

# Activating and Suppressing Hostile and Benevolent Racism: Evidence for Comparative Media Stereotyping

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This research examines the role of media literacy training and counter-stereotypical news stories in prejudice reduction. Research participants read either stereotypical or counter-stereotypical news stories after exposure to a media literacy video or a control video. After this, they completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire that included Likert-type scales and feeling-thermometer ratings about their feelings toward African-Americans, Asian-Indians, and Caucasian-Americans. The findings reveal that hostile prejudice is more likely to be expressed toward African-Americans and benevolent prejudice is more likely to be expressed toward Asian-Indians. As predicted, counter-stereotypical news stories as compared to stereotypical news stories decrease prejudice toward Asian-Indians. Contrary to expectations, the media literacy video seems to prime prejudices rather than suppress them. Interestingly, news stories about Asian-Indians increase hostility toward African-Americans. These comparative stereotyping are explained using modern racist beliefs and model minority stereotypes.

Racial portrayals in the media have been studied across a wide variety of media contexts, including news (Dixon & Linz, 2000a,b; Entman, 1992, 1994a,b; Gilens, 1996), prime-time programming (Mastro & Robinson, 2000; Oliver, 1994), and advertising (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000; Mastro & Stern, 2003). These analyses of media content consistently document that racial minorities, if at all represented, are portrayed in stereotypical ways in a narrow range of peripheral roles. While not

all of these stereotypes are negative, even seemingly benign ones could activate paternalistic, benevolent prejudicial feelings that are just as problematic.

Although the majority of the research on race and media has emphasized content analytical studies on media stereotypes, other studies have explored the ways in which such biased media portrayals influence viewers' attitudes. Such scholarship on the social psychological effects of stereotypical media content has focused mainly on Caucasian-Americans' attitudes toward African-Americans, especially in the context of crime. Several experiments have manipulated the race of a criminal suspect in news stories and found that respondents were harsher in evaluating African-American targets when compared to Caucasian-American targets in subsequent tasks (Ford, 1997; Oliver, 1999; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996). Additionally, many studies have explored the linkages between exposure to stereotypical media images of African-Americans and attitudes toward political issues such as affirmative action, welfare programs, and the death penalty (Domke, 2001; Fujioka, 2005; Gilens, 1996; Peffley & Hurwitz, 2002; Tan, Fujioka, & Tan, 2000; Valentino, 1999). By concentrating on biased evaluations of African-American targets and on political beliefs, the bulk of this scholarship has examined *cognitive* responses while neglecting *emotional* responses to media stereotypes. The current project acknowledges the multi-dimensionality of racial prejudice by examining how exposure to stereotypical news stories can influence both hostile and benevolent racist feelings toward two out-groups – African-Americans and Asian-Indians.

Not all viewers are likely to exhibit prejudicial responses to stereotypical media portrayals. Research on control of automatic stereotyping shows that certain situational and motivational factors moderate racist responses (Blair, 2002; Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Devine, 1989; Devine & Monteith, 1993; Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; Kawakami, Dovidio, Moll, Hermsen, & Russin, 2000). For instance, past studies show that participants exposed to stereotype negation training and counter-stereotypical exemplars are less likely to express racial prejudice toward members of stigmatized racial groups (Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Kawakami, Dovidio, Moll, Hermsen, & Russin, 2000). The current study applies this idea of suppression of activated prejudicial responses to the context of media psychology by examining whether media literacy training and exposure to counter-stereotypical news stories help decrease prejudicial responses.

## EFFECT OF RACIAL MEDIA STEREOTYPES ON ACTIVATION OF PREJUDICIAL RESPONSES

Racist feelings are artifacts of shared cultural norms rather than individual idiosyncrasies (Jones, 1972). Socio-cultural forces such as family, friends, opinion leaders and the mass media help form, activate, maintain, and transmit cultural stereo-

types. Mediated communication such as news, in particular, plays an important role in creating and reinforcing cultural stereotypes about people and places when there is very little contact (Armstrong, Neuendorf, & Brentar, 1992; Fujioka, 1999). Through continual habitual exposure across genres and media types, media stereotypes become part of symbolic dominant ideologies (Gerbner, 1998; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). Exposure to even a single or a few media exemplars can often be powerful enough to create impressions about issues, peoples and places, especially when little or no first-hand, non-mediated sources of information are available (Armstrong et al., 1992; Fujioka, 1999; Zillmann, 2002; Zillmann & Brosius, 2000).

Repeated exposure to stereotypical information makes stereotypes frequently and readily accessible (Banaji, Hardin, & Rothman, 1993; Bargh, 1994; Devine, 1989; Gilbert & Hixon, 1991; Lepore & Brown, 1997; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997). Prejudicial feelings become chronically accessible and automatically activated, especially when social categories such as race are highly salient (Wyer & Srull, 1989). Automaticity refers to the idea that stereotypes and prejudice are activated with little or no strain on the limited processing capacities that people possess (Bargh, 1994). Culturally shared social stereotypes are so widespread and deep-rooted that they are immediately, automatically activated (Devine, 1989). Most often, specific stereotypical attributes need to be primed (stereotype priming) to have an effect on judgments, but sometimes the mere activation of a social category (category priming) can increase the accessibility of stereotypical characteristics associated with that category (Banaji et al., 1993; Lepore & Brown, 1997).

The neo-association model of Jo and Berkowitz (1994) explains that the requirement for media priming to occur is an existing associative network of related concepts in the cognitive structure. With such a network in place, a presentation stimulus can trigger a chain of related thoughts and feelings through the process of *spreading activation*. With such schemata in place, stereotypical media exemplars can activate racist notions that become highly accessible when audiences make judgments about racial groups (Ford, 1997; Hansen & Hansen, 1988; Hansen & Krygowski, 1994; Valentino, 1999). Likewise, the activation-recency hypothesis put forth by Hansen and Hansen (1988) suggests that prolonged exposure to biased media content makes these notions highly automatic. Thus, unless conscious efforts rectify recently activated primes, such primes will bias evaluations made immediately after exposure.

#### SUPPRESSION AND CONTROL OF PREJUDICIAL RESPONSES

The flip side of *activation* of racist feelings upon exposure to media stereotypes is the *suppression* of such feelings. Recent studies suggest that although frequent ex-

posure to stereotypes might activate prejudicial responses quite unintentionally and perhaps unconsciously, such feelings are possibly controllable under certain situational and motivational circumstances (Blair, 2002; Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Devine, 2001; Devine & Monteith, 1999).

Several factors related to perceivers' motives, social norms, presence of counter-stereotypes, focus of attention, cognitive resources, and nature of stimulus cues might influence the extent to which prejudicial responses can be suppressed (Blair, 2002; Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; Gilbert & Hixon, 1991; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997). For instance, according to the Fiske and Neuberg continuum model (1990), willingness and ability to make accurate judgments play an important role in the suppression of prejudice (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). That is, motivation for accuracy and the availability of attentional resources are key factors in determining the use of individuating information as opposed to stereotypical information (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). This model distinguishes between automatic stereotypical processing and deliberate individuating information processing. While almost the entire basis for stereotypical processing of information is social categorization, the individuated processing route involves examining specific attributes of the individual being evaluated before making a judgment. According to this model, unless motivational reasons to be accurate are present in an interpersonal situation, people will likely use existing stereotypes rather than attend to individuating information in forming impressions.

Other research has found that the need to avoid the perceptions of being a prejudiced person or belonging to a group of prejudiced people (Devine & Monteith, 1993), motivation to avoid guilt feelings (Devine, 1989), and exposure to egalitarian beliefs (Macrae, Bodenhausen, & Milne, 1998) can also help in reducing prejudicial responses. Adequate training motivates participants to inhibit their prejudice, especially in public settings where they adhere to social norms of appearing nonprejudiced (Devine, 1989; Devine & Monteith, 1993).

### EFFECT OF MEDIA LITERACY AND COUNTER-STEREOTYPICAL EXEMPLARS ON PREJUDICE REDUCTION

Because the prejudice reduction strategies described thus far occurred mostly within nonmediated contexts, the effectiveness of such mechanisms for mediated messages is not clear. Within media psychology, most of the studies on diminishing the harmful effects of media content have focused on media violence. For instance, Cantor and Wilson (2003) describe three distinct intervention strategies used to counter violent content in media programming. Although their research synthesis is in the context of media violence, the approaches they outline also apply to confronting media stereotypes. These strategies include (1) instructions to

consciously counter negative media content during or prior to such exposure, (2) exposure to prosocial media content and, (3) large-scale multisession structured curricular programs. The present research uses the first two approaches to decrease prejudicial responses to racial media stereotypes by exposing participants to media literacy instruction and counter-stereotypical media content in a controlled experimental setting.

### Media Literacy Instruction

Research shows that instructions from experts to consciously counteract negative effects of media content can have a positive influence on audiences' attitudes (Beentjes, van Oordt, & van der Voort, 2002; Kawakami, Dovidio, Moll, Hermsen, & Russin, 2000; Nathanson, 1999; Nathanson & Yang, 2003). Social cognitive theory explains that when authority figures criticize harmful behaviors in the media, participants view the disapproved media depictions in a less favorable light, preventing viewers from mimicking media behaviors in real life (Bandura, 1986). In the context of prejudice reduction, Kawakami and colleagues (2000) trained participants to negate stereotypical associations by saying "yes" in their minds when encountering nonstereotypical exemplars and "no" when encountering stereotypical exemplars. Based on their findings, these researchers concluded that practice and conscious efforts could reduce prejudice.

Typically, live or taped comments from authority figures such as parents and teachers expressing their disapproval for anti-social (and approval for prosocial) media behavior have been successfully with school-going children (Beentjes et al., 2002; Nathanson, 1999). Among older adults, however, efforts to negate harmful media effects have sometimes led to backlash effects, especially when such training appeared to be "too preachy" (Nathanson & Yang, 2003). Therefore, a more indirect approach, using audio-visual instructional materials with media professionals as expert sources, might be effective for such audiences. Because the present study attempts to reduce the harmful effects of media stereotyping, the central theme of the instructions involves the need to avoid making generalizations based on a few media exemplars (Zillmann & Brosius, 2000). Overall, for the purposes of this study, the definition for media literacy instruction is televised commentary shown prior to exposure to news stories, where experts on media literacy encourage participants to abstain from making biased generalizations based on a few media exemplars.

### Counter-Stereotypical Media Exemplars

Another strategy for prejudice reduction that has been reasonably successful in some contexts is the presentation of stereotype-disconfirming information (Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Waelenke, 1995; Coover, 2001; Dasgupta &

Greenwald, 2001; Donovan & Leivers, 1993; Fujioka, 1999; Graves, 1999; Power, Murphy, & Coover, 1996). For example, Caucasian-American participants were less likely to attribute lack of success to individual rather than societal factors when exposed to counter-stereotypical exemplars as opposed to stereotypical exemplars of African-Americans (Power, Murphy, & Coover, 1996). Similarly, in a study conducted by Fujioka (1999), exposure to counter-stereotypical media content regarding African-Americans increased positive attitudes toward this group, especially amongst Japanese participants who had little direct contact with African-Americans as compared to Caucasian-American participants.

Other research has found that exposure to atypical, admired, out-group members (famous celebrities such as Denzel Washington and Michael Jordan in the African-American context) can activate positive attitudes toward the out-group (Bodenhausen et al., 1995; Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001). Dasgupta and Greenwald (2001) showed that prejudice reduction was possible by exposure to counter-stereotypical exemplars. Specifically, when participants were simultaneously exposed to photographs of admirable members of stigmatized groups (such as African-Americans and the elderly) and those of disliked members of ingroups (such as Caucasian-Americans and youth), there appeared to be rather long-lasting effects on reducing prejudice towards the stigmatized group. In a similar study by Bodenhausen and colleagues (1995), media images of admired and successful celebrity African-American role models increased perceptions that discrimination against African-Americans is unjustified. However, such effects were observed only if there were positive feelings toward the celebrities and if the participants were not made consciously aware of the atypicality of the exemplars. To avoid contrast effects from the priming of extreme, atypical exemplars, the current study considers examples from everyday lives of non-celebrities that challenge existing cultural stereotypes as counter-stereotypical exemplars.

### HOSTILE AND BENEVOLENT FORMS OF PREJUDICIAL FEELINGS

The present research examines Caucasian-Americans' self-reported feelings toward two out-groups – African-Americans and Asian-Indians (people living in India). Cultural stereotypes of African-Americans often include criminality, aggression, poverty, low intelligence, and laziness (Devine, 1989; Devine & Elliot, 2000; Lepore & Brown, 2000), just as the characteristics of traditionality and passivity are unidimensional conceptualizations of Asian-Indians (Jones & Ashmore, 1973; Mitra, 1999; Naidoo, 1988). Postcolonial critiques of Orientalism argue that historically, Western texts portray Eastern cultures as different, inferior, exotic, and sensual. Dividing the world into “us” versus “them” accomplishes a homogenizing of *the other* as unusual, uncivil, and evil while proclaiming the dominant Western

ideology as normal, civil, and good (Narayan, 1997; Shohat & Stam, 1994; Shome, 1996). Recent news stories on outsourcing of hi-tech jobs to India from the US might suggest a shift in such stereotypes. Asian –Indians, once perceived as naïve, helpless subordinates might now be perceived as competent threats to American resources in the global marketplace. However, at the time of this study, such news stories were still not quite visible in the U.S. media; participants, therefore, are quite unlikely to display this shift in cultural stereotypes of Asian-Indians.

According to the realistic conflict theory, differences in cultural stereotypes and prejudices associated with various groups in society have their origins largely in real conflicts arising out of competition to win scarcely available tangible resources (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). More recently, application of this theory extends to include even the mere *perception* of the presence of conflict among groups (Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998). The stereotype content model proposed by Fiske and colleagues describes how competition and conflict translate into specific feelings toward out-groups. According to this perspective, perceptions of *warmth* and *competence* of out-groups determine their status and level of competition, which in turn predict the type of feelings expressed toward out-groups (Eckes, 2002; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999). More specifically, the model posits, on the one hand, expressions of hostile prejudice toward out-groups has its foundation in the perceptions of troublesomeness and incompetence. On the other hand, benevolent prejudice toward out-groups arises from perceptions of passivity and helplessness. Consistent with the conflict theory and stereotype content model, the expectation in the current study is that Caucasian-American participants will express hostile feelings toward groups such as African-Americans who are stereotyped as being troublesome and rebellious. Contrasting feelings will be benevolence toward Asian-Indians who have the stereotype of being passive and deprived. The traditional conceptualization of prejudice is of uniform contempt and “antipathy, based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization” (Allport, 1954, p. 9). Not surprisingly, the majority of the scholarship on media stereotyping has focused on negative stereotypes such as criminality and violence (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002; Dixon & Linz, 2002; Domke, 2001; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Valentino, 1999). Contemptuous prejudice typically targets subordinate groups labeled as ungrateful for rebelling against the ruling racial groups while rightfully demanding more power (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Researchers such as McConahay (1986) have captured this phenomenon under the term *modern racism* that includes perceptions of African-Americans as “overly pushy” for more resources. The effects of racial media stereotypes on modern racist beliefs have received some attention recently (Busselle & Crandall, 2002; Entman, 1990; Rada, 2000; Richardson, 2005). The current study conceptualizes hostile prejudice as negative feelings that stem from such modern racist beliefs toward out-groups seen as incompetent and rebellious. Such feelings are manifest as

discomfort, uneasiness, nervousness, disgust, contempt, anger, dislike, and fear, expressed toward racial out-groups (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Sears, 1988).

Although this body of research has enhanced our understanding of the role of media in reinforcing hostile prejudice, this restricted focus neglects the growing evidence from social cognitive literature, which discusses the importance of detrimental effects of so-called benevolent forms of prejudice. Research shows that flattering feelings of sympathy towards noncompetitive out-groups are consistent with the functions served by traditional hostile feelings (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Glick & Fiske, 2001; Katz, Wackenhut, & Hass, 1986). Historically, both benevolent and hostile racism played a vital role in sustaining racist ideologies of slavery in the U.S. and justifying discriminatory privileges given to Europeans while colonizing "inferior child-like natives" in Third World countries (Hochschild, 1998; Jackman, 1994; Narayan, 1997). By assuming the role of protectors of "primitive uncivilized people," dominant groups rationalize their entitlement for extra responsibilities and power in order to provide for subordinate, helpless groups. Out-groups who passively accept this asymmetric power relationship receive benevolent treatment while those that rebel are treated with hostility. In the current study, benevolent prejudice is the seemingly positive feelings that stem from perceptions of out-groups as being inferior, incompetent, and passive. Benevolent prejudice is manifest as feelings of sympathy, pity, sadness, amusement, and guilt toward out-groups (Fazio & Hilden, 2001; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Swim & Miller, 1999). Even though such feelings are not blatantly contemptuous, they can be just as hurtful, offensive, and inappropriate as hostile prejudice (Swim & Stangor, 1998).

Most of the studies discussed so far have devoted attention to the role of media in influencing viewers' *perceptions* and *beliefs* about racial out-groups (Brown Givens & Monahan, 2005; Ford, 1997; Hansen & Hansen, 1988). The few studies that have investigated emotional responses to racial depictions in the media have mostly focused on negative feelings, such as fear, primed by crime news stories (Chiricos, Eschholz, & Gertz, 1997; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996; Sotirovic, 2001). The current investigation attempts to expand this focus by examining the role of media in the activation and inhibition of both hostile and benevolent prejudicial feelings.

### RACIAL HIERARCHIES AND COMPARATIVE STEREOTYPING

Experimental research on racial media stereotypes has typically examined the effects on viewers' attitudes toward the specific racial group depicted in the media message. Interestingly, the inclusion of more than one out-group in the current ex-



periment allows for the possibility of studying comparative stereotyping processes. Although there is little prior research on this topic because of the limited number of studies that include more than one racial out-group, one recent study found that reading news stories about the accomplishments of Asian-Americans is likely to increase negative stereotypes of Caucasian-American participants toward Mexican-Americans (Ho, Sanbonmatsu, & Akimoto, 2002).

Such comparative negative stereotyping effects are not surprising considering the history of “divide and rule” politics of racial relations during the slavery era in the U.S and during European imperialism in colonial times. Specifically within the U.S., model minority stereotypes typically associated with Asian-Americans have been known to create hierarchies and tensions amongst various racial minorities (Lee, 1996; Wu, 2002). By associating Asian-Americans with seemingly positive traits such as hard working, intelligent, and polite, they are categorized as “good minorities” or the “model minorities.”. Such profiling distinguishes them from other racial minority groups, such as African-Americans, whose characterization, in relative terms, is “bad minorities” (Lee, 1996; Wu, 2002). Such distinctions often justify racial discrimination against African-Americans by creating a myth that Asian American successes are proof that race does not matter in contemporary American life. Additionally, the model minority stereotype unnecessarily forces a racial comparison between Asian Americans and African-Americans, pitting them against each other. The preliminary evidence from the Ho, E. A., Sanbonmatsu, D. M., & Akimoto, S. A. (2002) study suggests the possibility that exposure to media stereotypes of one racial out-group could influence feelings toward another racial out-group because of such content’s effect on beliefs about the equitable availability of resources to racial minorities through the activation of model minority stereotypes.

## PRESENT RESEARCH

In summary, existing research on stereotyping suggests that when cultural stereotypes are deep-seated, exposure to stereotypical cues will automatically prime prejudicial responses (Bargh, 1994; Devine, 1989; Lepore & Brown, 1997). However, even automatically activated prejudicial responses can be suppressed under appropriate situational and motivational circumstances (Blair, 2002; Devine & Monteith, 1999) The current study explores the role of media literacy training and counter-stereotypical media exemplars in decreasing prejudicial responses. Also, the present study focuses on affective prejudicial responses by considering feelings toward rather than beliefs about out-groups. Conflict theory and the stereotype content model predict that hostile feelings are expressed toward defiant, inferior out-groups while benevolent feelings are expressed toward obedient,

subordinated groups (Eckes, 2002; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; LeVine & Campbell, 1972). By examining the feelings of Caucasian-Americans toward two racial groups (African-Americans and Asian-Indians), a secondary objective of this study is to look for possible comparative stereotyping effects such that media content about one out-group influences feelings toward another out-group. Based on the review of relevant literature, the current study formulates the following research hypotheses:

- H1: Participants in a media literacy training condition are less likely than those in a control condition to report prejudicial responses to news stories
- H2: Participants who read counter-stereotypical stories are less likely than those who read stereotypical stories to report prejudicial feelings
- H3: Hostile prejudice is more likely to be expressed toward African-Americans whereas benevolent prejudice is more likely to be expressed toward Asian-Indians

Due to a lack of sufficient prior research on the topic of comparative media stereotyping, the study poses the question; does exposure to news stories about one racial out-group influence prejudicial feelings towards another racial out-group?

## Method

### *Overview and Design*

Three pretests and a final experiment with undergraduate communication students as participants at a large Northeastern U.S. university provided research data. The pretests helped determine the content and strength of cultural stereotypes apart from the effectiveness of the manipulated stimuli. The final study was a 2 (Type of Video: literacy or control)  $\times$  2 (Stereotypicality of News Stories: stereotypical or counter-stereotypical)  $\times$  2 (Racial Group Depicted in Stories: African-Americans or Asian-Indians)  $\times$  3 (Race of Target Group: African-Americans, Asian-Indians, or Caucasian-Americans) factorial experiment (see Table 1 for the experimental design). "Race of Target Group" was a within participants independent variable in the sense that regardless of the experimental condition, all participants indicated their feelings toward the three racial groups - African-Americans, Caucasian-Americans, and Asian-Indians. The dependent variables were overall favorability, hostile feelings, and benevolent feelings expressed toward the three target groups.

### *Pretests*

In the first pretest, 50 participants completed a free response task in which they indicated their knowledge about cultural stereotypes typically associated with Af-

TABLE 1  
Experimental Design

	<i>Stereotypicality of News Stories</i>			
	<i>Stereotypical</i>		<i>Counter Stereotypical</i>	
	<i>Racial Group in Stories</i>		<i>Racial Group in Stories</i>	
	<i>African-Americans</i>	<i>Asian-Indians</i>	<i>African-Americans</i>	<i>Asian-Indians</i>
Video seen				
Literacy	Condition 1	Condition 3	Condition 5	Condition 7
Control	Condition 2	Condition 4	Condition 6	Condition 8

*Note.* Race of Target Group (African-Americans, Asian-Indians, and Caucasian-Americans) served as a within-participants variable. Dependent variables included overall favorability, hostile feelings, and benevolent feelings.

frican-Americans and Asian-Indians. The 40 traits mentioned most frequently as being associated with African-Americans and Asian-Indians appeared in the second pretest. In the second pretest, 47 participants used 7-point Likert-type scales, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very well*), to indicate the extent to which the traits generated in the first pretest are typically associated with African-Americans, Caucasian-Americans, and Asian-Indians. Attributes for African-Americans and Asian-Indians that were significantly different from those for Caucasian-Americans were used to represent the identified cultural stereotypes.

Factor analyses of the stereotypical traits from the second pretest indicated that the cultural stereotypes associated with African-Americans were “troublesomeness” (including attributes such as hostile, criminal, lazy, drug users, and aggressive) and “talent” (including attributes such as athletic and musical). Cultural stereotypes associated with Asian-Indians were “communality” (including attributes such as traditional, religious, and family-oriented) and “passivity” (including traits such as polite, quiet, hardworking and passive). The stereotype common to both African-Americans and Asian-Indians was “deprivation” (including attributes such as uneducated, uncivilized, unemployed, poor, diseased, and dirty).

In the third pretest, 68 undergraduate students participated and evaluated 20 news stories, modified from existing stories identified using *Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe* database. A 7-point Likert scale was used to determine the extent to which news stories reinforced or challenged racial stereotypes. Participants also completed 7-point semantic differential scales with bipolar adjectives such as *traditional-modern* and *aggressive-peaceful* to indicate the extent to which each news story exemplified specific stereotypical and counter-stereotypical traits regarding African-Americans and Asian-Indians. From these 20 stories, two story-pairs that displayed the greatest significant differences along stereotypical-counter stereo-

typical traits were selected for the final experiment. In this third pretest, participants also noted their perceptions about the video stimuli on 7-point Likert-type items. The findings showed that the media literacy video was perceived as significantly more educative ( $M = 5.35$ ) than the control video ( $M = 4.47$ );  $t(65) = -2.53$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and significantly more thought-provoking ( $M = 4.86$ ) than the control video ( $M = 3.42$ );  $t(65) = -3.94$ ,  $p < .001$ . Participants judged both videos equally interesting, clear, and easy to understand. Analysis of the qualitative feedback from participants showed clear comprehension of the central message about stereotype reduction and critical viewing in the literacy video.

## Final Experiment

### *Participants*

Participants were students recruited from undergraduate communications courses. Of the 227 participants, further analysis only considered the responses of Caucasian-American participants ( $n = 196$ ; 86.3%). Males and females had almost equal representation.

### *Procedure*

The final experiment was conducted in a computer laboratory by Caucasian experimenters. Participants were recruited for a "Media Stimuli" study involving two "mini-studies" – one study on news and another on social issues.<sup>1</sup>

The first mini-study, called the news study, lasted for about 30 min. During this part of the experimental session, participants saw either a media literacy video or a control video that lasted approximately 12 min. Immediately after the video ended, participants summarized the main points of the video in the first page of the booklet. Subsequently, participants analyzed five news stories provided in a news booklet. The first, third, and fourth stories were non-stereotypical and remained constant across all conditions. The manipulated second and fifth news story in each condition were stereotypical stories about African-Americans, stereotypical stories about Asian-Indians, counter-stereotypical stories about African-Americans, or counter-stereotypical stories about Asian-Indians. Participants were instructed to keep the key points of the video in mind as they read the news stories and summarized the key points of each news story. All participants had about 3 minutes to read and respond to each story in the booklet.

In the final portion of the experiment, participants took part in the social issues mini-study in which they completed a paper-and-pencil "social issues" questionnaire that contained items related to overall favorability, hostile feelings, and benevolent feelings toward Caucasian-Americans, African-Americans, and Asian-Indians.

### *Type of video seen*

The video that participants saw at the beginning of the experimental session was either a media literacy video or a control video. Scenes from existing media-related video resources and interviews with experts in the field formed the basis for both videos. The videos interviewed the same people in the same settings, but the primary message of the media literacy video was very different from that of the control video. The media literacy video introduced participants to the harmful effects of media and the tendency of media consumers to make generalizations based on biased media exemplars. The video further focused on strategies for becoming critical and reflective consumers of media messages. In contrast, the control video focused on various journalistic writing styles such as hard news, feature writing, etc.

### *Type of news stories read*

A news booklet manipulated the independent variables: stereotypicality of news stories and racial group depicted in news stories. A pretest was used in the selection of the most stereotypical and counter-stereotypical stories about African-Americans and Asian-Indians. The stereotypical stories regarding African-Americans were on *violence* and *unemployment*. Correspondingly, counter-stereotypical news stories related to African-Americans were on *gentleness* and *entrepreneurial success*. Similarly, stereotypical Asian-Indian news stories were about *tradition* and *poverty*; whereas the counter-stereotypical Asian-Indian stories were on *modernity* and *wealth*. All stories were about half a page in length and uniform in format.

### *Dependent variables*

The dependent variables for this study were hostile feelings, benevolent feelings, and overall favorability. Self-reported feeling rating scales measured hostile and benevolent feelings. In the paper-and-pencil social issues questionnaire, participants used 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*) to indicate the extent to which feelings such as fear, anger, pity, and discomfort described their affective reactions towards Asian-Indians, African-Americans, and Caucasian-Americans (Eckes, 2002; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Fiske et al., 1999). Feeling thermometers measured overall favorability. They have been used as an indicator of explicit feelings towards groups in previous studies (e.g., Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2003). In the paper-and-pencil social issues questionnaire, participants rated their overall feelings of favorability toward Caucasian-Americans, African-Americans, and Asian-Indians on a nine-point thermometer scale ranging from 0° (unfavorable) to 100° (very favorable).

## RESULTS

## Factor Analysis of Feeling Ratings

An exploratory factor analysis of the feeling ratings using principal components extraction and oblique rotation allowed extraction of two distinct factors that were labeled 'Hostility' and 'Benevolence' (see Table 2 for factor loadings). The 'Hostility' index included feelings of *fear*, *nervousness*, *anger*, *dislike*, and *discomfort* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.90$ ), and the 'Benevolence' index included feelings of *pity*, *sadness*, and *guilt* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.82$ ).

*Hostile feelings*

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA revealed that participants reported higher levels of hostility towards African-Americans ( $M = 2.29$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ) than toward Caucasian-Americans ( $M = 1.98$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ) or Asian-Indians ( $M = 1.94$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ), Wilks'  $\Lambda = 0.90$ ,  $F(2, 193) = 10.90$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.10$ .<sup>2</sup>

A 2 (Type of Video Seen) X 2 (Racial Group Depicted in News Stories) X 2 (Stereotypicality of News Stories) X 3 (Race of Target Group) repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant Type of Video Seen X Racial Group Depicted in News Stories X Race of Target Group interaction, Wilks'  $\Lambda = 0.96$ ,  $F(8, 148) = 3.50$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.05$ . Specifically, Table 3 illustrates that for participants who read news stories depicting Asian-Indians, those who saw the literacy video ( $M = 2.44$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ ) were significantly more likely than those who saw the control video ( $M = 1.97$ ,  $SE = 0.19$ ) to report greater hostility towards African-Americans. This analysis revealed no other main effects or interaction effects.

TABLE 2  
Factor Loadings for Components Measuring  
Feelings Toward Target Groups

	<i>Factor Components</i>	
	<i>Hostility</i>	<i>Benevolence</i>
Fear	0.88	-0.02
Nervousness	0.87	-0.01
Discomfort	0.84	0.02
Dislike	0.84	-0.03
Anger	0.77	0.06
Pity	-0.07	0.91
Sadness	0.00	0.88
Guilt	0.11	0.76
Eigenvalue	4.62	1.16
% Variance	57.77	14.45
Cronbach's $\alpha$	0.90	0.82

TABLE 3  
 Type of Video Seen X Racial Group Depicted in News Stories X Race of  
 Target Group Interaction on Hostility Ratings

	<i>Video Seen</i>	
	<i>Control</i>	<i>Literacy</i>
News Stories About African-Americans		
Race of Target Group		
Caucasian-Americans	2.21 <sub>a</sub> (.18)	2.02 <sub>a</sub> (.18)
African-Americans	2.42 <sub>a</sub> (.19)	2.14 <sub>a</sub> (.20)
Asian-Indians	2.03 <sub>a</sub> (.17)	2.09 <sub>a</sub> (.18)
News Stories About Asian-Indians		
Race of Target Group		
Caucasian-Americans	1.84 <sub>a</sub> (.18)	1.89 <sub>a</sub> (.18)
African-Americans	1.97 <sub>a</sub> (.19)	2.44 <sub>b</sub> (.20)
Asian-Indians	1.91 <sub>a</sub> (.17)	1.70 <sub>a</sub> (.18)

*Note.* Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Means in the same row with no lower case subscript in common differ at  $p < 0.05$  using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons. Wilks'  $\Lambda = 0.96$ ,  $F(8, 148) = 3.50$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.05$ .

### *Benevolent feelings*

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA revealed that participants reported highest degree of benevolent feelings towards Asian-Indians ( $M = 2.47$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ), followed by African-Americans ( $M = 2.11$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ), and least towards Caucasian-Americans ( $M = 1.92$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ), Wilks'  $\Lambda = .86$ ,  $F(2, 193) = 15.51$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.13$ .

A 2 (Type of Video Seen) X 2 (Racial Group Depicted in News Stories) X 2 (Stereotypicality of News Stories) X 3 (Race of Target Group) repeated measures ANOVA using a multivariate approach yielded a significant Stereotypicality of News Stories X Race of Target Group interaction, Wilks'  $\Lambda = 0.95$ ,  $F(2, 148) = 4.32$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.06$ . In particular, Table 4 illustrates that, coinciding with the second research hypothesis, respondents who read counter-stereotypical news stories ( $M = 2.21$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ ) were significantly less likely than those who read stereotypical news stories ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ) to report feelings of benevolence towards Asian-Indians. This part of the study revealed no other significant main effects or interactions.

### *Overall favorability*

A one-way repeated measures analysis of variance revealed that participants reported highest favorability towards Caucasian-Americans ( $M = 78.86$ ,  $SE = 1.27$ ), followed by African-Americans ( $M = 67.84$ ,  $SE = 1.37$ ), and least toward

TABLE 4  
Stereotypicality of News Stories X Race of Target Group Interaction  
on Benevolence Ratings

	<i>Stereotypicality of News Stories</i>	
	<i>Stereotypical</i>	<i>Counter-Stereotypical</i>
Race of Target Group		
Caucasian-Americans	1.92 <sub>a</sub> (.12)	1.88 <sub>a</sub> (.12)
African-Americans	2.06 <sub>a</sub> (.13)	2.08 <sub>a</sub> (.13)
Asian-Indians	2.82 <sub>a</sub> (.17)	2.21 <sub>b</sub> (.16)

*Note.* Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Means in the same row with no lower case subscript in common differ at  $p < 0.05$  using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons. Wilks'  $\Lambda = 0.95$ ,  $F(2, 148) = 4.32$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.06$

Asian-Indians ( $M = 63.62$ ,  $SE = 1.32$ ), Wilks'  $\Lambda = 0.66$ ,  $F(2, 190) = 49.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.34$ .

A 2 (Type of Video Seen) X 2 (Racial Group Depicted in News Stories) X 2 (Stereotypicality of News Stories) X 3 (Race of Target Group) repeated measures ANOVA employing a multivariate approach revealed a significant Type of Video Seen X Racial Group Depicted in News Stories X Race of Target Group interaction, Wilks'  $\Lambda = 0.96$ ,  $F(8, 146) = 3.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.04$ . Specifically, Table 5 illustrates that for participants who read news stories depicting Asian-Indians, those who saw the literacy video ( $M = 61.87$ ,  $SE = 2.90$ ) reported

TABLE 5  
Type of Video Seen X Racial Group Depicted in News Stories X Race  
of Target Group Interaction on Overall Favorability Ratings

	<i>Video Seen</i>	
	<i>Control</i>	<i>Literacy</i>
News Stories About African-Americans		
Race of Target Group		
Caucasian-Americans	77.19 <sub>a</sub> (3.04)	78.44 <sub>a</sub> (2.99)
African-Americans	68.77 <sub>a</sub> (3.01)	71.31 <sub>a</sub> (2.97)
Asian-Indians	63.60 <sub>a</sub> (3.05)	63.13 <sub>a</sub> (3.00)
News Stories About Asian-Indians		
Race of Target Group		
Caucasian-Americans	79.75 <sub>a</sub> (2.91)	78.08 <sub>a</sub> (2.93)
African-Americans	71.25 <sub>a</sub> (2.89)	61.87 <sub>b</sub> (2.90)
Asian-Indians	64.00 <sub>a</sub> (2.92)	65.14 <sub>a</sub> (2.93)

*Note.* Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Means in the same row with no lower case subscript in common differ at  $p < 0.05$  using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons. Wilks'  $\Lambda = 0.96$ ,  $F(8, 146) = 3.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.04$



significantly less favorable feelings towards African-Americans as compared to those who saw the control video ( $M = 71.25, SE = 2.89$ ). No other significant main effects or interactions became apparent.

## DISCUSSION

In summary, the analysis of the effects of the independent variables ("Type of Video Seen," "Stereotypicality of News Stories," "Racial Group Depicted in the News Story," and "Race of the Target Group") on overall favorability, hostile feelings, and benevolent feelings provided only partial support for the hypotheses, yet revealed patterns of responses that have interesting implications for comparative stereotyping. Contrary to expectations, results related to the first hypothesis revealed that the literacy video seemed to increase prejudicial responses as compared to the control video. The second hypothesis was partially supported. That is, reading counter-stereotypical news stories as compared to stereotypical news stories reduced prejudicial responses toward Asian-Indians. However, no similar observation appeared for feelings toward African-Americans. The third hypothesis was fully supported. As expected, hostile prejudicial feelings were more strongly expressed toward African-Americans, and benevolent prejudicial feelings were expressed toward Asian-Indians. In terms of the research question posed in this study, evidence of comparative stereotyping received some preliminary support, as news stories about Asian-Indians appeared to increase hostility toward African-Americans.

Results related to the first hypothesis revealed that the literacy condition, surprisingly, seemed to *activate* prejudicial feelings although it was intended to *suppress* such feelings. As such, no main effects for the type of video on the dependent variables appeared in this study. However, the results relating to comparative stereotyping effects observed in the Type of Video Seen X Racial Group Depicted in News Stories X Race of Target Group interaction on both overall favorability and hostile feelings suggest the possibility that the literacy video might have increased instead of reduced prejudicial responses.

One possible explanation for this surprising result is that, in spite of the special care taken to not specify any stereotypes in either the media literacy or control video stimuli, the very mention of generalizations about groups based on specific media examples in the literacy video could have made participants think about stereotypes. Another possibility is that participants who saw the literacy video were processing the news stories more carefully and deliberately. Therefore, participants in this condition might have been able to remember more details about the news stories as compared to those in the control condition. Also likely is that the media literacy training was perceived as too "preachy," leading to back-fire effects

amongst young college-going adults. Some other scholars (Cantor & Wilson, 2003; Nathanson & Yang, 2003) have noted such a possibility.

The second hypothesis predicted that participants exposed to counter-stereotypical news stories would be less likely to report prejudicial responses as compared to participants who read stereotypical news stories. Results from this study support this hypothesis in terms of Caucasian-American participants' feelings toward Asian-Indians, but not in their feelings toward African-Americans. Perhaps anti-Black attitudes are so strongly well entrenched that a brief exposure to news stories about this out-group could not bring about any noticeable changes in prejudicial attitudes. In other words, attitudes toward Asian-Indians might be more malleable than those toward African-Americans.

These findings support prior studies reporting that media stereotypes are more powerful in influencing viewers' attitudes when interracial contact is minimal (Armstrong et al., 1992; Fujioka, 1999). For instance, Fujioka (1999) used the contact hypothesis to explain why Caucasian-American participants compared to Japanese participants reported greater prejudicial feelings toward African-Americans. Similar to the results from the current study, Fujioka also found that counter-stereotypical media content improved racial attitudes, especially when participants had little contact with the target out-group. In the event of less first-hand contact and less familiarity with an out-group, participants are perhaps more likely to believe the typicality of media exemplars.

The results provided support for the third hypothesis. Although overall favorability scores were lower for Asian-Indians in comparison to African-Americans, the analyses also revealed significantly higher hostility toward African-Americans than toward Asian-Indians. These findings should also be considered in conjunction with the pretest results relating to cultural stereotypes. Namely, findings from the pretests showed that whereas cultural stereotypes associated with African-Americans included *troublesomeness* and *deprivation*, those associated with Asian-Indians included *passivity* and *deprivation*. These results lend support to conflict theory and the stereotype content model. As predicted by these perspectives, hostility was expressed toward rebellious, inferior out-groups and benevolence was expressed toward obedient, helpless subordinates. It is important to note that lower ratings on the feeling thermometer for Asian-Indians co-existed with seemingly positive feelings of sympathy recorded toward this out-group. This is not a contradiction but is consistent with the argument that benevolent feelings stem from notions of superiority of dominant groups over subordinate groups seen as incompetent, yet sociable.

In terms of the research question, this study found that participants who read news stories depicting Asian-Indians, especially those in the literacy as opposed to the control video condition, reported significantly lower overall favorability and greater hostility toward African-Americans. These findings are consistent with those of Ho, Sanbonmatsu, and Akimoto, (2002), who found that reading news

stories about Asian American successes led to negative attitudes toward Mexican Americans. Ho and colleagues explained this comparative stereotyping effect in terms of equal opportunity beliefs amongst the participants.

Applying a similar logic to the present study, stereotypical stories about Asian-Indians might emphasize a lack of social mobility and openness in India. Therefore, the failures of Asian-Indians may be attributed to social circumstances rather than individual incompetence. In comparison, the extent to which the perception of the US is one of a more open society providing greater opportunities for success than India, failure among African-Americans might be attributed to individual incompetence rather than societal injustices. Such an interpretation would be consistent with modern racist beliefs towards African-Americans that deny the existence of prejudice by claiming that this out-group is "too pushy" when making unfair and exorbitant demands for greater allocation of resources without contributing much to the society in return (McConahay, 1986). Although this interpretation is clearly speculative at this point, researchers should include multiple target racial groups in their studies in order to begin exploring why such comparative media stereotyping takes place.

This research project has several limitations that provide direction for future investigation. First, with regard to validity, social desirability has been a major problem associated with the measurement of racial stereotypical attitudes, sufficient to cloud whether or not self-reports truly reflect participants' honest feelings. Second, in terms of media literacy training, a long-term effort rather than a one-time video exposure might yield more noticeable changes in prejudicial responses. Finally, another suggestion for future researchers is to measure the level of prejudice among viewers both prior to and after exposure to the experimental stimuli.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the understanding of social psychological effects of media stereotypes by examining the specific types of media content that activate and suppress hostile and benevolent prejudicial feelings. Moreover, the study presents the possibility that media literacy training might have a boomerang effect by activating prejudice instead of decreasing such feelings. Additionally, the current research provides some preliminary evidence for the comparative negative stereotyping of one racial out-group after viewing stories about another racial out-group, which can be explained using model minority stereotypes and modern racist beliefs.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the Penn State Alumni Association for funding this project. They extend their gratitude to S. Shyam Sundar, Dennis Davis, Janet Swim, David Roskos-Ewoldsen, Travis Dixon, and Barbara Wilson for their valu-

able feedback. They appreciate the assistance provided by Carmen Stavrositu, Amanda Rotondo, and Tom Smee for this research.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The experiment also included computer-based measures of implicit attitudes in a third mini-study on “judgment and memory” in the final experiment. Participants took part in this mini-study in between the news study and the social issues study. Since the focus of the current study is on self-reported measures, the results of the implicit attitudes are not included here.

<sup>2</sup>A multivariate approach was used in all repeated measures analyses reported in this paper.

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