in the current study was particularly young with a median age of 20.5 years. This younger age group is likely to be in a stage of active identity negotiation, which likely plays a role in effects of identity threats on strength of identification with social groups.

The first proposed research question returned particularly interesting results. Results revealed that higher perceived frequency of negative Muslim entertainment portrayals was significantly correlated with stronger Muslim identification. These findings are important in establishing empirical support for the theoretical idea that threatened identities might be strengthened as a protective measure in response to indirect identity threats in media. Though these findings have strong theoretical support situated in SIT and RIM, previous empirical research had not produced evidence to support the idea that stronger identification with a threatened identity may prove to be protective, acting as a buffer against adverse effects, particularly in situations where integration into the majority group is not a viable option

(Ellemers, 1993). These findings might also point to important differences to consider in samples in future research, where different age groups might exhibit different responses to identity threats. These findings can contribute meaningfully to existing literature by helping to understand the processes that might be affected by exposure to negative media portrayals of one's group, particularly in young adults where identity formation and negotiation is more active than older adults.

Findings comparing the perceived frequency of negative Muslim portrayals in news and entertainment media found a significantly higher perceived frequency in entertainment portrayals than news portrayals. This finding is particularly important when considering that there are notably fewer quantitative content analyses reviewing Muslim portrayals in entertainment media such as TV shows or movies. The majority of such content analyses tend to focus on Muslims in TV news or newspaper portrayals, with a particular interest in how this might contribute to political beliefs and opinions. While these news portrayals are important, as they have been shown to be overwhelmingly biased and negative in their representation of Muslims (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Dixon & Williams, 2015), they make up only one part of the media landscape. Future research into Muslim portrayals considering other media types and genres would not only give a clearer idea of trends over time and across media types, but would also contribute substantially to media effects research. Understanding the effects of negative media portrayals as indirect identity threats first begins with the foundational knowledge of the factual portrayals of Muslims in media. Furthermore, understanding the quantity and quality of these representations can further illuminate how perceptions of viewers may differ or align with subsequent findings.

Limitations

It is important to note four main limitations of the present research. Firstly, as only a cross sectional survey was administered to participants, conclusions determining causality cannot be reached. While this is important to fully understand the direction and timing of the relevant findings, this study may act as a sort of pilot research showing a strong indication that causal research should be conducted on entertainment media as an indirect identity threat to more fully understand media effects on minority groups.

A second limitation related to study design is the reliance on self report in the present study to assess perceptions of negative media portrayals, where participants may have been unable to recall media exposure or disproportionately recalled negative exposure (Ito, Larsen, Smith, & Cacioppo, 1998). Considering self-report is not accurate in assessing media exposure, as literature on negativity bias has studied thoroughly (Prior, 2013), this gives further reason to incorporate entertainment media into a research design where manipulation of exposure can be controlled and accounted for.

Additionally, the items used to assess media perceptions were limited both in comprehensiveness and quantity. Notably, there was only a singular item assessing perceptions of entertainment portrayals, whereas four items made up an index for news perceptions. However, it is equally important to note that the simple addition of this measurement of entertainment portrayals is still an improvement on previous research, in which entertainment portrayals have largely gone unconsidered. The item used to assess entertainment portrayals focused on overall negative perceptions, whereas those used to assess news perceptions focus more precisely on acts of violence and terrorism in connection with Muslims. While these themes have been shown to be prevalent in both news and entertainment media, it is possible that focusing solely on these aspects of portrayals might cause participants to perceive them as more

frequent. Additionally, asking participants to consider portrayals with nuances beyond these would likely further refine the understanding of how these portrayals interact with identity in different contexts.

Lastly, an important limitation to be considered is the sample used in this research. With a younger sample, such as the college students who participated in this study, it is important to consider that identity negotiation is more prevalent in this age range. This might cause for different interaction with social identity threats if compared with older Muslims.

Conclusion

Though the discussed limitations are important to consider, the current study has found significant results that contribute meaningfully to media effects and identity research. Findings reveal the importance of entertainment media portrayals in affecting minority members' self and group-based perceptions. Pragmatically, the present research suggests that negative media portrayals of minority groups are likely to indicate to members of these groups that they are collectively held in a negative esteem by the majority society, which is likely to affect perceptions of group discrimination. While Muslims are often suspected to have values conflicting with American society and as being unpatriotic or disloyal (DelReal, 2016; Hamilton & Ura, 2015; Howell, 2015), it is important to note that negative media portrayals likely have a role to play both in perpetrating these beliefs about Muslims, and in informing Muslims of these negative group perceptions, resulting in harmful effects. Results from the present study suggest that macro level factors such as media representations of minorities can significantly affect the extent to which minorities feel welcomed and accepted into majority cultures.