

Tidying Up Attitudes, Queer Eye Style:
Parasocial Contact with Asian Women and Gay Men

Shay Xuejing Yao, Morgan E. Ellithorpe, Liam Cuddy, Aysha Siddika, Hira Nadeem, and
Mackenzie Myer

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Author Note

Shay Xuejing Yao, PhD candidate, Department of Communication, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, U.S., shayyao@msu.edu, ORCID 0000-0003-2664-7462

Morgan Ellithorpe, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, U.S., mellitho@udel.edu, ORCID 0000-0002-0317-9267

Liam Cuddy, Master Student, Department of Communication, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, U.S., lmcuddy@udel.edu

Aysha Siddika, PhD Student, Department of Communication, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, U.S., asiddika@udel.edu

Hira Nadeem, PhD Student, Department of Communication, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, U.S., hnadeem@udel.edu

Mackenzie Myer, Master Student, Department of Communication, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, U.S., mmyer@udel.edu

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Shay Xuejing Yao, Department of Communication, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, 48824, U.S. Contact: shayyao@msu.edu

Abstract

The Parasocial Contact Hypotheses (PCH) posits that mediated contact with social outgroups can result in more positive attitudes. The present study includes Asian women as a specific identity group that has yet to be studied in the context of PCH. It also includes gay men as a comparison group for the same processes. Participants (n=241) were exposed in a two-condition experiment to either *Queer Eye* (2018 version; gay men as target group) or *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* (Asian women as target group). Only social attraction significantly mediated the relationship between exposure to *Queer Eye* and attitudes toward gay men. Attitudes toward Asian women were measured with positive and negative subscales; social and task attraction significantly mediated a reduction in negative attitudes. Uncertainty reduction had an ambivalence effect; it mediated increases in both positive and negative attitudes. These results support the general hypothesis of PCH, with mixed effects.

Keywords: parasocial contact, mediated contact, outgroup attitudes, Asian women, gay men

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*"It's not easy to say, 'this is me, this is what I represent.' It's a process and you will know this better than anybody, but some days it's really hard and then I remember that I'm in a position to influence people." - Tan France, *Queer Eye**

As Tan France of *Queer Eye* suggests, it is possible for celebrities and media characters to be treated as representatives of salient social identity groups, and for exposure to them to influence attitudes toward those groups. Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT) predicts that intergroup prejudice can be reduced through interpersonal contact between members of different groups (Allport et al., 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew et al., 2011). A disconnect between a person's stereotypical beliefs about an outgroup and the behaviors exhibited by the outgroup exemplar may modify beliefs and attitudes toward the exemplar as well as the outgroup as a whole. Stemming from ICT, the Parasocial Contact Hypothesis (PCH) predicts that such prejudice reduction through intergroup contact can occur via *parasocial* contact with exemplar outgroup members in mass media (Schiappa et al., 2005). In the context of television, parasocial contact exhibits as a one-sided connection between the audience and media figures, where the audience may form a relationship with the media figures based on their exposure media content instead of direct interpersonal interaction (Schiappa et al., 2005; Schiappa et al., 2007). In the present study exposure to positive media portrayals of the target groups of gay men or Asian women is expected to help people from other identity groups form positive impressions and relationships with these target groups, and consequently they are expected to display more positive attitudes toward these groups.

Recent research testing the PCH has largely found support for the assertion that parasocial interaction is one mechanism by which mediated contact with outgroup members is associated with reduced prejudice and discrimination. A recent meta-analysis of mediated intergroup contact (Banas et al., 2020) found that positive mediated contact had a significant ameliorating effect on prejudice. Notably, this effect was similar regardless of whether the theoretical perspective was parasocial contact or vicarious contact. Parasocial contact focuses on the mediated contact between an ingroup viewer and an outgroup media character, while vicarious contact focuses on when ingroup and outgroup characters interact in media and that interaction is vicariously experienced by the viewer (Joyce & Harwood, 2014). There has been a relative proliferation of parasocial contact research in the past two years, with multiple studies finding positive effects on attitudes and policy preferences regarding sex and gender minorities (Birchmore & Kettrey, 2021; Bond, 2021; Massey et al., 2021; McDermott et al., 2018), people with mental health disorders (Wong et al., 2017), Muslims (Alrababa'h et al., 2021), and Black Americans (Stamps & Sahlman, 2021).

Media Representation of Gay Men

Content analyses based in the United States have found that, compared to their estimated prevalence rates in the society, LGBTQ+ individuals in general are significantly underrepresented in mass media (Fouts & Inch, 2005; Raley & Lucas, 2006). However, in recent years media representation of LGBTQ+ characters have increased both in quantity and quality. The GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) annual reports showed that in the 2020-2021 season nearly ten percent of all regular characters in broadcast television were identified as LGBTQ+ (Townsend & Deerwater, 2021), which was more than double the amount

ten years ago (Kane et al., 2011). A majority of these LGBTQ+ regular characters on broadcast television are gay men (Townsend & Deerwater, 2021).

Research has found portrayals of gay men, while improving, sometimes include stereotypical archetypes and tropes. For example, gay men have traditionally been used for comic relief (Raley & Lucas, 2006). Additional media portrayals of gay men identified in past research include flamboyant, feminine, and sometimes overdramatic characters (e.g., Jack from *Will and Grace*; Cameron from *Modern Family*) or the heteronormative, non-sexual characters who have successful careers (e.g., Will from *Will and Grace*; Mitch from *Modern Family*; (Rothmann, 2013; van Meer & Pollmann, 2021). However, recent research has recognized that gay characters, including gay men, have been represented with a wider variety of roles and more positive portrayals (Bond, 2014). There are more depictions of affection (e.g., holding hands) and sexual behaviors (e.g., kissing) between LGBTQ+ characters (Cook, 2018), and many of these depictions are validating in nature rather than demeaning (Bond, 2014). Studies have found that exposure to gay men in mass media help reduce negative attitudes and homophobia (Schiappa et al., 2005, 2006; Sink & Mastro, 2018). However, it should be noted that not all research has found positive effects of exposure (Golom & Mohr, 2011).

Media Representation of Asian Women

Asian women have been underrepresented and misrepresented in mass media (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Mok, 1998). Historically, Asian women are represented with exoticized, hypersexualized archetypes such as the “lotus blossom” (a woman who is utterly feminine, docile, and sometimes helpless) or the “dragon lady” (a woman who is cunning, manipulative, and seductive; Brooks & Hebert, 2006; Tajima, 1989). Asian Americans, including Asian American women, have also been portrayed as the “model minority” who manage to gain

success in American society with their own hard work instead of government support (Osajima, 2005; Wong & Halgin, 2006). More recent Asian women stereotypes that have emerged from mass media include the “book-smart, ‘brainy’, and tech-savvy” types (e.g., Lucy Liu from *Ally McBeal*; Sun et al., 2015, p. 299) and the “tiger mom” (e.g., Constance Wu from *Fresh Off the Boat*; Stamps, 2019). Despite the recurring stereotypes represented in mass media, there have been alternative, diverse portrayals of Asian women characters such as Marie Kondo from *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* and Sandra Oh from *Grey’s Anatomy* (Sun et al., 2015). These characters challenge the traditional Asian woman stereotypes and represent this social group in more positive light.

There is limited research linking media exposure with attitudes toward Asian women. Media effects research targeting Asians or Asian Americans in general tends to find negative effects. For example, one study found that more overall television use is associated with stronger intergroup anxiety regarding Asians (Atwell Seate et al., 2018). Similarly, another found that White American college students who internalized television stereotypes reported stronger beliefs in Asian American stereotypes and perceived Asian failures more as an internal attribution (Ramasubramanian, 2011). These results, although concerning, focused on Asians in general and may not accurately reflect how media consumption influences attitudes toward Asian women in particular. More research is needed to focus on the effect of media exposure on prejudice toward Asian women as a specific identity group.

Present Research and Hypotheses

The current study is an extension of Study 2 reported by Schiappa et al. (2005), in which they assigned participants to watch *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (2003-2007) and measured the five hypothesized mechanisms for PCH processes on group attitudes. *Queer Eye* (2018-

present) was selected in the current study as a modern update to the original *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (2003-2007) series used by Schiappa et al. (2005) in Study 2. Similar to the original series, *Queer Eye* features the “Fab Five” – five style experts who offer advice and help to those who are interested in lifestyle makeovers – who explicitly identify themselves as gay men. The central role of the “Fab Five” in the show and the favorable portrayals of the characters make *Queer Eye* ideal for the present research. The other show selected was *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, which was selected for two reasons. First, *Tidying Up* is the same genre of television as *Queer Eye* in that they are both reality shows in which the hosts enable guests by helping them to learn self-help and life skills. Secondly, *Tidying Up* showcases a positive representation of Asian women. Marie Kondo, the organizing consultant, is a skillful and respected character in the show, and the portrayal of whom deviates from the Asian women stereotypes such as being hyper-feminine and subservient (Brooks & Hebert, 2006). Asian women was selected as the second target group partially because Asian Americans have been the targets of a wave of hate crimes and prejudice in the United States in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bekiempis, 2021; Chiu, 2021). In addition, Asian women as a specific intersectional group have been understudied both as a target group for attitudes and in terms of portrayals in media (Mok, 1998; Brooks & Hebert, 2006).

In the 2005 study, the authors found support for effects of parasocial contact through the mediating mechanisms of social attraction, physical attraction, task attraction, and perceived homophily, which was tested via correlations between these variables and prejudice (Schiappa et al., 2005). The authors also tested uncertainty reduction but did not report a significant correlation. Schiappa et al. (2005) refer to these five factors (perceived homophily, social attraction, physical attraction, task attraction, and uncertainty reduction) as “underlying

mechanisms”, and call for future research to engage in “greater elaboration and specification of the most important elements of parasocial contact for inducing attitude change” (p. 112). Based on this wording, in the current study we treat these variables as mediators of the relationship between exposure and attitudes. Therefore, we present our hypotheses as follows, first predicting an influence of exposure to characters belonging to the target identity group on the five mechanism variables, and then predicting that those mechanism variables will mediate the relationship between exposure and attitudes. Rather than use a pre-test post-test design and change scores, which is how Schiappa et al. (2005) tested the mediating mechanisms of the parasocial variables, we performed an experiment where each exposure condition (*Queer Eye* or *Tidying Up*) acted as the other’s control group (see method below for more detail).

H1: Exposure to *Queer Eye* will be associated with increased a) uncertainty reduction for the Fab Five, b) social attraction for the Fab Five, c) task attraction for the Fab Five, d) physical attraction for the Fab Five, and e) perceived homophily for the Fab Five compared to exposure to the control group.

H2: Exposure to *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* will be associated with increased a) uncertainty reduction for Marie Kondo, b) social attraction for Marie Kondo, c) task attraction for Marie Kondo, d) physical attraction for Marie Kondo, and e) perceived homophily for Marie Kondo compared to exposure to the control group.

H3: Exposure to *Queer Eye* will be associated with more positive attitudes toward gay men compared to exposure to the control group, mediated by a) uncertainty reduction for the Fab Five, b) social attraction for the Fab Five, c) task attraction for the Fab Five, d) physical attraction for the Fab Five, and e) perceived homophily for the Fab Five.

H4: Exposure to *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* will be associated with more positive attitudes toward Asian women compared to exposure to the control group, mediated by a) uncertainty reduction for Marie Kondo, b) social attraction for Marie Kondo, c) task attraction for Marie Kondo, d) physical attraction for Marie Kondo, and e) perceived homophily for Marie Kondo.

Methods

Participants

Participants were 241 undergraduate students ($M_{age}=20.11$ years, $SD=3.08$) at [UNIVERSITY BLINDED] who participated for course credit. They identified as 190 (78.84%) female, 48 (19.92%) male, and 3 (1.24%) non-binary or other. Sexuality identity was measured due to the target group of gay men; 202 participants (83.82%) identified as heterosexual/straight, 24 (9.95%) identified as bisexual or pansexual, 5 (2.07%) identified as homosexual/gay man/lesbian woman, and 10 (4.15%) identified as something else, preferred not to say, or had missing data. Racial and ethnic identities of the sample included 177 (73.44%) White, 19 (7.88%) Asian or Pacific Islander, 19 (7.88%) multiracial, 12 (4.98%) Black or African American, 8 (3.32%) Hispanic or Latino, 3 (1.24%) Arab or Middle Eastern, and 3 (1.24%) other or prefer not to answer. Only participants who identified as heterosexual ($n=202$) were included in analyses where gay men were the target group, and participants who identified as Asian, including Asian as part of a multiracial identity ($n=22$), were not included in analyses where Asian women were the target group. Prior exposure to the two shows was also measured, with 42.11% having seen at least one episode of *Queer Eye* and 12.98% having seen at least one episode of *Tidying Up*.¹

¹ A version of the analysis was run with previous exposure included as a covariate. Results are unchanged from the version reported in the manuscript without controlling for exposure; output from this analysis can be found on OSF (AUTHORS, 2022).

Design and Procedure

The study was a two condition between-subjects experiment with random assignment, with a twist. Half of participants watched the first two episodes of the *Queer Eye* 2018 version, and the other half watched the first two episodes of *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, with each acting as the other's control condition. This is due to statistical concerns with change scores (e.g., see Tennant et al., 2022) and a practical issue with performing multi-part surveys with a student participant pool. This decision also allowed for direct comparisons between conditions for comparing exposure to one content vs. a control without the use of an unrelated control. For example, Schiappa et al. (2005)'s study 3 used a control condition which watched a lecture on public speaking – arguably a very different entertainment experience and less comparable to a show like *Queer Eye*. *Queer Eye* and *Tidying Up*, however, were selected for their genre and tone similarities while varying the target social group for exposure. This made them more comparable and arguably increased the likelihood that any effects were due to the exposure to the target group rather than any aspect of the media experience that is known to cause positivity, such as the emotional experience of elevation (Oliver et al., 2015).

After providing informed consent to participate online, participants were asked to confirm that they were in a position to watch 90 minutes of programming and answer survey questions in a single sitting and that they had working sound on their device. Those who indicated that they could not complete the study in one sitting were exited from the study and asked to return later when they could complete it all at once. They then answered demographic questions and were shown a test video (of colors and white noise) to verify they could play video with sound on their device. They were then randomly assigned to *Queer Eye* or *Tidying Up with*

Marie Kondo. Participants were discreetly timed in their watching of the episodes, and those who watched for less than one minute were not included in analysis ($n=24$).

Participants then answered survey questions measuring the parasocial contact hypothesis mechanisms of uncertainty reduction, physical attraction, social attraction, task attraction, and perceived homophily, followed by attitude measures. Participants who indicated they identified as a sexuality other than heterosexual were not asked to answer the attitude questions about gay men, and participants who identified as Asian were not asked to answer the attitude questions about Asian women; this was to avoid discomfort associated with responding to prejudiced items relevant to one's own identity. All remaining participants answered the five mechanism measures about both the Fab Five from *Queer Eye* and Marie Kondo from *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, who then answered measures on their attitudes toward gay men and Asian women. The target groups of Fab Five/gay men and Marie Kondo/Asian women were counterbalanced with random assignment. Therefore, order became a possible factor – half of those in the *Queer Eye* condition answered about the relevant targets (Fab Five/gay men) first, while the other half answered second; similarly, half of those in the *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* condition answered about the relevant targets (Marie Kondo/Asian women) first, while the other half answered second. Finally, participants answered an attention check question (all those who watched more than a minute of the program passed), provided their participant ID codes for credit, and received debriefing information about the purpose of the study.

Measures

Measures for the theoretical mechanisms of uncertainty reduction, physical attraction, social attraction, task attraction, and perceived homophily all specify the characters with which the parasocial contact occurs (i.e., the Fab Five, Marie Kondo); this is in accordance with the

procedures from Schiappa et al. (2005). These mechanism measures were also the same measures used by Schiappa et al. (2005). Attitude measures are toward the target group in general (i.e., gay men, Asian women). Participants were told before each set of questions that the questions regarded the Fab Five from *Queer Eye* and Marie Kondo from *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, and to “please answer the questions to the best of your ability, even if you have never seen the show before”.

Uncertainty Reduction

Uncertainty reduction was measured using a seven-item scale, and repeated for both the Fab Five as a target and Marie Kondo as a target (Kellermann & Reynolds, 1990). The scale was anchored on a 0 “not well at all” to 10 “very well” scale, and a sample item is, “How confident are you of your general ability to predict how [the Fab Five/Marie Kondo] will behave?” (Fab Five $M=5.16$, $SD=2.37$, Cronbach $\alpha=.95$; Marie Kondo $M=4.15$, $SD=2.47$, Cronbach $\alpha=.94$).

Physical, Social, and Task Attraction

Attraction was measured using five-item subscales for physical attraction, social attraction, and task attraction (McCroskey & McCain, 1974), measured on scales from -5 “strongly disagree” to +5 “strongly agree”. These items were also repeated for each of the Fab Five and Marie Kondo as targets. A sample item for physical attraction is, “I find [the Fab Five/Marie Kondo] very attractive physically” (Fab Five $M=1.78$, $SD=2.01$, Cronbach $\alpha=.84$; Marie Kondo $M=1.37$, $SD=1.58$, Cronbach $\alpha=.73$). A sample item for social attraction is, “I think [the Fab Five/Marie Kondo] could be friends of mine” (Fab Five $M=2.76$, $SD=1.92$, Cronbach $\alpha=.86$; Marie Kondo $M=1.37$, $SD=1.58$, Cronbach $\alpha=.75$). A sample item for task attraction is, “I have confidence in [the Fab Five’s/Marie Kondo’s] ability to get the job done”

(Fab Five $M=2.64$, $SD=1.84$, Cronbach $\alpha=.82$; Marie Kondo $M=2.72$, $SD=2.02$, Cronbach $\alpha=.91$).

Perceived Homophily

Perceived homophily was measured using a sixteen-item semantic differential scale measured with 7 response options between anchors (McCroskey et al., 1975). An example semantic differential item anchor pair is “does not think like me-----thinks like me”.

Participants were prompted to respond twice, once thinking about the Fab Five ($M=3.69$, $SD=0.95$, Cronbach $\alpha=.88$) and once thinking about Marie Kondo ($M=3.60$, $SD=0.85$, Cronbach $\alpha=.87$).

Attitudes Toward Gay Men

Attitudes toward gay men were measured using the Heterosexuals' Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbian Women scales, only using the ten-item attitudes toward gay men subscale (Herek, 1988), anchored on -5 “strongly disagree” to +5 “strongly agree” ($M=3.53$, $SD=1.76$, Cronbach $\alpha=.86$). A sample item is, “Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned”.

Attitudes Toward Asian Women

Attitudes toward Asian women were measured using the Attitudes Toward Asian Americans scale, modified to specify Asian women rather than Asian Americans in general. This was done because no scale specifically about attitudes toward Asian women was found by the research team. The scale has positive and negative subscales, and measurement was anchored on -5 “strongly disagree” to +5 “strongly agree” (positive attitudes $M=1.47$, $SD=1.71$, Cronbach $\alpha=.92$; negative attitudes $M=-3.69$, $SD=1.61$, Cronbach $\alpha=.96$). A sample positive attitude item

is, “Asian women tend to be hardworking and diligent” and a sample negative attitude item is, “Asian women are becoming more economically successful than they should be”.

Results

Analyses were conducted using saturated path analysis in Stata 14.0 using SEM commands and maximum likelihood estimation. There are no fit indices to report for saturated models. The models were tested as parallel mediation models with condition as the predictor variable, the five theoretical mechanisms (uncertainty reduction, physical attraction, social attraction, task attraction, and perceived homophily) as parallel mediators, and attitudes as the outcome (single measure for gay men, positive and negative attitudes separate for Asian women in accordance with the intention of the measures used). Error terms for endogenous variables were allowed to covary within each stage (i.e., the five mediators error terms together, and positive and negative attitudes toward Asian women error terms together). Analyses were conducted separately for gay men and Asian women as the target group. Condition was coded such that *Queer Eye* was 0 and *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* was 1; therefore, negative results on mediators and attitudes toward gay men indicate a positive change, while positive results on mediators and attitudes toward Asian women indicate a positive change. Indirect effects testing was conducted using the nlcom command in Stata 14.0 and 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrap samples.

Group Invariance Test for Order

An initial check for order as a significant factor was conducted by setting order as a group factor on the analyses for each model, gay men and Asian women as target groups. Wald tests for invariance were conducted post hoc to determine if order was a significant group difference on any path in the model. No Wald tests were significant for any path for either target

group model (full output available as a supplemental file). Therefore, order was collapsed and treated as a covariate for the main analysis.

Path Analysis for Mediation

Full statistical results for the path analyses can be found in Table 1 for the Fab Five/gay men as target and in Table 2 for Marie Kondo/Asian women as target.

Gay Men as the Target Group

Exposure to *Queer Eye*, compared to exposure to *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, was associated with significantly more uncertainty reduction, physical attraction, social attraction, and task attraction for the Fab Five. There was not, however, a significant association between watching *Queer Eye* compared to *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* on perceived homophily for the Fab Five. Based on this, H1a-d were supported, but H1e was not. Furthermore, only social attraction was significantly associated with more positive attitudes toward gay men, with a significant indirect effect of $b=-0.25$, 95% CI [-0.67, -0.04]. Thus, only H3b was supported and H3a and H3c-e were not supported.

Asian Women as the Target Group

Exposure to *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, compared to exposure to *Queer Eye*, was associated with significantly more uncertainty reduction and task attraction for Marie Kondo, and marginally significant social attraction in that $p=.050$ but the 95% confidence interval contains zero [-0.001, 1.02]. There was not, however, a significant association between watching *Tidying Up* compared to *Queer Eye* on physical attraction or perceived homophily for Marie Kondo. Based on this, H2a and H2c were supported, H2b was weakly/marginally supported, and H2d and H2e were not supported. In predicting positive attitudes toward Asian women, uncertainty reduction and physical attraction were both associated with significantly more

positive attitudes. Of those, only uncertainty reduction was associated significantly with exposure to *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, with a significant indirect effect of $b=0.56$, 95% CI [0.20,0.97]. In predicting negative attitudes toward Asian women, social attraction and task attraction were associated with significantly less negative attitudes toward Asian women. There was a significant indirect effect of exposure through social attraction $b=-0.10$, 95% CI [-0.26, -0.004], and through task attraction, $b=-0.66$, 95% CI [-1.07, -0.31,]. There was also, surprisingly, a significant and positive relationship between uncertainty reduction and negative attitudes, such that more uncertainty reduction was associated with more negative attitudes. There was also a significant indirect effect of exposure on negative attitudes through uncertainty reduction, $b=0.53$, 95% CI [0.19, 0.91]. Thus, uncertainty reduction appears to have had an ambivalence effect in the context of attitudes toward Asian women, being significantly related to increased positive and increased negative attitudes.

Discussion

Previous research has demonstrated mediated exposure to outgroup members through parasocial contact to be an effective approach to reduce intergroup prejudice (PCH; Schiappa et al., 2015). The present study extends prior PCH research by conceptually replicating Schiappa et al. with gay men as the target group and an additional target group – Asian women. Results indicated a mixed influence of exposure on the five mediators (uncertainty reduction, perceived homophily, and social, physical, and task attraction), as well as a limited influence on attitudes. Specifically, only social attraction significantly mediated the relationship between exposure and attitudes toward gay men. When Asian women were the target group, task attraction and social attraction mediated a relationship between exposure and less negative attitudes. Uncertainty

reduction had an ambivalence effect in that it mediated the effect of exposure on both increased positive attitudes but also increased negative attitudes.

The findings of this study generally support the crux of PCH (Schiappa et al., 2005), in that mediated contact with outgroup members was associated with changes in attitudes and, for the most part, positive attitudes. However, not all of the theoretical mechanisms were supported in this study, and the effects were different when gay men were the target group compared to Asian women. When gay men was the target group, only social attraction was significantly associated with increased positive attitudes. But when Asian women was the target group, uncertainty reduction, physical attraction, social attraction, and task attraction all contributed to significant changes in attitudes toward the target group. These inconsistent findings emphasize that exposure through media portrayals and PCH can reduce prejudice and discrimination against minority groups such as the LGBTQ+ community and Asian women, but it also indicates that there is still work to be done to understand the mechanisms more fully. Indeed, previous research has also found discrepancy regarding the roles of the five mediating mechanisms in the PCH process (e.g., Schiappa et al., 2005, Study 2 and 3), but this discrepancy could be attributed to specific stimuli content, specific samples, or other factors that are more generally applicable to the target groups. Unfortunately, we do not have empirical data to test these possibilities in the current study. Future research should continue investigating the PCH process with gay men and Asian women as target groups with different media stimuli and audience populations to test whether our results replicate. Additionally, the place for uncertainty reduction in this process needs to be considered more specifically in future research, as the current study found ambivalence effects, while other studies have found no effects (e.g., Schiappa et al., 2005) or positive effects (Madison, 2013).

It is also important to highlight that the current research focused on parasocial contact in the context of television, which is a strictly one-sided contact where audience engages with media figures through imagining interaction only. With parasocial contact in the context of television, there is no “real” interaction at all (except for when audience uses other channels to interact with the media figures such as writing letters). More recently, social media has become another popular communication channel for parasocial contact and parasocial relationships where users engage with media figures such as “influencers” and other types of celebrities. With social media, it is possible for users to directly interact with media figures, although the lasting bond that goes beyond the rare responses from the media figures is still very much one-sided. Thus, the current findings on the effects of parasocial contact with gay men and Asian women may or may not apply to other channels such as social media.

Limitations and Future Research

One of the five variables used to mediate the relationship between exposure and attitude was uncertainty reduction. However, the ambivalent effect shown by this variable demands clarity. Other research has found that uncertainty reduction is a crucial facilitator for effective parasocial relationships in terms of contact (Lissitsa & Kushnirovich, 2021), making it even more important to explore the nature of this relationship. Additionally, in our study participants who watched Marie Kondo showed a significant reduction in uncertainty toward Asian women, but the overall average of uncertainty reduction toward this group is still relatively low (i.e., 4.15 on a 10-point scale). Future research in the focal area should consider effect sizes as well as exploring other factors that may influence perceived uncertainty toward this target group.

In the present research attitudes toward Asian women were measured with two subscales – one captures positive attitudes and one captures negative ones, but attitudes toward gay men

were measured with one scale with low scores indicate more negative attitudes and high scores indicate more positive attitudes. This decision was made due to the availability of the existing measurements in the literature; however such a design may fail to capture potential ambivalent attitudes toward gay men (e.g., high positive attitudes *and* high negative attitudes). We recommend researchers in this area to develop measurement scales that are suitable to capture both positive and negative evaluations toward the gay men target group.

Moreover, most of the work using PCH has been done with gay men as the target group, though some studies have looked at other groups such as Black Americans (Stamps & Sahlman, 2021) and Muslims (Alrababa'h et al., 2021). Therefore, there is a need to analyze the impact of mediated messages on various different social groups. In addition, the current study used a university student sample from the United States. This is common in PCH research; however, there is a possibility that attitudes towards gay men and Asian women may differ in the general population. Other work should be done by recruiting a more representative and inclusive sample for greater generalizability. Specifically, more work outside of a United States context should be conducted, as well as within different cultural groups within the United States. For example, one recent study found that cultural differences and ethnocentrism can influence parasocial processes (Hu et al., 2019). Additionally, whether parasocial interaction actually occurred could have differed for individuals in the study; we did not measure parasocial interaction with the outgroup characters, only the PCH mechanisms as laid out by Schiappa et al. (2006). Also, actual contact of the respondents with gay men and Asian women was not measured in this study. Previous research has suggested that real-world contact acts as a moderator of the influence of mediated contact on attitudes (Ramasubramanian, 2015). Thus, both experience of parasocial interaction and actual contact should be included in future studies of this topic.

Another potential limitation lies in the possible priming effects. Prior literature has demonstrated that tasks involving social judgements and evaluations may produce priming effects that last up to one hour (Roskos-Ewoldsen, et al., 2007). In the present study, participants answered racial evaluation related questions immediately after their exposure to stimuli. Additionally, given that each set of stimulus was as long as 90 minutes, it is impossible to rule out the possible confound of priming effects in our findings. The extent to which the present findings point to real attitude changes or priming effects is beyond the scope of our study, however it is critical for the research area of parasocial contact to investigate such a question. Thus we encourage future research to differentiate priming effects from lasting attitude change with longitudinal experimental designs.

Finally, the design of the study, in which each exposure condition acted as the other's control condition, may have diluted the results if exposure to any positive outgroup exemplar is associated with increased positivity toward all groups, not just the target group. While this cannot be entirely ruled out, the fact that there were differences found between condition, and that there were no order effects (in which we would expect whichever group is asked about first to receive the largest increase in positivity), arguably reduces this likelihood. That said, future research should consider a neutral control condition to reduce this possible alternative explanation. In addition, the study's one-shot nature, while similar to Schiappa et al. (2005)'s Studies 2 and 3, may not be as powerful as interventions which have participants watching an entire season of a television show (such as their Study 1). Future research should look to see how much dose matters in this context. Finally, participants were asked to answer the mediator variables referring to TV show personalities they may have never seen before. This means that any responses are difficult to interpret, and could have led to an increased error variance in these

measures, potentially causing Type II error. It is possible that the best interpretation of the responses regarding the show participants did not watch is not as a control for the other show, but instead as impressions of the personalities of the unwatched show based solely on their name and/or any general background knowledge participants had. The lack of effect of controlling for prior exposure, as reported in the method section, reduces concerns about this somewhat as if there was something systematic about answering questions about a show that was not seen should have been reflected in an effect of previous exposure and yet there was none. However, this could remain a limitation in the interpretation of differences by condition.

Conclusion

In a world in which LGBTQ+ persons face both subtle and blatant homophobia and other minority groups like Asian women are subject to discrimination and violence because of their race, the examination of this topic is more relevant now than ever before. The current study contributes to the research about these groups via PCH and suggests that media exposure to these groups can lead to generally more positive perceptions of them. More research is still needed to pinpoint moderating conditions and better understand the mechanisms, but the present study provides further support for PCH and the importance of additional and accurate representations of diverse identities in media.

Research Transparency Statement

The authors are willing to share their data, analytics methods, and study materials with other researchers. The material will be available the Open Science Framework.

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Table 1*Statistical Results from Path Analysis for the Fab Five and Gay Men as the Target Group*

	Uncertainty Reduction		Physical Attraction		Social Attraction		Task Attraction		Perceived Homophily		Attitudes	
	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI
Exposure to <i>Queer Eye</i>	-1.32	-2.05, -0.59	-0.70	-1.31, -0.09	-0.61	-1.19, -0.03	-1.01	-1.54, -0.49	-0.10	-0.40, 0.20	0.22	-0.28, 0.72
Order of Target Group Measures	-0.36	-1.10, 0.38	0.01	-0.60, 0.62	-0.30	-0.88, 0.29	-0.27	-0.80, 0.25	0.09	-0.21, 0.40	0.05	-0.42, 0.52
Uncertainty reduction	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.10	-0.23, 0.02
Physical attraction	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.01	-0.18, 0.15
Social attraction	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.41	0.19, 0.63
Task attraction	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.08	-0.15, 0.31
Perceived homophily	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.11	-0.17, 0.39
<i>R</i> ²	.08		.03		.03		.09		.01		.23	
Indirect Effects	<i>b</i> [95% CI]											
Attitudes	0.14 [-0.02, 0.39]		0.01 [-0.10, 0.13]		-0.25 [-0.70, -0.03]		-0.08 [-0.36, 0.16]		-0.01 [-0.16, 0.03]		--	

Note: *n*=156, coefficients reported are unstandardized, and coefficients significant at *p*<.05 are bolded for ease of interpretation. Indirect effects under each item are the indirect effect of exposure to *Queer Eye* on attitudes through the column's variable as a mediator. Due to coding of exposure variable, negative relationships mean more positive mediators and attitudes.

Table 2

Statistical Results from Path Analysis for Marie Kondo and Asian Women as the Target Group

	Uncertainty reduction		Physical attraction		Social attraction		Task attraction		Perceived homophily		Positive attitudes		Negative attitudes		
	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI	
Exposure to <i>Tidying Up</i>	2.95	2.36, 3.54	0.39	-0.07, 0.84	<i>0.51</i>	<i>-0.00, 1.02</i>	2.06	1.55, 2.56	-0.02	-0.26, 0.21	-0.33	-0.94, 0.27	-0.20	-0.72, 0.32	
Order of Target Group	-0.00	-0.60, 0.59	0.06	-0.39, 0.52	0.14	-0.38, 0.65	-0.06	-0.57, 0.45	0.09	-0.14, 0.32	0.14	-0.31, 0.58	0.09	-0.29, 0.47	
Measures															
Uncertainty reduction	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.19	0.07, 0.31	0.18	0.08, 0.28	
Physical attraction	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.17	0.00, 0.34	-0.09	-0.24, 0.06	
Social attraction	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.04	-0.12, 0.20	-0.19	-0.33, -0.05	
Task attraction	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.10	-0.06, 0.27	-0.32	-0.46, -0.18	
Perceived homophily	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.07	-0.38, 0.24	0.11	-0.15, 0.38	
<i>R</i> ²	.36		.02		.02		.27		.00		.17		.31		
Indirect effects <i>b</i> [95% CI]															
Positive attitudes	0.56 [0.22, 0.97]		0.07 [-0.00, 0.23]		0.02 [-0.06, 0.17]		0.21 [-0.14, 0.65]		0.00 [-0.03, 0.07]		--		--		
Negative attitudes	0.53 [0.19, 0.91]		-0.03 [-0.17, 0.02]		-0.10 [-0.26, -0.00]		-0.66 [-1.07, -0.31]		-0.00 [-0.07, 0.02]		--		--		

Note: *n*=171, coefficients reported are unstandardized, and coefficients significant at *p*<.05 are bolded for ease of interpretation, italics for *p*<.06. Indirect effects under each item are the indirect effect of exposure to *Tidying Up* on attitudes through the column's variable as a mediator.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model with Attitudes toward Asian Women as Outcome

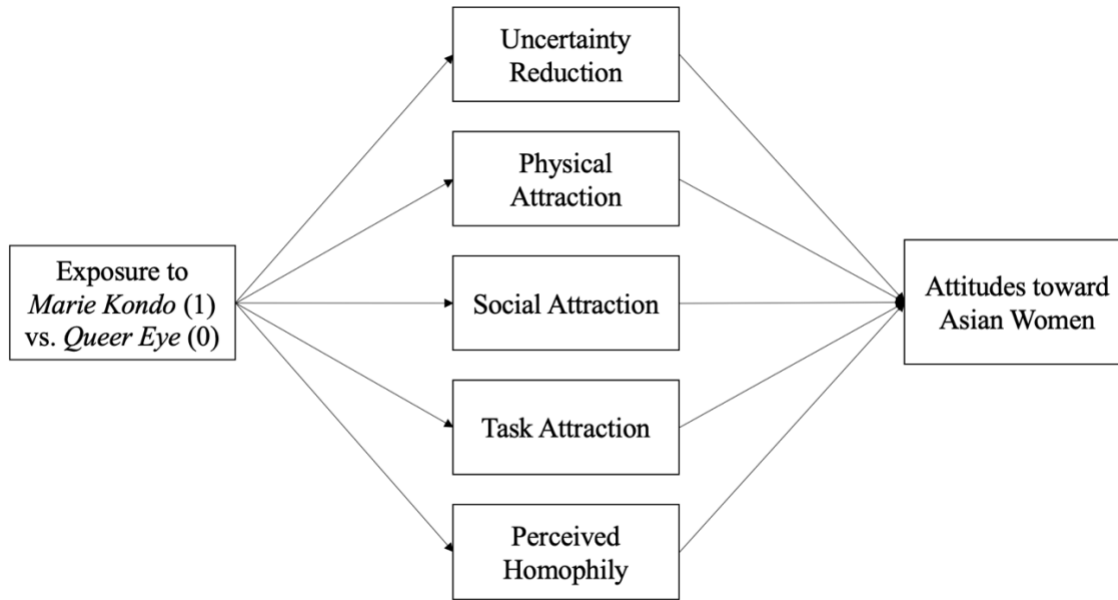


Figure 2

Conceptual Model with Attitudes toward Gay Men as Outcome

