

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Hostile Media Perceptions, Presumed Media Influence, and Minority Alienation: The Case of Arabs in Israel

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This article examines the notion that minority perceptions of the strong influence of biased media coverage may indirectly lead to increased minority alienation. This idea was tested in the context of the perceived media stigmatization of Arab citizens in Israel. Using structural equation modeling (N = 251), it is demonstrated that, over and above the effects of ideological, social, and demographic variables, hostile media perceptions and the perceived influence of media coverage affected Arabs' perceived image and consequently their social alienation. Interestingly, the amount of exposure to mainstream Israeli media did not play a significant part in this process. However, exposure to Arab media significantly affected perceptions of hostile coverage.

doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2007.00361.x

Social psychological and sociological research demonstrate that what we think others feel about us, and about the groups to which we belong, has major consequences for the way we perceive ourselves and for our relationship with the surrounding society. The current investigation explores the role played by media in shaping such perceptions. It is argued that what we think others think of our group is influenced to a large extent by our perceptions of media coverage. Perceiving that media cover our group negatively, and furthermore, perceiving that this coverage is influential, may indicate to us that society at large thinks negatively of our group. In other words, the perception that hostile media coverage has an impact on out-group members may be related to the perception that our in-group suffers from negative stereotyping by mainstream society. When we think others think badly of us, we may in turn feel alienated and estranged from our fellow citizens and from society at large, regardless of whether or not the coverage is indeed hostile or influential. In this paper, these claims are investigated in the context of the relationship between Jewish and Arab citizens in Israel.

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Minority alienation from mainstream society

Studies of minority alienation typically involve the application of the classical sociological concept of alienation to a minority–majority context (Bullough, 1967; Mirowsky & Ross, 1980). Alienation refers to a mode of experience in which a person experiences himself as an alien (Fromm, 1955). It is a sense of not belonging and of apathy and a feeling that one is not integrated into the ongoing society (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Maxwell, 2006). According to Seeman (1975) alienation includes, in addition to the sense of estrangement, feelings of powerlessness—that is, a sense that an individual’s behavior cannot determine the outcomes he or she seeks—and cultural estrangement—“the individual’s rejection of commonly held values” (Seeman, 1975, p. 93). Additional definitions raise the notion of discrepancy between one’s conditions and the desired conditions, or as Clark (1959, p. 849) describes it, alienation is the sense that an individual cannot “achieve the role he has determined to be rightfully his.” This connotes feeling of injustice and discrimination.

Thus, minority alienation from mainstream society means that minority group members perceive that they are not a part of society at large, and further, that they are discriminated against and that no matter what they do, they will never be integrated into society. Minority alienation also relates to group members’ perception that their minority group’s values sharply differ from, and cannot be compromised with, those of the majority.

Although alienation of minority members was found to be related to many social phenomena including distress (Mirowsky & Ross, 1980) and group members’ residential mobility into previously segregated majority areas (Bullough, 1967), the concept has not sparked much interest from communication scholars. The most influential theories in communication research on the effects of media coverage of minorities—cultivation, framing, and priming—are typically used to explain majority perceptions of minorities rather than minority alienation. According to cultivation theory, heavy television viewers who spend much of their time watching stereotyped and distorted presentations of minorities in media will come to accept such portrayals as reality (Weimann, 2000, pp. 226–238 for a review).¹ Framing theory suggests that the way media portray minority members (e.g., episodically or thematically) may alter audience interpretation of the situation of minorities (e.g., attribution of responsibility for racial inequality; see Iyengar, 1994). According to priming theory (e.g., Power, Murphy, & Coover, 1996), media portrayals merely activate preexisting schemas of audiences in a way that influences their interpretations of the situation of minorities.

Most research conducted within these theoretical frameworks focuses on media effects on majority perceptions of minorities. Only scant research has examined the effects of such content on minority audiences. This research demonstrated, on the one hand, negative effects on African American audiences’ self-esteem (a correlate of alienation in sociological research), and on the other, increased acculturation among Latinos (Greenberg, Mastro, & Brand, 2002, p. 345; results on both hypotheses are

mixed). However, the mechanism explaining these associations was not fully explored.

In this paper, an indirect effect of media on minority alienation is suggested. Perceptions by minority group members of hostile coverage of their group in majority media, accompanied by perceptions that such coverage has an impact on the majority, are hypothesized to contribute to minority alienation indirectly, through minority members' perceived image in the eyes of the majority. This hypothesis is guided by past social psychological research and by recent advances in communication research regarding hostile media perceptions (HMPs) and the influence of presumed media influence.

Audience perceptions of "the hostile media"

In a landmark article, Vallone, Ross, and Lepper (1985) demonstrated that partisans tend to perceive media coverage as unjustly biased against their own point of view. This is the case even when coverage is relatively evenhanded. The authors exposed pro-Israeli and pro-Arab American students to U.S. televised coverage of the 1983 Beirut massacre and found that both groups perceived the identical segments to be biased against their side. This pattern of findings was dubbed "the hostile media phenomenon." Additional research (Gunther & Liebhart, 2005) has shown that respondents' ego involvement with the topic is associated with stronger perceptions of bias in news articles.

Later research has replicated the hostile media findings in other contexts, using both experimental and correlational designs. Although the initial design in this paradigm used relatively balanced news clips as the stimulus material, the findings were extended to cases in which media coverage is clearly *imbalanced* (Gunther, Christen, Liebhart, & Chia, 2001). Research has documented a *relative* hostile media phenomenon, "in which each group perceives news coverage to be either more hostile to, or at least less agreeable with, their own point of view than the opposing group sees it" (Gunther & Chia, 2001, p. 690).

Although research has probed into the cognitive mechanisms underlying such perceptions (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994), relatively little research has examined the *consequences* of people's perception that news coverage of their group is slanted. However, some research has documented the effects of HMPs on people's assessments of public opinion. According to "the persuasive press inference" (e.g., Gunther, 1998), people feel that what media say today reflects what other people will think tomorrow and thus deduce public opinion on a given subject from their perceptions of media bias. It follows that minority perceptions regarding bias in majority media may affect the perceived stigmatization of minority by majority. Indeed, Fujioka (2005) found that African American respondents perceiving that treatment of Blacks in U.S. media is unfair tended to perceive that Whites think negatively of African Americans. Given this logic and past findings, it is hypothesized that the more minority respondents perceive media portrayals of their group

as hostile, the more negatively they will perceive that majorities think of their group (H1).

The influence of presumed media influence

A similar and related process that has received scholarly attention in recent years is called “the influence of presumed media influence” (Gunther & Storey, 2003). This process describes a situation in which people perceive that other people are affected by media coverage and change their attitudes or behaviors accordingly. Unlike the persuasive press inference, the process of presumed influence operates through perceptions of media impact rather than through perceptions of media bias. The two types of perceptions are empirically associated, however, with perceptions of bias probably influencing perceptions of influence (Cohen, Mutz, Price, & Gunther, 1988; Perloff, 1989; Price, Tewksbury, & Huang, 1998).

The influence of presumed media influence originates from Davison’s (1983) notion of the “third-person effect.” Davison suggested that “In some cases, a communication leads to action not because of its impact on those to whom it is ostensibly directed, but because others (third persons) think it will have an impact on the audience” (p. 1). Most studies of this idea (also referred to as “the behavioral component of the third-person effect”) have investigated support for message restrictions as a result of third-person perceptions and demonstrated that when people overestimate the influence of harmful messages on others, they are inclined to espouse censorship (Hoffner et al., 1999; McLeod et al., 1997; Salwen, 1998).

More recently, the influence of presumed media influence was tested in additional contexts. For example, belief in the influence of health messages (originally targeted toward doctors) affected patients’ beliefs about, and improved their interactions with, health care providers (Gunther & Storey, 2003). Adolescents perceiving that sexual messages on television make their peers more permissive toward sex are significantly more likely to hold more permissive sexual attitudes themselves, presumably to comply with the perceived social norm, and this affects their behavioral intentions to engage in sexual activities (Chia, 2006).

Research on the influence of presumed media influence is generally focused on attitudes and perceptions related to others (e.g., censorship should be imposed because others are affected). With very few exceptions, research has failed to explore the consequences of presumed media influence for those who serve as the objects of media coverage. If what media say about me and my life has an impact on how I believe I am judged by others, then it should also affect how I view myself and my relationship to the surrounding society.

In line with this logic, evidence demonstrates that residents of negatively covered low-status development towns (located on the Israeli periphery and suffering from a multitude of social and economic problems), who perceived that coverage of their town had an impact on out-group members (e.g., people living in central areas), were more likely to perceive the image of their towns as negative (Tsfati & Cohen,

2003). Following these findings and the logic of the influence of presumed media influence, and similarly to the hypothesis regarding HMPs, it is possible to suggest that the more minority group members perceive that negative coverage of their group has an impact on out-group members, the more they will tend to perceive public opinion toward their group as negative (H2).

Perceived image and minority alienation

Perceiving that the public image of a group to which one belongs is negative has consequences for her or his relationship with society at large. According to social identity theory, in situations where individual mobility is an option (i.e., place of residence vs. gender or race), we are likely to desire to dissociate ourselves from groups with a low social status (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Hence, believing that media foster a negative image of a group we belong to may create a desire to dissociate ourselves from it. For example, residents of the low-status development towns perceiving that their towns suffer from a negative image (due to media coverage) were more likely to consider residential mobility, controlling for satisfaction from living conditions in their town (Tsfati & Cohen, 2003).

What happens when mobility from the in-group is not an option is less clear, however. In the case of Israeli right-wing settlers, perceived negative public opinion (again, fostered by media coverage) was associated with intentions to forcefully resist the democratic decision to evacuate the Gaza Strip (Tsfati & Cohen, 2005b). This reaction perhaps reflects alienation from mainstream society, and frustration with the democratic process, which is so grossly slanted by media coverage according to the settlers' point of view. Thus, minority perceptions that majority opinion toward the minority is negative, due to unfair coverage, may be related to alienation from mainstream society. This could be conceptualized as consistent with the predictions of social identity theory regarding hostility toward out-groups in situations of threat, especially when the competition or comparison is seen as unfair (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 17; see also Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). Indeed, research on individual-level alienation found associations between constructs like perceived peer acceptance (which is parallel to perceived group image) and classroom alienation (Epperson, 1963).

Beyond social-psychological research on social identity, the hypothesized link between perceived image and alienation is also consistent with Goffman's (1963) writings on the concept of the stigma. Goffman (p.7) describes the anxiety with which the stigmatized individual approaches interactions in society. A stigmatized individual "may perceive, usually quite correctly, that whatever others profess, they do not really 'accept' him and are not ready to make contact with him on equal grounds." These perceptions foster a sense of feeling out of place in the world, that is, of alienation, and this is the case in part because the stigma arises from something the stigmatized individual knows he or she cannot fix (p. 12). It seems sensible to hypothesize, then, that (H3) perceived group image should be

related to alienation from the out-group, so that minority members perceiving that the majority thinks more negatively of them should feel more alienated from the majority.

The context: Arab citizens in Israel

Israeli population is comprised of approximately 82% Jews (originating from different countries), and 18% Arab–Palestinians, of different religious persuasions and diverse social backgrounds. Arabs citizens of Israel are thus defined as a national minority (Smootha, 2002). They are “others” in terms of their religion, language, culture, and national expectations. Due to the constitutional definition of the State of Israel as a Jewish state, many of the state’s symbols and basic laws (e.g., the flag, anthem) aim to increase solidarity and unity within the heterogeneous Jewish groups but create a cleavage between Jews and Arabs (Liebman & Don-Yehiya, 1983). This schism is further intensified due to Israel’s conflict with the Palestinians (living in territories occupied by Israel but not citizens of the state). The Arab citizens of Israel (members of the Palestinian people, but living in Israel, and possessing Israeli citizenship) tend to identify with the hardship of the Palestinian people and to sympathize with their struggle for national determination, whereas most Jews and the state institutions perceive this identification as a threat to Israel’s security.

While enjoying formal equality and basic civil liberties, Arab Israeli citizens are discriminated against in almost all spheres of life and suffer from higher unemployment, higher levels of poverty, lower educational attainment, inferior municipal services, and many other problems. Furthermore, Arabs are distant from the socio-political power centers in Israel and thus lack any significant political influence. Jews and Arabs compete over material and symbolic resources (Ghanem, 2001). On several occasions in Israel’s short history, Arab protest has evolved into clashes with police. Most recently, in October 2000, 12 Arab citizens were shot to death by police and one Jewish citizen was killed by Arab Israeli protesters.

Israeli communication research has examined media coverage of Israeli Arabs and their places of residence from the 1960s to the present day. Studies have found that compared with the Jewish majority, Israeli media pay very little attention to Arabs and Arab cities and villages, as well as the events that take place within them (Avraham, 2003). Although Israeli Arabs comprise 18% of the Israeli population, only 3% of the people appearing in news programs are Israeli Arabs (Avraham, First, & Elefant Loffler, 2004, pp. 5–6). This symbolic annihilation (Tuchman, 1978) is accompanied by a continued negative framing of Israeli Arabs as a disloyal minority, threatening the security of the state. Coverage of the Arab minority focuses mostly on violence, involvement in terrorist activities, violation of public order, and crime (Avraham, 2003). Ninety-five percent of Israeli Arabs in commercial television news reports are covered in the context of disorder news compared with 69% of the Jews (Avraham et al., 2004, p. 12); 52% of Israeli Arabs on commercial television news

are covered negatively compared with 21% of Jews (Avraham et al., 2004, p. 16). In addition, Israeli Arabs were found to be totally absent from Israeli media discourse on the arts and the economy.

The Israeli Jewish–Arab context is suitable for the examination of this study's hypotheses for several reasons. First, it represents a minority–majority cleavage in which ethnicity is a dominant characteristic that fulfills a central role in the social identity of both Jews and Arabs. Second, it represents a context in which mobility from the negatively stereotyped in-group is extremely difficult (as opposed to conversion into Judaism, changing one's ethnicity is impossible, and assimilating into Jewish society usually involves severing contact with one's family). Third, given the relative social segregation between Jews and Arabs in Israel, media sources are expected to play a relatively important role in shaping Arabs' perceptions of Jews. Most Arabs live in segregated geographic areas and hardly interact with Jews socially (Smootha, 1987, pp. 9–12). Hence, what mainstream Israeli media say may particularly shape their knowledge of how Jews perceive them.

Finally, severe mutual mistrust, hatred, and alienation exist between Jews and Arabs in Israel (Smootha, 1987), but this alienation is explained only in part by demographic, ideological, and sociological variables (e.g., Moore & Aweiss, 2002). Therefore, testing the proposed model may improve our understanding of the relationship between Jews and Arabs in Israel and expose the possible role of the news media as a source of Arab social alienation.

In sum, in the Arab–Israeli context, an indirect effect of HMPs and presumed media influence on alienation through the perceived image of Arabs is hypothesized: Arab respondents' perception that their coverage in mainstream Israeli media is hostile is expected to affect their perceptions of what Jews think about Arabs (H1). This hypothesis is guided by past research and theorizing on the persuasive press influence. Arab respondents' perceptions that their coverage in Israeli media has an impact on Jews are also expected to affect their perception regarding their negative image among Jews (H2). This hypothesis is guided by theories about the behavioral component of the third-person perception and the influence of presumed media influence. Finally, perceived stigmatization is expected to affect alienation from Israeli society (H3). This expectation is guided by social identity theory, on the one hand, and by Goffman's notion of the stigma, on the other.

However, the research that follows is not limited to testing separate specific hypotheses but rather proposes a conceptual model in which perceptions of media bias and influence indirectly shape alienation, through their impact on perceived image. To test for this complete model, evidence supporting H1, H2, and H3 does not suffice. Rather, it is necessary to examine the overall fit of the model to the data, and in addition, to test for the significance of the indirect effects of HMPs and presumed media influence on alienation. Thus, the conceptual model will be tested using structural equation modeling (see Kline, 1998), a methodology that allows us to model indirect associations, while testing for the fit of the overall model, and correcting for measurement errors.

Method

The data for this study were collected by the University of Haifa Survey Research Center, using telephone surveys conducted during December 2006. The sample was a simple random sample from the population of Arab households in Israel. Out of the 781 dialed numbers, 179 were faxes, business numbers, or non-Arab households; 74 were unanswered or busy; and 38 had technical problems. Out of the 490 contacts in this sample, 51 refused, 146 asked to be interviewed at a later time (and the predetermined number of interviews was reached before they were recontacted), and 42 did not complete the interview.²

The sample consisted of 251 (51% female) individuals aged 18 or older. In terms of religiosity, the self-reported distribution was approximately 30% religious, 26.8% secular, and 43.2% traditional (a term used in Israel both in Hebrew and Arabic for a self-defined intermediate level of religiosity); 43.3% lived in cities and the rest in small towns and villages. Similar to the Israeli Arab population, 65.3% lived in the Galilee region, 22.1% in the “triangle” area, and the rest in mixed cities and in the Negev region. Respondents had an average of 12.2 years of schooling ($SD = 3.52$), and the average age was 35.98 ($SD = 13.85$).³

Construction of the measurement in structural equation modeling

Presumed media influence was measured using a single item (as is often the case in third-person perception and presumed influence research) and treated in the model as an observed variable. Respondents were asked to respond to the statement “Israeli media exert a strong influence on Jewish Israelis’ perceptions of Israeli Arab citizens.” Answer categories ranged from “1” (*strongly disagree*) to “5” (*strongly agree*) ($M = 4.16$; $SD = 1.13$).

Hostile media perceptions

Perceptions of Arab Israelis’ media image were measured using seven Likert-type survey items, with answer categories ranging from “1” (*strongly disagree*) to “5” (*strongly agree*): (1) “the media ignore Israeli Arab citizens”; (2) “... present Israeli Arab citizens as primitive”; (3) “... present groups alienated from Israeli Arabs in a positive manner”; (4) “... present Arab citizens in a negative manner”; (5) “... are suspicious toward Arab citizens’ loyalty to the state”; (6) “... present Arab citizens in a distorted way”; (7) “most people working in the news media belong to social groups that are hostile to Arabs.” In an exploratory factor analysis (principal component, oblique), the seven items loaded on a single factor explaining 50% of the variance (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .83$; $M = 3.75$; $SD = 0.88$). Item parceling was used in order to facilitate identification and achieve a parsimonious model (Bandalos, 2002): The seven items were randomly divided to three indicators,⁴ and HMPs were modeled as a latent construct influencing these indicators.

Perceived image among Jews

What Israeli Arabs thought about how Israeli Jews perceived them was measured using six Likert-type survey items with answer categories ranging from “1” (*strongly*

disagree) to “5” (*strongly agree*). Items asked whether respondents thought that Israeli Jews (1) “perceive Arabs as a security threat to the state”; (2) “... think Arabs are extreme”; (3) “... think Arabs are primitive”; (4) “... think about Arabs in a stereotypical manner”; whether (5) “racist perceptions of Arabs are prevalent in the Jewish Israeli public”; and whether (6) “Arab citizens suffer from a negative image among Jews.” Exploratory factor analysis (principal component, oblique), explaining 70% of the variance, revealed a two-factor structure with Items 1–3 loading separately from Items 4–6. Cronbach’s α for the first factor was .71, and for the second factor was .80 (for the first factor $M = 3.90$; $SD = 0.97$; for the second factor $M = 3.60$; $SD = 1.06$). Perceived image of Arabs was modeled as a latent construct influencing two indicators, representing these factors.

Alienation from the Israeli state and society was measured using five items: (1) “I feel alienated from Israeli society”; (2) “I feel I do not belong in Israeli society”; (3) “As a citizen, I feel that the State of Israel discriminates against people like me”; (4) “No matter what Arabs do, they will always be discriminated against in Israel, which is defined as a Jewish state”; (5) “Arabs must not accept the Jewish–Zionist character of the state.”⁵ Again, answer categories ranged from “1” (*strongly disagree*) to “5” (*strongly agree*). Items 1 and 2 captures the “not belonging” sense of alienation described above. Item 3 captures the discrepancy component of alienation. Item 4 captures the powerlessness element. Item 5 captures the cultural estrangement ingredient of alienation. In an exploratory factor analysis (principal component, oblique), the five items loaded on a single factor explaining 50% of the variance (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .69$; $M = 3.06$; $SD = 1.17$). Again, parceling was used and the items were randomly divided to three indicators that were modeled as influenced by the latent construct.⁶

Exposure to Israeli and Arab news media

To examine the possibility of direct media effects, measures of news media exposure were incorporated into the model. Respondents were asked about the frequency of their exposure to 41 print, radio, television, and Internet news outlets in Arabic and Hebrew. Each item had answer categories ranging from *never* (coded “1”) to *on a daily basis* (coded “5”). Exploratory factor analysis of the 41 items failed to rotate or offer a coherent factor solution. Hence, four separate analyses were conducted, each time focusing on the items relating to newspapers, radio, television, and Internet news media. Variables were created for the resulting factors in each analysis.⁷ Exploratory factor analysis of these variables (principal component, Varimax), explaining 52% of the variance, revealed a two-factor structure, one representing exposure to mainstream Israeli media outlets⁸ (radio, newspapers, and Internet) and the other tapping exposure to Arab media outlets.⁹ Probably due to the fact that many Israeli Arabs get at least some news from mainstream Israeli television, the Israeli television news watching construct loaded weakly on both factors. Following extensive past research (see Tsfat & Peri, 2006),¹⁰ it was decided that this variable belongs with the construct representing exposure to mainstream Israeli news

outlets.¹¹ Variables for both factors (exposure to mainstream Israeli and to Arab media) were calculated as the mean of their components (in the case of exposure to mainstream Israeli news, Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$; $M = 2.41$; $SD = 0.70$; in the case of exposure to Arab news, Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$; $M = 2.08$; $SD = 0.59$).

Covariates

As explained above, political alienation is affected not only by people's perceptions of their perceived image and perceptions of biased news coverage but also by various demographic variables and ideological beliefs. Thus, the model controlled for a variety of factors, including ideological non-Zionist beliefs ("The Zionist movement is racist"; $M = 4.03$; $SD = 1.37$, on a 1–5 scale), perceptions regarding the status of Arabs in Israel ("The situation of Israeli Arabs has improved dramatically in recent years"; $M = 2.68$; $SD = 1.40$), centrality of Arab identity ("On a 1–5 scale, please rate how central being an Israeli Arab is to your identity"; $M = 3.87$; $SD = 1.29$), and social ties with Jews (the average of "In my daily life, I meet Jews very frequently" and "I have many Jewish friends"; $r = .54$; $p < .001$; $M = 3.57$; $SD = 1.39$). Political covariates also included voting to a non-Zionist party in the Israeli elections ($= 1$ [27.2%]; else $= 0$) and not participating in the parliamentary elections ($= 1$ [45.4%]; else $= 0$). Demographic controls included secularity ($= 1$), being urban ($= 1$), sex (female $= 1$), age (in years), years of schooling, income (high below average $= 1$; high above average $= 5$; $M = 2.23$; $SD = 1.26$), and number of children ($M = 2.53$; $SD = 2.48$).

Statistical model specification

The structure of the model—tested using structural equation modeling—is presented in Figure 1. In accordance with standard representation, the observed variables were depicted as rectangles and the latent variables as ovals. For simplification purposes, indicators influenced by the latent variables, error terms, and covariances between exogenous variables were omitted from the figure. The model allows for all correlations between exogenous variables.

The endogenous variables in the model are HMPs, perceived media influence on Jews, perceived image of Arabs, and alienation. Guided by past findings on third-person perceptions (Cohen et al., 1988; Perloff, 1989), perceived media influence was modeled as an endogenous variable affected by HMPs. To examine the possibility of direct media effects, paths were added from both media exposure constructs to all endogenous variables.

In accordance with H1, perceived image of Arabs is modeled as a function of HMPs. In accordance with H2, and following the logic of the influence of presumed influence, this equation also contains a direct path from presumed media influence to perceived image. In accordance with H3, alienation was modeled as influenced by perceived negative image. To assess the net effect of the main theoretical constructs, demographic, political, and social variables potentially influencing the endogenous variables were included as controls.

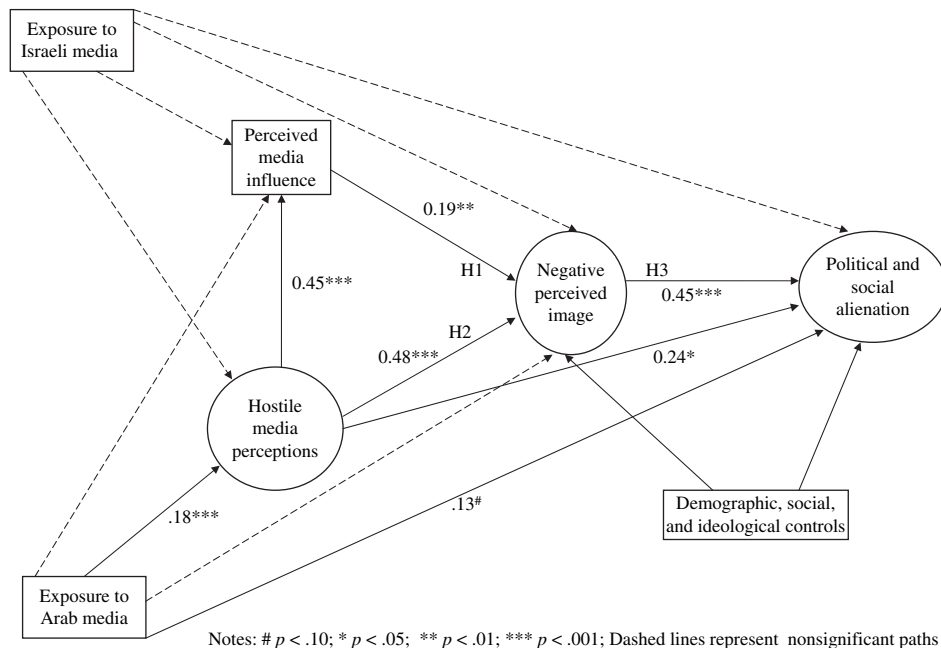


Figure 1 Standardized ML estimates for the structural model.

Because the hypotheses imply mediational relationships between triads of variables, model building and trimming strategies (Kline, 1998, pp. 132–137) were used to examine the utility of including or excluding the mediational and direct paths in each triad. Results of this analysis supported the exclusion of the paths for direct effects of presumed influence on alienation.¹² However, a similar analysis did not support the exclusion of a direct path from HMPs to alienation.¹³ Accordingly, such a path was added to the model (the theoretical justification for the inclusion of this path can be substantiated using theory and research on the link between HMPs and the related construct of democratic trust; Tsfat & Cohen, 2005a). Importantly, and consistent with Baron and Kenny's (1986) requirements for mediation, in both cases, a direct path without controls for the mediator was substantially reduced when controlling for the mediator. After perceived image was controlled for, the effects of presumed influence became insignificant (which indicates total mediation), but the effect of HMPs remained significant, though substantially smaller (indicative of partial mediation).

Results

Maximum likelihood (ML) estimates for the model were calculated using AMOS. Figure 1 presents standardized estimates for the paths relevant for the discussion, and Table 1 presents unstandardized estimates and standard errors for the model.

Table 1 ML estimates for the model

	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	Error (<i>SD</i> ²)
Measurement component		
Hostile media perceptions → Indicator 1	1.00	.56 (.64)
Hostile media perceptions → Indicator 2	1.31 (.10)***	.04 (.03)
Hostile media perceptions → Indicator 3	1.40 (.11)***	.19 (.24)
Perceived media influence → Indicator 1	1.00	.52 (.46)
Perceived media influence → Indicator 2	1.09 (.14)***	.51 (.56)
Political alienation → Indicator 1	1.00	.71 (1.00)
Political alienation → Indicator 2	1.03 (.15)***	.52 (.58)
Political alienation → Indicator 3	1.01 (.15)***	.59 (.76)
Structural component		
Exposure to Israeli media → Hostile media perceptions	-.09 (.07)	
Exposure to Israeli media → Perceived media influence	-.15 (.09)	
Exposure to Arab media → Hostile media perceptions	.22 (.08)**	
Exposure to Arab media → Perceived media influence	-.02 (.11)	
Hostile media perceptions → Perceived media influence	.71 (.10)***	
Exposure to Israeli media → Perceived image	-.09 (.07)	
Exposure to Arab media → Perceived image	-.07 (.08)	
Hostile media perceptions → Perceived image	.44 (.08)***	
Perceived media influence → Perceived image	.11 (.04)**	
Exposure to Israeli media → Political alienation	-.01 (.08)	
Exposure to Arab media → Political alienation	.15 (.09) [#]	
Perceived image → Political alienation	.49 (.15)**	
Hostile media perceptions → Political alienation	.24 (.10)*	

Note: Reported measurement errors in the indicators were calculated as $1 - R^2$. The first listed indicator was set as a reference variable for each latent term.

*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. [#] $p < .10$.

Appendix 1 presents the results for the control variables. The model explains 48.5% of the variance in the perceived image of Arabs, 57.9% of the variance in alienation, 3.5% of the variance in HMPS, and 21.8% of the variance in presumed media influence. Goodness-of-fit estimates for this model were satisfactory: The Bentler–Bonett's normed fit index was .98, the Tucker–Lewis index was .98, and root mean square error of approximation was .07.

The first equation predicts respondents' perceptions of media influence on Israeli audiences. In line with research on presumed media influence, the more respondents perceived their coverage to be negative, the more they thought that others, Jewish Israelis in this instance, are affected by their coverage ($b = .71$; $SE = .10$; $p < .001$). Presumed media influence was not statistically related to exposure to Israeli media. This variable was also unrelated to exposure to Arab media. The second equation predicted the extent of audiences' HMPS. Such perceptions, that Israeli media cover Arabs unfairly, were unrelated to the amount of exposure to Israeli media. However, HMPS were related to exposure to Arab media ($b = .22$; $SE = .08$; $p < .01$).

The third equation predicts the extent to which respondents thought they were perceived negatively by Jewish Israelis. Over and above demographic, political, and social controls, and in line with H1, HMPs were positively and significantly related to perceived image. That is, the more the respondents thought Arabs were negatively portrayed by media, the more they perceived their image in the Jewish population to be negative ($b = .44$; $SE = .08$; $p < .001$). All else being equal, and in line with H2, perceived media influence on Jews positively and significantly predicted perceived image. That is, the more the respondents thought Israeli media exert a strong influence on how Jews perceive Arabs, the more they thought Jews think negatively of Arabs ($b = .11$; $SE = .04$; $p < .01$).

Finally, the fourth equation predicts political and social minority alienation. *Ceteris paribus*, and as predicted by H3, perceived image was positively associated with alienation. That is, the more the respondents felt that Jewish Israelis perceived Arabs negatively, the more they felt alienated, as Arabs, from the Israeli society ($b = .49$; $SE = .15$; $p < .001$). Interestingly, the results also supported a significant direct path from perceived negative coverage to alienation: the more the respondents felt that their media coverage was negative, the more alienated they felt ($b = .24$; $SE = .10$; $p < .05$). Notably, exposure to Israeli media did not significantly affect alienation. The effect of exposure to Arab media, however, was positive and borderline significant ($b = .15$; $SE = .09$; $p = .087$).

Results for the control variables (presented in Appendix 1) show that the only significant predictors of perceived image, in addition to HMPs and presumed media influence, were secularity (secular respondents perceived a more negative image; $b = .21$; $SE = .11$; $p = .059$; this effect was only borderline significant) and the ideological variable of perceiving Zionism as racist ($b = .14$; $SE = .04$; $p < .001$). The only significant covariate predicting alienation was Arab Israeli identity (perhaps because item wording mentioned Israeli identity, alienation was associated with *weaker* Arab Israeli identity; $b = -.09$; $SE = .04$; $p < .05$). However, having fewer ties with Jews ($b = -.07$; $SE = .04$; $p < .10$) and thinking that the Arabs' situation had not improved ($b = -.06$; $SE = .04$; $p < .10$) were borderline significant predictors of alienation.

Given that the model contains three main indirect effects—of presumed influence and HMPs through perceived image on alienation and of HMPs through presumed influence on perceived image—the significance of these indirect effects (the product of both direct paths in a triad) has to be tested. Current literature (e.g., Preacher & Hayes, 2005) recommends bootstrap estimates to overcome the inferential problem arising from the assumption that the sampling distribution of an indirect effect—the product of two coefficients—is normal (required by prior approaches such as the Sobel test). A macro by Preacher and Hayes was used to calculate bootstrap estimates for the indirect effects in the main three triads: of presumed influence and HMPs on alienation and of HMPs on perceived image through presumed influence. Results indicated that these indirect effects are indeed significant.¹⁴

Finally, to examine the overall contribution of presumed influence and HMPs to the model, the paths from presumed influence and HMPs to perceived image, and

from HMPs to alienation, were set to zero. In other words, a model predicting alienation from Israeli society without perceived media influence and HMPs was estimated. In this model, the dependent variable is explained only by the control variables. The two competing models were evaluated using the criteria of model fits, explained variances, and chi-square difference tests, following the strategy utilized by Cohen, Vigoda, and Samorly (2001). All indices indicated that the model proposed in this study performs better, in terms of fit, than the competing model. The explained variances in the dependent variables in the proposed model were higher than those in the competing model (for perceived image $R^2 = .49$, compared with $R^2 = .20$; for alienation $R^2 = .58$, compared with $R^2 = .47$). Finally, the chi-square difference test ($\chi^2 = 59.92$; $df = 3$) was statistically significant ($p < .001$), supporting the retention of the theoretical paths suggested by the current hypotheses. While, as all other statistical models, the proposed model is imperfect and while the possibility that other models may fit the data as well or even better cannot be ruled out, the current analysis demonstrates that the hypothesized model provides a better fit to the data than models offered by current understanding of Arab Israeli political alienation.

Discussion

This study examined whether perceptions regarding negative coverage, and regarding the influence of this coverage on out-group audiences, indirectly affect minority alienation. The results supported the theoretical expectations: Perceiving that media cover the in-group negatively and perceiving that this coverage has an impact on out-group members affected respondents' perceived image, which in turn affected their sense that they do not belong in society. HMPs and presumed media influence contributed indirectly (and also directly in the case of HMPs) to alienation, even controlling for demographics, and for a variety of factors that were used in past research to explain out-group alienation in Israel.

Sociological and psychological research has long ago noted that what others think about our group has major implications for our attitudes and behaviors (Goffman, 1963; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The current study demonstrates that such perceptions are partly shaped by the way news coverage is interpreted by minority audiences and by the perceived influence of that coverage. The results thus enrich our understanding of the sources of minority alienation. Although this is an attitudinal, rather than a behavioral construct, it is important to note that this construct was associated in other research with constructs like distress and with support for illegal protest (e.g., Nachmias, 1974) and thus is likely to have severe implications for social integration.

Interestingly, HMPs had a stronger influence than presumed influence in the process described in the current examination. Other than the fact that their effect on perceived image was more than double the effect of presumed influence, their total effect was substantially larger due to the fact that they affected the dependent variable

directly. The more important role played by HMPs in alienation may be due to the fact that respondents perceived media coverage to be reflective of future trends toward Arabs. An alternative explanation is that media coverage represented an elite viewpoint or was viewed as part of the Israeli establishment. This may also be the reason for the direct effect of HMPs on alienation: What media say about Arabs may be perceived as part of institutional discrimination against Arabs.

Interestingly, exposure to mainstream Israeli media was not associated with any of the endogenous variables in this study, including HMPs and presumed influence. Still, such perceptions of media influence or of hostile coverage do not necessarily depend on the *amount* of exposure, if we think they may occur as a result of brief encounters of Arab audiences with the headlines of Israeli newspapers on their way to work, or as they watch Israeli television while zapping between Arab stations. In this sense, some minimal “floor” effects of exposure cannot be negated in the current investigation.

It is worthwhile to note that, somewhat surprisingly, and in contrast to exposure to mainstream Israeli media, exposure to Arab media was significantly associated with HMPs. Nonmainstream media often operate as outlets for political frustration and are often highly critical and cynical toward mainstream media (Tsfati & Peri, 2006). Thus, the findings point out to the possible contribution of exposure to such nonmainstream outlets to minority perceptions of mainstream media portrayals, as well as to their more general social alienation. Examining the causal direction in these associations requires further examination.

The study was conducted in the context of an extremely ego-involved group—Israeli Arabs—and this raises the question of whether or not the findings are generalizable to less ego-involving circumstances, a question which cannot be fully answered before the current hypotheses are examined in additional contexts. Scholarship on generalizability, however (Shapiro, 2002), points to the importance of examining theories under extreme conditions as part of what is called “boundary search,” and this search should continue in future research. At present, we can still generalize from the current investigation to many other ego-involving circumstances (e.g., Tamils in Sri Lanka, Kurds in Turkey, Bosnian Serbs in the 1990s, etc.).

As any other study, this study is not free of limitations. First, as any other correlational method, structural equation modeling does not offer us decisive causal evidence. Second, given space limitations, one of the main variables—presumed media influence—was measured using a single item. Third, given the low correlation between items measuring exposure to different media, the reliability coefficients for the exposure to Israeli media measure was rather low.

The practical implication of the present findings for adherents of social integration is perhaps that media systems should provide minority groups with the feeling that they receive fair media access. However, HMP research demonstrates that even when a group is treated relatively fairly, members of that group perceive the coverage to be more hostile than others. Another possibility for adherents of social integration is thus to target the feeling that media coverage is highly influential. It is a difficult challenge to bring public perceptions of media impact more in line with decades of

research that has found this impact to be limited, but current findings suggest that it is an important and necessary challenge.

Acknowledgments

Data for this study were collected as part of an MA thesis project conducted by Roi Estlein at the Department of Communication, University of Haifa, supervised by the author. The author thanks Mr. Estlein for his hard work on the design and translation of the survey instrument. The author also thanks the anonymous reviewers, Dr. Badi Hasisi, and Dr. Jonathan Cohen for their comments and ideas.

Notes

- 1 Although this is true about cultivation research in general, some cultivation research, especially on communication and aging, does speak to the notion of minority alienation (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, & Morgan, 1979; see also Weimann, 2000, p. 218).
- 2 Outcome rates, calculated in accordance with AAPOR guidelines, were: response rate 1 = .47; cooperation rate 1 = .66; and refusal rate 1 = .09.
- 3 Population parameters for the Arab adult population, as calculated from the Israeli Statistical Yearbook are 49.5% female, $M_{age} = 37.09$. The median schooling for adult Israeli Arabs is 11.40 years. The corresponding figure in the sample was 12.00.
- 4 Indicator 1 was the average of Items 3, 4, and 6; Indicator 2 was the average of Items 1 and 7; Indicator 3 was the average of Items 2 and 5.
- 5 A possible critique would ask whether the construct of alienation is empirically separate from that of perceived image and of HMPs. According to this possible critique, feeling that out-group members think of one's group negatively and that media cover the group in a negative manner is an integral part of the construct of alienation, rather than the cause of it. To demonstrate that the three constructs are indeed separate, all 18 survey items used to measure the three constructs were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (Principal Components, Varimax). A clear four-factor structure emerged from the analysis, explaining 56.2% of the variance. The items measuring alienation and HMPs, as described above, loaded on separate factors. The items measuring perceived image demonstrated the same factor structure that emerged when analyzing these items separately, and loaded on two factors, as described above. Thus, the analysis demonstrated that the construct of alienation is empirically separate from the constructs representing HMPs and perceived image.
- 6 Item 3 served as the first indicator. Indicator 2 was the average of Items 1 and 4; Indicator 3 was the average of Items 2 and 5.
- 7 A full list of the 41 items and the results of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) are available from the author.
- 8 Mainstream outlets include outlets broadcast in Arabic (e.g., Voice of Israel).
- 9 Arab Internet news outlets, two measures of exposure to Israeli Arab newspapers, two measures of exposure to Arab television stations—one representing exposure to pan-Arab networks such as Al-Jazeera and the other representing exposure to national television outlets from neighboring countries—and a measure of exposure to news on Arab radio stations, both Israeli Arab and other Arab radio stations.

- 10 In this previous research, exposure to Israeli news media loaded together with Israeli news media. Also, the authors conducted an experts' survey and a survey of the general public in order to validate a typology of Israeli media to mainstream and nonmainstream. In both cases, national Israeli television stations were identified as mainstream organizations compared with the Arab speaking outlets that were identified as nonmainstream.
- 11 The exclusion of the mainstream Israeli television news from the exposure from the Arab news construct did not affect the reliability of this variable. On the other hand, the exclusion of the mainstream Israeli television news factor from the exposure to Israeli TV news construct reduced the reliability of this variable to $\alpha = .66$.
- 12 A model with a direct path from presumed media influence to alienation was compared to a model without such a path. The chi-square difference score was .22 ($df = 1$; $p = .63$). Because a nonsignificant result in model building supports the simpler model, the direct path from presumed influence to alienation was removed.
- 13 A model with a direct path from HMPs to alienation was compared with a model without such a path. The chi-square difference score was 5.03 ($df = 1$; $p = .02$). Because a significant result in model building supports the retention of the added paths, the direct path was added to the model.
- 14 In the case of the indirect effect of HMPs on alienation through perceived image, the bootstrap estimate was .1293 ($SE = .043$). In the case of the indirect effect of presumed influence on alienation through perceived image, the bootstrap estimate was .0926 ($SE = .028$). In the case of the indirect effect of HMPs on perceived image through presumed influence, the bootstrap estimate was .0900 ($SE = .035$).

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Appendix 1 ML estimates for control variables

	Perceived Image	Political Alienation
Sex	.03 (.10)	-.01 (.10)
Age	.01 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Education	.02 (.02)	.00 (.02)
Number of children	-.01 (.03)	.02 (.03)
Income	.03 (.04)	-.03 (.04)
Secularity	.21 (.11) [#]	.03 (.12)
Urban	.06 (.09)	.07 (.10)
Social ties with Jews	-.02 (.04)	.07 (.04) [#]
Arab Israeli identity important	.03 (.03)	-.09 (.04) [*]
Voted for an Arab party	-.11 (.14)	.20 (.15)
Did not vote in parliamentary elections	.00 (.13)	.01 (.14)
Zionist movement is racist	.14 (.04) ^{***}	.06 (.04)
Arabs' situation dramatically improved	.02 (.03)	-.06 (.04) [#]

Note: Table entries are unstandardized coefficients. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

*** $p < .001$. * $p < .05$. [#] $p < .10$.

Perceptions des médias hostiles, influence présumée des médias et aliénation des minorités : Le cas des Arabes en Israël

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Résumé

Cet article examine la notion selon laquelle les perceptions qu'ont des minorités de la forte influence d'une couverture médiatique biaisée puissent, indirectement, mener à une aliénation plus grande de ces minorités. Cette idée fut testée dans le contexte de la stigmatisation médiatique perçue par des citoyens arabes en Israël. Utilisant la modélisation par équation structurelle ($N=251$), il est démontré que, indépendamment de variables idéologiques, sociales et démographiques, les perceptions médiatiques hostiles et l'influence perçue de la couverture médiatique avaient une incidence sur l'image perçue des Arabes et, partant, sur leur aliénation sociale. Élément intéressant, le niveau d'exposition aux principaux médias israéliens n'a joué aucun rôle significatif dans ce processus. Toutefois, l'exposition aux médias arabes a eu un impact significatif sur les perceptions d'une couverture hostile.

Feindselige Medienwahrnehmungen, ein unterstellter Einfluss der Medien und die Entfremdung von Minderheiten. Der Fall der Araber in Israel

Der Beitrag untersucht die Annahme, dass die Wahrnehmung eines starken Einflusses einer verzerrten Medienberichterstattung bei einer Minderheit indirekt dazu führen kann, dass die Entfremdung dieser Minderheit zunimmt. Diese Annahme wurde im Kontext der wahrgenommenen Stigmatisierung von arabischen Bürgern in Israel untersucht. Mittels Strukturgleichungsmodellen (N=251) wird gezeigt, dass über den Einfluss von ideologischen, sozialen und soziodemographischen Variablen hinaus, die feindselige Medienwahrnehmung und der wahrgenommene Einfluss der Medienberichterstattung das Bild der Araber und folglich ihre soziale Entfremdung beeinflusst. Interessanterweise, spielte der Umfang der Nutzung der israelischen Hauptmedien keine signifikante Rolle in diesem Prozess. Allerdings beeinflusste die Nutzung arabischer Medien signifikant die Wahrnehmung einer feindseligen Berichterstattung.

Las Percepciones Hostiles de los Medios, la Influencia Presunta de los Medios, y la Alienación de las Minorías: El Caso de los Árabes en Israel

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Resumen

Este artículo examina la noción de que las percepciones de la minoría sobre la fuerte influencia de la cobertura tendenciosa de los medios pueden conducir indirectamente a un incremento de la alienación de la minoría. Ésta idea fue puesta a prueba en el contexto de la estigmatización percibida de los medios hacia los ciudadanos Árabes en Israel. Usando un Modelo de Ecuación Estructural ($N=251$), se demuestra que, por encima de los efectos de las variables ideológicas, sociales y demográficas, las percepciones hostiles de los medios y la influencia percibida de la cobertura de los medios afectó la imagen percibida de los Árabes, y consecuentemente su alineación social. Es interesante notar que la cantidad de exposición a la corriente dominante de los medios Israelíes no jugó un papel significativo en este proceso. No obstante, la exposición a los medios árabes afectó significativamente las percepciones de cobertura hostil.

敌对性媒介感知，预设性媒介影响和少数群体边缘化：以色列的阿拉伯人个案分析

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本文检测少数群体认为媒体偏见的强烈影响可能间接导致他们的进一步边缘化。研究针对的是以色列阿拉伯裔市民的预知性媒介耻辱化。通过结构平等模式分析（N=251），本研究证明：相比意识形态、社会及人口性因素的变量，敌对性媒介感知和媒介报道的预知性影响对阿拉伯人的预知形象有影响，而导致他们的社会边缘化。有趣的是，接触以色列主流媒体的频率对上述关系并无重要影响，但接触阿拉伯媒体显著影响了对敌对性报道的感知。

적대적인 미디어 인식들, 가정된 미디어 영향, 그리고 소수자 소외에 관한 연구:

이스라엘내 아랍인들의 경우에 관한 사례분석

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요약

본 연구는 편향된 미디어 보도의 강력한 영향력에 대한 소수자 개념은 간접적으로 소수자 소외감을 증가시킬수 있다는 개념을 연구하였다. 본 아이디어는 이스라엘내에 있는 아랍시민의 인지된 미디어 비난 상황에서 연구되었다. 구조적 균형 모델 (N=251)을 이용, 본 연구는 이념적, 사회적, 그리고 인종적 변수들의 효과를 뛰어넘어, 적대적인 미디어 개념들과 미디어 보도의 인지된 영향력들이 아랍인들의 인지된 이미지에 영향을 준다는 것과 결과적으로 그들의 사회적 소외감을 이끌어낸다는 것을 증명하였다. 흥미있게도, 주요 이스라엘 미디어에 대한 노출정도는 이 과정에서 중요한 역할을 하지 않았다. 그러나 아랍 미디어에 대한 노출은 중요한 정도로 호전적인 보도 인식에 영향을 미친 것으로 나타났다.