Communicating anti-racism

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CHAPTER 4

Entertaining anti-racism

Multicultural television drama, identification and perceptions of ethnic threat

Introduction

Governments and NGOs are increasingly recognizing the potentials of multicultural television entertainment to address issues of intercultural misunderstanding, discrimination and racism. In this context, the American sitcom ‘The Cosby Show’ is often cited as a guiding example. Despite the media’s general tendency to stereotype blacks, the Cosby show, it has been argued, managed to single-handedly improve the image of African-Americans in the United States and elsewhere (cf. Brown Graves, 1999, Hartley, 1999, see also Lewis, 1991 for an overview of the discussion). Based on the presumptive effects of such alternative representations of ethnic minorities, governments and NGO’s may be tempted to produce multicultural entertainment with the explicit aim to improve intercultural relations. One typical example is a Dutch government funded drama series called ‘Westside’. Filmed in the style of a reality TV show, the fictional series chronicles the lives of four families from different ethnic backgrounds living in a poor urban neighbourhood. The show deals extensively with cultural issues within communities (ie. struggles around tradition and modernity in Muslim families) and between them (such as interethnic love interests, misunderstandings and (eventually resolved) conflicts). By presenting these themes in an attractive, dramatic and entertaining way the show was intended to improve mutual understanding between ethnic groups and reduce interethnic tensions.

The reception and effects of programmes such as Westside have not been studied in much detail yet (although see Brown Graves, 1999, Persson, 1999, Shochat, 2003). Drawing on an experimental case study of the effects of Westside, this paper addresses two related issues. First, it investigates the effects of multicultural television entertainment on intercultural relations. Second, it seeks to contribute to the theoretical understanding of the cognitive processes underlying these effects. It will do so by looking at the role of identification (Cohen, 2001; Livingstone, 1990). Competing theoretical models exist that suggest identification is a crucial
mediating link between exposure to multicultural drama and changes in intercultural attitudes. In this study, the role of identification is hypothesized and tested based on social identity theory (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman & Rust, 1993) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). The main question that will be addressed is the following: Does multicultural television drama affect intercultural tolerance and if so, what role does identification play this process?

Multicultural television drama

The television shows like the Cosby show are generally expected to have a direct effect on audiences because their style of representing ethnic or racial minorities breaks with existing stereotypes. Recently, Schiappa, Gregg and Hewes (2005) have sought to provide a scientific basis for these common sense assumptions by postulating the ‘parasocial contact hypothesis’. Their theory essentially mirrors the assumptions of Allport’s original 1954 contact hypothesis regarding real-life intergroup contact (Allport, 1954). In everyday life, prejudice may persist because ethnic groups simply lack opportunities for personal contact members of other ethnic groups. Alternatively, contact may occur under less favourable circumstances, such as situations where conflicts of interest or power differences exist. These forms of contact actually produce negative experiences of intergroup contact that reinforce existing prejudice. The contact hypothesis holds that many prejudices disappear over time when groups are brought into contact with each other under favourable circumstances, such as when groups are of equal status and feel they have common goals and need to work together to realize them (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Pettigrew, 1998).

The work of Schiappa et al. (2005) extends this general contact hypothesis to the media. Their main assumption is that contact does not have to be in person but may also be mediated through media such as television. Schiappa et al. find support for this assumption in the findings of earlier researchers that have demonstrated that viewers often react to televised characters as they do in real life (Ibid). Moreover, viewers often do not bother to make clear distinctions between fictional and non-fictional media content. As a consequence, their exposure to particular kinds of representations of minorities in the media could potentially provide them with similar experiences as real-life contact would provide (Ibid.).

However, the images and sounds that constitute representations of ethnic minorities in the media are inherently selected, framed and narrativized and not a simple reflection of reality. The
question is therefore how representations in television drama need to be constructed to produce a realistic, prejudice reducing experience of parasocial contact. Schiappa et al. argue that representations of minorities must avoid the common stereotypes about the group in question and be of a positive nature (Schiappa et al., 2005). Work by other authors in the suggests additional criteria. Brown Graves (1999) has argued that despite an increase in Blacks in the American media, the overall media landscape remains largely segregated, with Blacks featuring mostly in all-black programmes on specific time slots. Merely representing minorities in positive and non-stereotypical ways may therefore still implicitly naturalize existing patterns of segregation in society and fail to challenge anxieties about intercultural contact. Furthermore, many new positive and non-stereotypical representations in multicultural settings tend to present minorities as totally assimilated in the majority culture and obscure issues of intercultural misunderstandings, discrimination and racism (Coover, 2001). It has thus been proposed to focus on realistic representations of positive *intercultural relations and interactions* instead of groups in isolation (Schiappa et al., 2005; Ortiz & Harwood, 2007).

The criteria mentioned above suggest that multicultural television drama like Westside is particularly suited to produce experiences of parasocial contact. In multicultural drama, different ethnic minority groups are represented in positive ways. Moreover, because of its narrative structure and its focus on universal interpersonal experiences such as love, jealousy and deceit, viewers get to see the contradictions within individual characters and stereotypes are avoided. Lastly, through its focus on the relations within and between different ethnic minority groups, multicultural drama is crucially concerned with the representation of intercultural relations.

**Representations and intercultural tolerance**

The cognitive processes underlying the parasocial contact hypothesis in the context of multicultural drama can be usefully conceptualized with the help of Social Identity Theory (SIT; Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman & Rust, 1993, Mastro, 2003, Tajfel, 1981). SIT posits that prejudice and discrimination derive in part from the basic need for a positive social identity. In a situation in which particular group identities (such as ethnicity) are salient and distinct, this basic need can be satisfied by stressing positive qualities of the ingroup and emphasizing the negative qualities of the outgroups (Gijsberts, Hagendoorn & Scheepers, 2004). Through this process of ‘ingroup favoritism’, a positive social identity is created as negative attitudes towards outgroups are reinforced (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman & Rust, 1993, Mastro, 2003).
While ingroup favoritism is conceptualized as a universal and ubiquitous cognitive process, the intensity and kinds of ingroup identities that are involved can differ. In this study, we focus specifically on the occurrence of ethnic ingroup favoritism. According to Ethnic Competition Theory (ECT), ethnic ingroup favoritism is increased when ethnic identities are salient social categories and when people perceive ethnic outgroups as a threat to their own status and ways of life (Gijsberts, Hagendoorn & Scheepers, 2004). Perceptions of ethnic threat are determined by (perceived and actual) ethnic competition for resources and power in society. Such perceptions of competition may therefore be related to markers of social position such as age, education level and political preferences (Ibid.). However, they are also affected by contextual variables (Ibid.). One of these factors may be the experience of viewing television in which ethnic outgroups are represented in non-stereotypical and non-threatening ways (Mastro, 2003).

In summary, social identity theory and ethnic competition theory predict that viewing multicultural television drama (i.e. drama shows in which the majority of characters are from an ethnic minority background) affects intercultural tolerance by reducing perceptions of ethnic threat. This study therefore focused on the effects of alternative representations of ethnicity in multicultural television drama on the perceptions of ethnic threat. The first hypothesis that was tested is based on this assumption and reads as follows:

H1: exposure to multicultural television drama decreases perceptions of ethnic threat.

Several theoretical models predict that identification may be a crucial mediating factor for the effect postulated in H1. The two most prominent ones are Social Identity Theory and Social Cognitive Theory. Both will be discussed below.

Identification in Social Identity Theory

SIT predicts that identifying with ingroup or outgroup characters may have different effects on perceived ethnic threat. As was mentioned above, stronger identification with the ingroup is associated with the tendency to develop negative attitudes towards the outgroup (Gaertner et al., 1993; Mastro, 2003, Tajfel, 1981). Identification with the ingroup may be altered by changing the salience of ingroup membership in a particular social or narrative context (Gaertner et al., 1993; Hoeke, 2008). Cues as simple as seating arrangements may cause people to identify as a collective group. Their previous ingroup and outgroup identities are made irrelevant in the
process, resulting in positive perceptions and attitudes towards these previous outgroups (Ibid.). The salience of cultural difference may be affected by encouraging identification with members of the outgroup that contradict ingroup favoritism. Multicultural drama is one possible intervention through which the latter kind of identifications might be produced.

Identification with television characters is a complex and controversial process (Barker, 2005; Cohen, 2001) and its conceptualisation in SIT may not correspond with all of the definitions used in media reception studies. Cohen argues that the range of (implicit) definitions in media reception studies amounts to conceptual confusion and proposes that ‘identification with media characters may be usefully defined as an imaginative process invoked as a response to characters presented within mediated texts’ (Cohen, 2001, p.250). During this process, an audience member shares the perspective of the character that is identified with and vicariously experiences the emotions that the character is going through (Ibid.).

Many factors preceding the exposure to a particular media text may already predispose a viewer to identify with particular characters in fictional drama. For example, Hoffner and Buchanan found that viewers tend to identify more with television characters with similar gender or attitudes (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). However, narrative structure of a media text also play an important role (Livingstone, 1990; Hoeke, 2008). Depending on the ways in which characters are portrayed, viewers are encouraged or discouraged to identify with them. In a recent study, Hoeke affirms this interconnection between narrative and identification participants by demonstrating that viewers could be seduced to identify with one of two characters in a story by manipulating its narrative structure. A story about a man in a wheelchair who applied for a job was manipulated so as to present either the job applicant or the hiring company executive as more likely to be identified with. Mediation analysis showed that the impact of the story on reader’s attitudes was mediated through their identification with the characters (Hoeke, 2008). While this study was done in a laboratory setting and used a written story instead of an audio-visual media text, it suggests that identification may be similarly affected by the narrative structure in television drama.

In the genre of multicultural drama, characters with an ethnic background form the majority of the cast and are depicted a non-stereotypical positive way. As a consequence, its narrative structure invites viewers to identify with characters from ethnic backgrounds that are different from their own. When immersed in such a programme, viewers would be expected to identify more with members of ethnic outgroups than they would in when they would be confronted with
stereotypical or more distanced representations. Once viewers identify less exclusively with characters of their own ethnic ingroup, SIT suggests that ingroup favoritism is lower and perceived ethnic threat is reduced.

H2: The effect of multicultural television drama on perceptions of ethnic threat is mediated by a less exclusive identification with ingroup characters.

Identification in Social Cognitive Theory
SIT is mainly concerned with the processes occurring during the actual exposure to multicultural drama. It is therefore relatively silent on the lasting effects that might be expected after the immediate moment of viewing. In this respect, Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977, Ortiz & Harwood, 2007) forms a useful theoretical complement.

SCT posits that the television presents ample opportunities for vicarious social learning (Singhal, Cody, Rogers & Sabido, 2004). These processes of learning are considered to be dependent identification of the viewer with the characters that are modelling particular kinds of behavior. Contrary to the predictions of Social Identity Theory (which suggests that a relative increase in identification with outgroups is crucial), SCT can be interpreted as suggesting that identifying with role models who are similar to oneself will increase the learning effect. This therefore suggests that identification with ingroup characters an equally important mediating variable for learning effects of multicultural television drama as identification with outgroup characters is. In other words, identification with characters that who interact successfully in a multicultural context are expected to increase processes of vicarious learning and lead to increased intercultural self-efficacy.

H3a: Learning effects of multicultural drama are moderated by the level of identification with characters modelling intercultural behavior

When watching multicultural television drama, learning is predominantly of a vicarious nature as viewers learn about the possibilities and consequence of certain forms of behavior in intercultural situations. Viewers may witness how the characters of the show deal with intercultural situations and misunderstandings. In so doing, they vicariously develop a sense of efficacy in intercultural encounters in their own everyday life. Such a sense of efficacy reduces
feelings of anxiety or incompetence to engage in such exchanges themselves (Fan & Mak, 1998). In the context of intercultural relations, the key cognitive construct is thus a form social self-efficacy (Fan & Mak, 1998, Singhal et al., 2004) that pertains specifically to the domain intercultural exchanges and relations. Through observing the role models, viewers may learn in at least two ways from multicultural drama. First, when watching ethnic ingroup and outgroup characters engaging in friendly interactions, viewers may learn of the positive consequences of such behavior. Moreover, they can observe how this behavior is carried out successfully. Second, they may also learn from watching characters make mistakes in intercultural interactions. In these instances, they may observe how intercultural conflicts emerge and then watch characters suffer the consequences. In so doing, viewers may learn about which kinds of behavior are likely to produce conflicts (such as acting in a prejudiced or avoidant manner in multicultural contexts) and what consequences this will have on the people involved. When they feel they have learned new insights about intercultural relations, viewers may develop an increased sense of intercultural self-efficacy that reflects an increased sense of self-confidence in intercultural interactions. This sense of intercultural self-efficacy may in turn reduce perceptions of ethnic threat as contact with other ethnic groups is perceived as a potentially positive experience. The two expected forms of learning can be formulated as hypotheses H3b, c and d below.

H3b: viewing multicultural drama in which positive interactions between ethnic ingroup and outgroups are modelled increases intercultural self-efficacy

H3c: viewing multicultural drama in which the development and negative consequences of intercultural conflict are modelled increases intercultural self-efficacy

H3d: increases in intercultural self-efficacy lead to lower perceptions of ethnic threat

Method
In order to test the hypotheses, an experiment was carried out with two experimental conditions and one control condition. 152 participants with a mostly white majority background were assigned randomly to one of three conditions in which they watched drama shows that differed in the extent that they featured non-stereotypical representations of ethnic minorities and modelled harmonious intercultural contact or the development and resolution of intercultural conflicts.
Participants
Over a three week period, 152 people from Amsterdam (66%) and its surrounding cities (34%) took part in the study. Participants were recruited through the distribution of flyers in the inner city area and offered a 10 Euro reward for their participation. Only people that could speak the Dutch language were allowed to participate. In order to distinguish outgroup from ingroup in the analysis, the study focused exclusively on non-Muslims. This group was regarded as the ingroup and Muslims were regarded as their main outgroup, following recent rises in Islamophobia in the Netherlands that have increasingly made Muslims the quintessential ‘outgroup’ in Dutch society (cf. Feteke, 2004). Muslim participants (n=9) were therefore excluded from the analyses. 97 (66%) were female and 46 were male (34%). The age of respondents varied between 15 and 63 years old, with a mean of 28.5 (SD=12.11). 6% had completed lower secondary education or less, 66% had completed higher secondary education and 28% had completed a university degree. The ethnicity of respondents was largely white Dutch, white European or white American (90%). 5% was from the former Dutch colonies Surinam or the Dutch Antilles and 5% was of Asian, African or South American descent. No differences were found between white and non-white (ie. Surinamese, Asian, African or South American descent) on the dependent measures perceived ethnic threat, identification with in and outgroups and intercultural self-efficacy (with the lowest p-value for identification with outgroups, $F(1, 141) = 2.182, p=.142$. In subsequent analysis, these groups were therefore analysed as one group.

Procedure
The experiment took place at the testing laboratory of the University of Amsterdam in the centre of the city. Participants were told that the research was about the ways people experience popular cultural television programmes and that they would also have to answer a number of general questions that would not be related to the content of the programme. Participants were seated in front of a computer in a separate cubicle. First they completed about 5 minutes of initial questions about demographics and media use. Then they watched two episodes of a multicultural drama show which lasted about 40 minutes. Then they filled out a second set of questions which took about 20 minutes.
Manipulation

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In all conditions, participants watched television drama in which ethnic minorities are represented in positive ways. A decision was made to use full episodes from existing television programmes in order to produce an experimental manipulation that approximated the experience of viewing multicultural drama in daily life.

Two different Dutch drama series were used in the study that represented ethnic minorities in positive, non-stereotypical ways. In the experimental conditions, participants were shown two consecutive episodes of the reality drama *Westside*. The show revolves around the lives of four families of different ethnic backgrounds. In the control condition, participants watched two episodes of ‘*Heading for Tomorrow*’, a mainstream soap with mostly white Dutch characters in the cast.

The experimental conditions differed from the control conditions in the number of characters from ethnic minority backgrounds that were featured. In the experimental conditions, 80% of the characters were of ethnic minority backgrounds across episodes and in the control condition, 20% of the characters were of ethnic minority backgrounds. Moreover, the experimental conditions contained more scenes in which ethnic minorities appeared (approx. 30 minutes) than the control condition (approx. 10 minutes).

In order to test hypotheses H3c and H3d, two experimental conditions were created. In the first condition, positive intercultural relations are shown, which corresponds to H3c. In the second condition, the development and consequences of intercultural conflict are modelled, which corresponds to H3d. In the control condition, intercultural contact was more limited but also of a positive nature. Schematically, this setup can be represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition1: Westside-Harmonious</th>
<th>Condition2: Westside-Conflict</th>
<th>Control Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Majority of characters has ethnic minority background</td>
<td>- Majority of characters has ethnic minority background</td>
<td>- Minority of characters has ethnic minority background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- positive intercultural behaviour modelled</td>
<td>- development and consequences of intercultural conflict modelled</td>
<td>- positive intercultural behaviour modelled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Overview of differences between conditions
In the episodes shown in condition one, the central storyline revolves around the mysterious disease of a Surinam character and the desire of a Moroccan daughter to start a dancing career at a modern studio despite her fathers’ objections. The white Dutch family is shown in the company of the members of the Surinam family. In the first half, the son is shown helping the Surinam family find their daughter who has gone missing. In the second half, the white Dutch parents help the Surinam grandmother move to a new apartment.

In two episodes shown in condition two, the developments of conflicts between ethnic groups are shown. The main storyline revolves around the suspicion and accusations of the white Dutch family that the son of the Moroccan family has stolen their son’s scooter. This turns out to be a false assumption. At the end of the second episode, the white Dutch son confesses to his parents that he had sold the scooter and that he lied about it having been stolen. During these two episodes, the parents repeatedly express suspicion and disdain for their muslim neighbors but in the end their prejudices are shown to be unfounded.

In the control condition, participants watched two episodes of ‘Heading for Tomorrow’. Most of the scenes revolved around white Dutch characters. Part of the characters are working in a vegetarian restaurant and the story revolves around a cook who accidentally puts meat in the dish of a journalist who happens to be visiting. Two characters have an ethnic minority background and one of these is Muslim. In the episodes shown, this story evolves through scenes in which the couple is talking to each other and falling in love.

**Measurements**

In order to measure perceptions of ethnic threat, the 6-item European social survey scale for perceived ethnic threat was used (Coenders, Lubbers & Scheepers, 2003). An sample question from this scale is: ‘there is going to come a time when I will have to conform to the norms and values of ethnic minorities’. Participants responded on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (7). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was $\alpha = .82$ ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.25$).

At the time of writing, no validated measures for intercultural self-efficacy in an intercultural context were available. When self-efficacy is conceived in a social domain, it refers to people’s cognitive and affective reactions to interpersonal contact (Fan & Mak, 1998). Intercultural self-efficacy is therefore taken to refer to people’s perception of their own ability to
successfully negotiate intercultural contact. For this study, a composite scale of 4 items was created by using items from the ‘social self-efficacy’ scale (Fan & Mak, 1998) to address the cognitive dimensions and items from the racial anxiety scale (Plant & Devine, 2003) to address the affective dimensions. The questions used for the cognitive dimension of intercultural self-efficacy were ‘I am confident in my ability to deal with people from a different ethnic group’, ‘It is not difficult to solve a conflict with a person from a different ethnic group’. The questions used to address the affective dimension were ‘When I am around people from a different ethnic group I feel nervous’ and ‘When I am around people from a different ethnic group I feel very relaxed’. Participants responded on a 7 point scale ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (7). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was $\alpha = .71$ ($M = 2.95, SD = 1.02$). This scale, moreover, was significantly negatively correlated to the number of friends with an ethnic minority background ($r = .26, p < .002$) and colleagues with an ethnic minority background ($r = .30, p < .0005$). As would be expected of a scale for intercultural self-efficacy, this indicates that the less contact participants had with people from a different ethnic background, the lower they scored on this scale.

The identification with the characters in the television series shown was measured using scales for the 6 most prominent characters featured in each condition. These items were developed based on the theoretical definition of Cohen (2001). A four-item scale was used to measure identification for the 6 main characters in each condition. Each question was presented along with a picture of the character to ensure validity of recall. Questions were posed as statements to which participants could respond on a 7 point Likert scale that ranged from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (7). The following four items were used: ‘I understood the behavior of (name character)’, ‘I empathized with (name of character)’, ‘I think (name of character) is a sympathetic person’ and ‘I recognize things from myself in (name of character)’. The items of each scale intercorrelated highly and Cronbach’s alpha for the scales measuring each character ranged between $\alpha = .76$ to $\alpha = .97$. Mean scores for the different characters ranged between 4.94 ($SD = 1.21$) and 2.74 ($SD = 1.39$). In order to produce a measure of identification that could be used in analyses across the 3 conditions, composite scales were created. One composite scale was created for identification with the white Dutch characters (the ingroup) in the programmes and another for identification with Muslim characters (the outgroup). Scores on each of these ranged between 1 and 7 and were independent of the number of ingroup and outgroup characters shown in the programme. Both measures consisted of the weighted
average of scores on all scales for members of each ethnic group in each condition and therefore consisted of relative identification scores. Average score for the identification with the ingroup (white Dutch characters) was $M = 2.82$ ($SD = 1.18$) and for the identification with the outgroup (Muslim characters) index $M = 3.43$ ($SD = 1.15$).

**Results**

Tests for randomisation across the 3 groups of the experiment showed there were no significant differences between the groups in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, political preference and mood prior to exposure to the videos. The *Westside* episodes shown in condition 2 were, as intended, rated as giving more insights into the development of intercultural conflicts than those shown in the other *Westside* condition and the control condition ($M = 6.17$, $SD = .80$ and $M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.28$ respectively; $t(130.758)=-5.343; p<.05$).

As Table 1 shows, a significant effect was found for condition on perceived ethnic threat, $F(2, 140) = 3.984, p<.05, \eta^2 = .05$. The experimental conditions scored lower on perceived ethnic threat than the control condition. Planned contrasts demonstrated that this difference was significant, $t(99.01)=-2.638, p<.05$. These results therefore support hypothesis 1. Furthermore, the scores on perceived ethnic threat were significantly lower for the second experimental condition (in which intercultural conflicts were modelled) than those in the other two conditions (featuring positive portrayals of the ingroup as well as the outgroup, $t(143)=2.485, p<.05$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Perceived ethnic threat*</th>
<th>Identification with ingroup characters*</th>
<th>Identification with outgroup characters*</th>
<th>Intercultural self efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Westside 1-Harmony</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2.92 (1.34)</td>
<td>2.78 (1.18)</td>
<td>3.21 (.76)</td>
<td>3.01 (1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westside 2-Conflict</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.61 (1.11)</td>
<td>2.41 (1.17)</td>
<td>2.97 (.61)</td>
<td>2.87 (.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control condition</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.32 (1.23)</td>
<td>3.25 (1.08)</td>
<td>2.74 (.84)</td>
<td>2.96 (1.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p<.05$. 

Table 1. Effects of condition on perceived ethnic threat, identification, perceived knowledge of ethnic minorities and intercultural self efficacy.
Identification was influenced, as expected, by the kind of programme watched, $F(2,140) = 55.44$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2 = .09$ for identification with ingroup characters and $F(2,140) = 55.44$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2 = .31$ for identification with outgroup characters respectively. A Post-hoc LSD test revealed that the difference between the experimental conditions and the control condition was significant. Participants’ who had watched Westside identified relatively more with characters of their ethnic outgroup than participants in the control condition who had watched Heading for Tomorrow. Moreover, they identified relatively less with characters of their ethnic ingroup than participants in the control condition (see Table 1).

In order to explore the role of identification in the effect of multicultural drama on perceptions of ethnic threat, a mediation analysis was carried out following the requirements set out by Baron & Kenny (1986). In order to conclude that mediation has occurred, four conditions need to be met. First, a significant relation must exist between the independent and the dependent variable. Second, a significant relation must exist between the independent variable and the mediating variables. Third, a significant relation must exist between the mediators and the dependent variable. Fourth, when the effect of the mediator on the dependent variable is controlled for, the connection between the independent and dependent variable must decrease significantly (Ibid.).

The first two requirements for mediation have already been demonstrated above. First, the dependent variable (perceived ethnic threat) and the independent variable (experimental condition) were shown to be significantly related. Second, a significant relation was found between the independent variable and the mediating variables ingroup and outgroup identification (see Table 1 for means). In order to explore whether third and fourth requirements were also met, a two-step regression procedure was carried out. In the first step of the analysis, all relevant predictors of perceived threat were entered without ingroup and outgroup identification. Factors political preference and age were included because, as was noted earlier, these are strong predictors of perceptions of ethnic threat that are independent of the hypothesized effects of viewing multicultural drama. In the second step, identification was included to see to what extent the identification with ingroup and outgroup characters mediated effects of the experimental manipulations on perceived ethnic threat. Because the two experimental conditions did not differ in terms of identification, they were taken together in this analysis in order to contrast the
experimental conditions with the control condition. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Two step regression investigating the relation between multicultural drama exposure, ingroup and outgroup identification and perceptions of ethnic threat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perceived ethnic threat (step1)</th>
<th>Perceived ethnic threat (step2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westside vs Control</td>
<td>.521*</td>
<td>.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political preference</td>
<td>-.796*</td>
<td>.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.018*</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with outgroup</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.363*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with ingroup</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.182*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at p<.05.

The positive beta loading for ingroup identification in table 4 shows that more identification with ingroup characters was associated with increases in perceived ethnic threat. The negative beta loading for outgroup identification suggests that more identification with outgroup characters was associated with lower levels of perceived ethnic threat. As both of these beta coefficients are significant, the third requirement for mediation was met. In the second step of the regression in table 2, the variable identification is introduced. As a result, the beta loadings for the variable condition are sharply reduced. This suggests that the effects of the experimental manipulation are caused by its effects on identification with ingroup and outgroup characters.

Using a macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008), these results were tested for statistical significance using a Sobel test and a bootstrapping procedure. Results from the Sobel test demonstrate that the indirect effect of multicultural drama through identification with ingroups and outgroups was significant ($F(5,138)= 7.671, p<.0005$). The bootstrap estimated indirect effect was .1382 for ingroup identification and .3439 for for outgroup identification. The 95 percent bootstrap confidence interval (1000 trials) was between .0095 and .3498 for ingroup identification and between .1073 and .6926 for outgroup identification. Because these intervals
do not include zero, it can be concluded that the indirect effects of watching Westside running through identification with ingroup characters and through identification with outgroup characters are both different from zero. The conclusions from the steps above are therefore confirmed by the bootstrapping procedure (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

**Identification and social cognitive theory**

According to social cognitive theory, identification with multicultural drama would have an effect on perceptions of ethnic threat through its facilitation of social learning. Hypothesis 3b, c and d suggested that such learning would be evident in an increased sense of intercultural self-efficacy. However, the experimental and control groups did not differ in terms of intercultural self-efficacy ($F(2, 142) = .108$, $p=.898$, see Table 1 for M and SD). Furthermore, no effects were found for intercultural self-efficacy on perceptions of ethnic threat ($\beta = .33$, $p = .28$) and no interaction effect was found between identification with ingroups or outgroups and intercultural self-efficacy on perceptions of threat ($\beta = .12$, $p = .70$ and ($\beta = .11$, $p = .79$). These results therefore contradict hypotheses H3a, b and c that assumed multicultural television drama would increase intercultural self-efficacy (H3b and c) and that this effect would be moderated by identification with characters in the programme (H3a).

**Discussion**

The results presented above show that watching the multicultural drama Westside significantly lowered perceptions of ethnic threat as compared to watching a mainstream soap opera. This effect was mediated by the viewers’ identification with ingroup and outgroup characters as was hypothesized using social identity theory. Less identification with ingroup characters and more identification with outgroup characters was related to viewers’ levels of perceived ethnic threat. The learning effects hypothesized by the Social Cognitive Theory and postulated in hypothesis H3 were not found in this study. Our measure for intercultural self-efficacy was not affected exposure to multicultural drama and identification with characters. However, it is possible that such effects may require longer exposure to multicultural drama than was provided for in the present experimental set up. Further longitudinal studies are needed to address this issue.

In conclusion, the main question posed in the introduction may be answered tentatively in the affirmative: multicultural television drama can affect intercultural tolerance as it can lower perceptions of ethnic threat. The fact that lowered identification with ingroups was associated
with lower levels of perceived ethnic threat suggests that the representation of ingroup characters has perhaps been relatively ignored in the bid to represent ethnic outgroups in a positive way. This study has shown that multicultural drama may be effective when it succeeds in subverting habitual ingroup identification patterns and ingroup favoritism amongst viewers. It therefore suggests that more attention to the representations of ingroup characters may result in more effective programming.

However, a number of aspects of this process of ‘entertaining anti-racism’ remain to be investigated. First, analysis showed that levels of perceived ethnic threat were affected by many antecedent factors with a much larger impact than the experience of viewing two episodes of a multicultural television drama. The question might be raised whether other kinds of television content or more repeated viewing might have an even greater effect. At present it is unclear how much stronger these effects might become. Furthermore, it remains to be investigated how exposure to multicultural affects the reception of the many other, perhaps more threat inducing news and entertainment programmes that are likely to be part of an average viewer’s media diet. Further research in this area might therefore explore these issues most usefully from a longitudinal ‘cultivation’ perspective (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994). These studies may fruitfully address the cumulative effects of watching multicultural television drama within a non-experimental real life setting. This would deepen our understandings of the ways in which short term effects in perceptions of ethnic threat may (or may not) constitute a force that may ‘drench’ the effects of common television fare on intercultural tolerance over time (cf. Greenberg, 1988).

Using television entertainment as an intervention in multicultural relations is not risk free and may also have unintended and aversive consequences. For example, it may potentially increase perceptions of threat or affect political processes and orientations amongst viewers. In this respect, qualitative studies may also be deployed to chart the ways in which immediate effects of viewing experiences develop and affect everyday life through public or private discussions about these programmes in various domains of a viewer’s life (see Chapter 6). Additional studies charting the effects on other dependent measures are also called for. Further studies are needed to both to increase our knowledge of these processes as well as to heighten our awareness of the political and ethical implications of multicultural television drama.