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Social Norms and Social Identity Explain the Selection and Anticipated Enjoyment of In-Group Versus Out-Group Films

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This study examines the role of social norms in the context of entertainment media selection based on social identity theory and the theory of normative social behavior. Participants who self-identified as White American, Asian/Asian American, or Black/African American were solicited to complete an online survey regarding media selection, as well as identity strength, perceived norms surrounding entertainment consumption, and media habits. The results indicate that in-group preference and identity predicted media selection, such that people selected films featuring members from their own demographic groups. Yet, in-group media selections were also influenced by social norms. Although participants overall preferred movies featuring in-group actors, the driving factor for in-group media selection differed across groups. For White participants, in-group media selection was influenced by in-group preference. However, social norms were main predictors for Asian participants' in-group media selection. Neither norms nor in-group preference predicted Black participants' media selection.

Public Policy Relevance Statement

The effects of social norms and identity on in-group film selection differed across participants' ethnicities. Our findings help give nuance to understanding in-group preference in media selection and avoidance, and further highlight that when testing theories of social influence, researchers need to carefully consider the interaction of the sociographic qualities of their population of interest, and nature of the behavior in question.

Keywords: media enjoyment, media selection, social norms, social identity

Crazy Rich Asians is known as one of the few successful Hollywood movies with an all-Asian cast. When the movie was released in 2018, almost 40% of people who saw the movie in American theaters self-identified as Asian. This is a much higher proportion of Asian movie-goers than usual, as Asians only make up 6% of American theater audiences on average (Toy, 2018). However, it is not surprising that Asians in the United States flocked to theaters to watch *Crazy Rich Asians*. Previous research suggests that people tend to seek positive representations of their own racial group in media (Abrams & Giles, 2007; Joyce & Harwood, 2018), especially if their in-group is portrayed in a positive light (e.g., attractive and successful; Appiah et al., 2013). The effect of in-group identity on media consumption has been guided by understandings of social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1979) including the cited research earlier. SIT, applied to media, mostly focuses on how individuals' identification with a group and

their exposure to entertainment featuring that group can improve self-esteem and perceptions of group vitality (Abrams & Giles, 2007; see Trepte & Loy, 2017 for review). However, we would argue that the role of social influence factors on media selection has been underrepresented and is not limited to identity effects. In the example of *Crazy Rich Asians*, Asian communities in the United States strongly encouraged each other to watch the film in the theaters (Baik, 2018). Beyond the role of racial identity in media selection, we expect that behaviors and approval of social in-groups (i.e., social norms) may exert pressure to consume media content.

Social norms are individuals' perceptions of the prevalence and appropriateness of thoughts and behaviors in a particular group context (Cialdini et al., 1990). The effect of social norms is driven by, in part, how much an individual identifies with the group enacting or endorsing those behaviors (reference groups; Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). Said differently, social identity (Tajfel, 1979) can drive people to act and think in ways that they perceive as normative for their in-group. Given the way in which social norms and SIT work together to influence behavior in other domains (e.g., health; Sheeran et al., 2016), in this article, we investigate how social norms might interact with SIT to explain individuals' media selection.

The present article tests (a) how social norms and in-group preference influence media selection, enjoyment, and willingness

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to watch the media and (b) how in-group preference moderates the effect of norms. This article begins by reviewing social identity and media selection. Next, we discuss the role of group norms on media selection. Hypotheses are posed based on previous literature, and an online experiment testing these hypotheses is presented. Finally, the implications of our results for media selection are discussed.

Social Identity and Social Norms in Entertainment Selection

SIT delineates that one's in-group identity shapes individuals' thoughts and behaviors. Tajfel (1978) stated that social identity is "that part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 63). Media selection is influenced by an individual's perceived membership to a social group and social identity (Babrow, 1989; Rubin, 1983), such that there is a "predictable bias" or a selective exposure (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015) toward content featuring members of one's in-group.

Studies applying SIT to entertainment media have found that people tend to select media positively depicting their in-groups to stimulate a sense of positive social identity (Appiah et al., 2013; Trepte & Loy, 2017). By watching media which positively depicting ethnic in-groups, those who strongly identify with their ethnic in-groups may gain certain gratifications, such as improvements to self-esteem or perceptions of group vitality (Abrams & Giles, 2007, 2009). Previous literature has found that an individual is more likely to select a positive media depiction of ones' age group (Harwood, 1999; Knobloch-Westerwick & Hastall, 2010), gender, and nationality (Knobloch, 2005; Trepte & Krämer, 2007). Also, people favor movies featuring actors of the same race (Weaver, 2011). In some ways, cast racial makeup may function as a cue to decide if a movie is relevant to an in-group or an out-group. In this way, identity selectively motivates the selection of media featuring one's ethnicity as well as avoidance of out-group media and negative depictions of one's in-group.

Yet, although social identity has been found to drive preference for media featuring one's in-group (Joyce & Harwood, 2018), the effect of identity on selection behaviors has sometimes been small, inconsistent, and/or insignificant. For instance, research has shown that certain social identities have little to no effect on selection behavior (Appiah et al., 2013; Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2014; Trepte & Krämer, 2007). As a macrotheory of group influence, SIT and its basic principles help to explain biased media selection, but the role of group membership, specifically the interplay of social group influence and social identity, has garnered less attention in the literature. According to Trepte and Loy (2017), "the question of how exactly group memberships and media use are interrelated still needs exploration" (p. 11), and they call for research examining how group membership alters the mechanisms that underlie identity effects. We propose that individuals' media consumption may also be affected by in-group members' collective behaviors and attitudes, which we conceptualize based on a social norms approach. Social norms are "prevailing codes of conduct that either prescribe or proscribe behaviors that members of a group can enact" (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005, p. 129), which an individual group member perceives to understand what others do

and what they approve of. Social norms can be categorized into two types: descriptive (perceived prevalence of other's behavior) and injunctive (perceptions of others' approval of a behavior; Cialdini et al., 1990). Individuals' behaviors are guided by both types of norms, but each has differential utility in guiding behaviors. Descriptive norms provide people a shortcut in decision-making, as often people assume there is a good reason why the majority of people are engaging in a given behavior. On the other hand, people comply with injunctive norms based on their desire for belonging to their in-groups (Chung & Rimal, 2016). Regardless, both descriptive and injunctive norms lead individuals to perform behavior consistent with their in-group.

The role of normative influence on behavior has been studied in a variety of health contexts, including college students' drinking behavior (Padon et al., 2016) and handwashing (Chung & Lapinski, 2018). We expect social norms to influence media selection in the same way that norms affect health-related behaviors. Descriptive norms should affect one's decision to watch a movie by providing a heuristic cue that this is what others are doing (Chung & Rimal, 2016). In terms of media, we can see evidence for this effect, in that overall box office success can be predicted by a film's performance in its opening weeks: When people find out that many are watching a film, they are more likely to watch it themselves (Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997), and media may be selected owing to perceptions that other members of the group are consuming similar media (Lin & Pao, 2011). Thus, knowledge of prevailing viewing behaviors should make an individual more likely to watch a film.

Injunctive norms are also expected to influence an individual's selection behaviors. In terms of media, injunctive norms can be what is expected of the individual, and may be learned via critical reviews. Evidence suggests that the prevalence of positive reviews in the press—that is the extent to which critics approve of the films—predicts a movies' box office success (Basuroy et al., 2003). This may be especially true when people perceive that others in the group approve of their selections (Johnson & Ranzini, 2018). Thus, injunctive norms should influence media selection.

In addition to the normative effects on media selection, we predict that norms may impact anticipated media enjoyment. Although the effect of social norms on attitudes and emotions remains a topic of debate (cf. Christensen et al., 2004), media scholars have argued that enjoyment of content can be influenced by contextual factors such as group norms and viewing situations (Denham, 2004; Nabi & Krmar, 2004). Kryston and Eden (2018) demonstrated that perceived descriptive norms surrounding mass-market films were positively correlated with film enjoyment, regardless of viewers' perception of film quality. Given this evidence, we predict that descriptive and injunctive norms will affect individuals' perceived enjoyment of a film.

Selection and anticipated enjoyment are both directly related to the willingness to watch a film (i.e., viewers' intentions to watch a film). Various social influence theories argue that norms affect behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991; Chung & Rimal, 2016), and this hypothesized positive relationship is widely supported in the literature (Borsari & Carey, 2003). In media research, Johnson and Ranzini (2018) demonstrated that people were more willing to post popular songs on social media when instructed to share music that emphasizes similarity with

the group, even if the specific tracks were not their favorite. Although their study did not explicitly test the effect of norms on willingness to consume media, the results show that when people are motivated by in-group belonging (the mechanism by which norms affect behavior), they are more willing to change their media behaviors to adhere to the perceived norm.

In sum, descriptive and injunctive norms are expected to influence initial selection, anticipated film enjoyment, and willingness to watch the film participants selected. Based on the earlier discussion, the following hypotheses are posed.

Hypothesis 1: Descriptive in-group norms will be positively related to (a) selection of media featuring the participant's in-group, (b) anticipated enjoyment of the film, and (c) willingness to watch the selected film.

Hypothesis 2: Injunctive in-group norms will be positively related to (a) selection of media featuring the participant's in-group, (b) anticipated enjoyment of the film, and (c) willingness to watch the selected film.

We argue that in some instances, identity strength may not directly affect selections and rather moderates in-group normative influence. Social categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) and the social identity model of deindividuation effects model (Reicher et al., 1995) suggest that group identity can drive adherence to in-group norms in certain settings where an individual is depersonalized (Lee, 2004). Similarly, the theory of normative social behavior (TNSB; Rimal & Real, 2005) suggests that normative effects on behaviors can be strengthened by group identity (i.e., Neighbors et al., 2010), which is the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as similar to, and aspire to be like, the reference group. Thus, we propose that in-group preference, which we define as the degree to which individuals identify with an in-group over other out-groups, should moderate the normative effects on behaviors. The effects of in-group descriptive and injunctive norms will lead to a stronger effect on behaviors when group norms are coupled with strong in-group identity and low out-group identity.

Hypotheses 3: In-group preference will moderate the relationship between descriptive in-group norms and (a) selection of media featuring the participant's in-group, (b) anticipated enjoyment of the film, and (c) willingness to watch the selected film, such that the effect of norms on selection of media will be stronger for participants with stronger in-group preference.

Hypotheses 4: In-group preference will moderate the relationship between injunctive in-group norms and (a) selection of media featuring the participant's in-group, (b) anticipated enjoyment of the film, and (c) willingness to watch the selected film, such that the effect of norms on selection of media will be stronger for participants with stronger in-group preference.

In addition to descriptive and injunctive norms, we posit that individuals' in-group preference will directly affect the selection and anticipated enjoyment of media hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 5: In-group preference will predict (a) selection of media featuring the participant's in-group, (b) anticipated enjoyment of the film, and (c) willingness to watch the film.

Method

Participants

A total of 322 participants ($M_{age} = 46.06$, $SD_{age} = 16.00$, 55% male) living in the United States were recruited and compensated via TurkPrime, a panel service for Amazon Mechanical Turk. We recruited American participants because our stimuli were major Hollywood films. Our effort to recruit a diverse sample to compare effects across various ethnic in-groups was successful: Almost half of participants identified as White ($n = 147$), followed by Black/African American ($n = 76$), Asian ($n = 67$), Hispanic ($n = 4$), multiple ethnicity ($n = 3$), and "other" racial group ($n = 1$). Participants who self-identified as Hispanic, multiethnic, or some other ethnicity were excluded from further analysis. All procedures including participant recruitment and compensation were approved by the university's institutional review board.

Procedure

After they provided informed consent, participants were directed to an online survey. At the start of the survey, participants were presented with a random array of the six pretested films, from which they could select one film that they would like to have a sequel. Participants then rated perceived descriptive and injunctive norms and group identity for various in- and out-groups for viewing this film's sequel. The survey was closed with a single open-item question asking participants to react to the study overall ("Is there anything you feel we should know about your responses to this survey that we have not asked?").

Stimuli

The investigators generated a list of 28 light-hearted comedy/romance films and TV shows, including accompanying posters and plot synopses, with diverse cast representation (see all films and posters at <https://osf.io/vh658/>). This genre was chosen because titles in this genre had similar plots, and previous research finds similar preference for comedy across ethnic groups (Fischoff et al., 1998). Synopses had no explicit mention of ethnicity. Next, 32 naïve participants were asked about film familiarity, perceived film enjoyment (Intrinsic Motivation Inventory, enjoyment subscale; Ryan, 1982), and affect and arousal of the film poster (The Self-Assessment Manikin; Bradley & Lang, 1994). Participants also rated perceived approval for viewing the films among six social groups (three ethnic groups, close friends, high school friends) using a single item slider (0 = *no approval* and 100 = *high approval*), and the extent to which 10 different social groups were featured in the films (four target groups and six dummy groups; 1 = *not true [that the group was depicted] at all*, 7 = *very true*). The six final films selected for the study were *The Other Woman* (White cast), *Bridesmaids* (White cast), *Crazy Rich Asians*, *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* (Asian cast), *Think Like*

a *Man* (Black cast), and *Brown Sugar* (Black cast).^{1,2} There were no significant differences in the number of the participants who have watched the movie before, affect, arousal and perceived enjoyment across the selected films. All pretest results are summarized here: <https://osf.io/vh658/>.³

Measures

Descriptive statistics for all measured variables are presented in Table 1. Each scale demonstrated reliability (α) greater than .80.

Demographic and Control Variables

In addition to race, participants were asked their age, highest level of education completed, and questions about their preferences for different genres as well as their general viewing habits (e.g., number of movies seen per week). Participants were also asked how often they watched romantic comedies alone, with friends, and with family with scores ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very often*). The average of these three items was included as a covariate in all inferential analyses.

Movie Selection

Participants were presented with a randomized array of six movie posters and short descriptive blurbs for the following movies: *The Other Woman*, *Bridesmaids*, *Crazy Rich Asians*, *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*, *Think Like a Man*, and *Brown Sugar*. Participants selected one of these six movies for which they would like to watch a sequel. The "sequel selection" was chosen to make all six movie options novel to participants while still using externally valid stimuli.

In-Group Selection

Based on participants' movie selection and self-identified race, we created a binary variable to indicate in-group film selection, coded as in-group film (e.g., if a White participant selected either *The Other Woman* or *Bridesmaids*, it would be coded as 1), or out-group film (e.g., if a White participant selected any of the other four films, it would be coded as 0).

Descriptive and Injunctive Norms

Descriptive norms and *injunctive norms* were measured using scales adapted from Park and Smith (2007). Descriptive norms were measured using one item (e.g., "Most of my White/Asian/Black friends would watch a sequel for this film."), using a 7-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement.⁴ The injunctive norm scale features four items, which ask participants the extent of their agreement with a series of different

statements (e.g., "Most of my White/Asian/Black friends would support me watching a sequel/alternative version of the film.")⁵ Participants completed norms measures for all groups. Perceived descriptive and injunctive norm scores from White, Asian, and Black friends were averaged to create scales for perceived norms from each group, with higher scores signifying stronger perceived norms for viewing the film.

In-Group Norms

Aggregated norms scores were transformed to in-group descriptive and injunctive norms (e.g., Asian participants' perceived norms among their Asian friends), to maximize the effect of the reference group among participants' normative perceptions. First, the mean of each descriptive and injunctive norm scores from different ethnic friends groups were multiplied with dummy coded variables of participants' self-identified racial groups (*self-identify* = 1, *all other* = 0). To illustrate, if a participant self-identified as White, their perceived norms scores for their White friend were only examined to represent in-group norms.

In-Group Preference

In-group identity was measured using Rimal and Real's (2005) scale for group identity with a 7-point Likert scale ($\alpha = .96$, $M = 4.74$, $SD = 2.14$).⁶ Participants completed this measure for each group. Mean scores on these scales were used to calculate in-group preference. In-group preference was operationalized by taking the strength of participants' self-identified in-group identity (e.g., an Asian participant's Asian identity score) and subtracting the mean of their identity scores for all other groups (e.g., an Asian participant's Black and White identity scores) and can be represented as follows:

$$\overline{ID}_{self-identified\ ethnicity} - \left(\frac{\overline{ID}_{other\ ethnicity1} + \overline{ID}_{other\ ethnicity2}}{2} \right).$$

Anticipated Enjoyment

Participants were asked how much they would enjoy the film sequel in three different situations ("at home by myself," "at home with other people," "in the theater with other people"). The three

¹ Despite the inclusion of Maya Rudolph, an actress main character featured on the poster for *Bridesmaids*, the film was rated as featuring predominantly White cast members by our participants in both the pre-test and main study.

² To avoid confounding effects preferences or liking for particular actors, we selected films which featured different main actors in the casts.

³ These stimuli and pretest data were presented in an unpublished article. The study is available upon request.

⁴ The scale from Park and Smith (2007) features three items that vary the wording regarding the target behavior. However, in this study, there were no reasonable alternative for describing the target behavior in a future tense to accurately reflect the variations in the original scale. Thus, we decided to use a single-item measure of descriptive norms to avoid repetitive wording and participant fatigue.

⁵ We limited referent groups to friends of a specific ethnicity to make norms and group identity with a referent group more salient. We used friends rather than "general others" to capture positive close relationships. This is consistent with the past operationalization of proximal norms (Park & Smith, 2007).

⁶ The variable refers to participants' perceived group identity toward their own ethnic group (e.g. Asian participants' Asian identity preference scores).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
Injunctive norms	286	5.25	1.54	.96
Descriptive norms	287	5.14	1.71	
In-group preference	270	0.59	1.19	
Anticipated enjoyment	283	4.79	1.83	
Willingness to watch	280	4.15	1.73	.86
Romantic comedy consumption	285	3.34	1.89	.84

items were highly correlated ($.44 \leq r \leq .72, p < .001$). Scores ranged from 1 (*not enjoy*) to 7 (*enjoy*) and were averaged to form an overall anticipated enjoyment score. Mean anticipated enjoyment was multiplied with the in-group selection score to generate enjoyment scores only for in-group films.

Willingness to Watch In-Group Films

Participants were asked to indicate their willingness to watch the films they selected with five items (e.g., “I would watch a sequel of the film I chose”) using a 7-point Likert scale. The scores were multiplied with the binary in-group film selection score so that the value reflects participants’ willingness to watch their in-group films.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

First, we assessed whether individuals were indeed more likely to select films representing their ethnic group, using a 3 (Film Selection: White, Asian, Black Cast Films) \times 3 (Race: White, Asian, Black) χ^2 test. In line with SIT, results revealed that participants were significantly more likely to pick films with casts depicting their own ethnic group over others, $\chi^2(10) = 72.55, p < .01, \psi = .49$ (Table 2). Next, we conducted three 3 (Film Selection: White, Asian, Black Cast Films) \times 3 (Race: White, Asian, Black) multivariate analyses of variance, to see if there were effects of race, film selection, or interaction effects on in- and out-group descriptive norms, injunctive norms, and group identity (see Table 3 for cell means). Although there were significant main effects, there were no interactions between race and film identity on our variables of interest. However, given the main effects, it appeared that race influences perceptions of in-group norms and group identity. Therefore, we include a test of the effects of norms and identity on in-group film selection within each ethnicity as post hoc analysis.

We next present the results of three regression analyses testing the effect of in-group descriptive and injunctive norms and group identity on selection, anticipated enjoyment, and willingness to watch in-group films. A correlation matrix for all variables across all participants is included in Table 4.

The Effects of Norms and In-Group Preferences on Selections of In-Group Films

We predicted that (Hypothesis 1a) in-group descriptive, (Hypothesis 2a) injunctive norms, and (Hypothesis 5a) in-group pref-

erence would significantly account for variance in participants’ in-group film selection. In addition, in-group preference was expected to moderate the effect of (Hypothesis 3a) descriptive norms and (Hypothesis 4a) injunctive norms on in-group film selection. To test this, we conducted logistic regressions for in-group descriptive norms, in-group injunctive norms, and in-group preference on selections of in-group films for all participants (Table 5). First, in-group descriptive norms, in-group injunctive norms, and in-group preference were entered as independent variables, with in-group film selection as the dependent variable. Next, the same logistic regression analyses were repeated with the interaction term of in-group preference and the interaction term of norms and preference.

Across all participants, in-group descriptive norms did not predict in-group film selection. However, in-group injunctive norms, $b = .28, SE = .13, p < .01, OR = 1.32$, and in-group preference, $b = .36, SE = .14, p = .01, OR = 1.44$, significantly predicted in-group film selection.⁷ The results suggest a 32% increase in the odds of selecting an in-group film when injunctive norms increase one unit, and a 44% increase in the odds of selecting an in-group film when in-group preference increased one unit when holding all other variables constant. Thus, the data were consistent with Hypothesis 2a, and Hypothesis 5a, but not Hypothesis 1a. To test the moderating role of in-group preference on these results, we conducted the same logistic regression including the interactions between norms and in-group preference as moderators. Counter to the predictions, neither the interaction of descriptive norms and in-group preference nor the interaction of injunctive norms and in-group preference, were statistically significant (Table 5). Thus, the effect of descriptive and injunctive norms on the in-group film selection was not contingent upon the effect of in-group preference. Therefore, the data were not consistent with Hypotheses 3a and 4a.

The Effects of Norms and In-Group Preferences on Anticipated Enjoyment

Hypotheses 1b, 2b, and 5b predicted that descriptive norms, injunctive norms, and in-group preference would be positively related to anticipated enjoyment of in-group films. Further, Hypotheses 3b and 4b predicted that in-group preference would moderate the effects of descriptive and injunctive norms on anticipated enjoyment of in-group films. Multiple linear regression was conducted to examine the effects of descriptive, injunctive norms, and in-group preference on anticipated enjoyment of selected in-group films, $F(4, 258) = 13.32, p < .01, \text{adj } R^2 = .16$ (Table 6). Only injunctive norms were statistically significant predictors for anticipated enjoyment, $\beta = .28, SE = .16, p < .01$. Thus, the data were partially consistent with Hypotheses 2b and 5b, and not consistent with Hypothesis 1b. The same multiple linear regression was conducted with interaction terms of two norms and in-group preference for all participants to test the moderating role of in-group preference. None of the interaction terms were statistically significant (Table 6). The results were consistent across all ethnic groups. Hypotheses 3b and 4b were not supported.

Table 2

Ethnicity of Cast Selection by Ethnicity of Participants

Ethnicity	Asian cast film	Black cast film	White cast film
Asian			
<i>N</i> (adj. <i>R</i>)	42 (5.6 ^a)	9 (−3.7 ^a)	16 (−2 ^a)
Black			
<i>N</i> (adj. <i>R</i>)	14 (−3.4 ^a)	37 (6.5 ^a)	15 (−3 ^a)
White			
<i>n</i> (adj. <i>R</i>)	43 (−1.8)	37 (−2.6 ^a)	67 (4.3 ^a)

^a Adjusted standardized residual ± 2.0 .

⁷ All coefficients are unstandardized.

Table 3*Multivariate Effects of Film Selection and Ethnicity on Perceived In-Group Norms and Identity*

N	Film selection							Participant ethnicity								
	Asian		Black		White		F	Df	p	η^2	Asian		Black		White	
	95	92	95	95	66	72					144	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	F	df
Asian DN	5.63 (1.54) ^A	4.06 (1.71) ^B	4.24 (1.88) ^B	1.63	2,274	<.01	.07	5.56 (1.45) ^A	4.31 (1.47) ^B	4.43 (1.81) ^B	3.07	2,274	.05	.02		
Black DN	4.77 (1.63) ^A	5.14 (1.68) ^A	4.13 (1.85) ^B	2.72	2,274	.03	.02	4.55 (1.63) ^B	5.39 (1.75) ^A	4.37 (1.73) ^B	3.24	2,274	.04	.02		
White DN	5.00 (1.59) ^A	4.12 (1.79) ^B	4.85 (1.75) ^A	4.41	2,274	.01	.03	4.59 (1.49)	4.47 (1.95)	4.79 (1.74)	0.65	2,274	.52	0		
Asian IN	5.33 (1.48) ^A	4.52 (1.65) ^B	4.71 (1.71) ^B	3.74	2,273	.03	.03	5.39 (1.36) ^A	4.70 (1.91) ^B	4.69 (1.58) ^B	1.26	2,273	.29	.01		
Black IN	5.11 (1.46) ^A	5.18 (1.66) ^A	4.61 (1.76) ^B	2.24	2,273	.11	.01	5.02 (1.46) ^C	5.52 (1.70) ^{AB}	4.66 (1.63) ^B	2.85	2,273	.06	.02		
White IN	5.26 (1.39) ^A	4.48 (1.72) ^B	5.16 (1.51) ^A	5.34	2,273	<.01	.04	5.03 (1.44)	4.85 (1.85)	5.00 (1.50)	0.50	2,273	.61	0		
Asian ID	5.30 (1.42) ^A	4.61 (1.70) ^B	4.54 (1.78) ^B	1.73	2,261	.18	.01	5.14 (1.45)	4.51 (1.72)	4.83 (1.72)	0.98	2,261	.38	.01		
Black ID	5.03 (1.51)	5.08 (1.60)	4.51 (1.87)	1.15	2,261	.32	.01	4.45 (1.59) ^C	5.28 (1.59) ^{AB}	4.86 (1.73) ^B	2.88	2,261	.06	.02		
White ID	5.21 (1.41)	4.67 (1.63)	5.09 (1.60)	1.06	2,261	.35	.01	4.63 (1.50) ^B	4.59 (1.67) ^B	5.36 (1.46) ^A	4.34	2,261	.01	.03		

Note. No significant interaction effects were observed. Significant contrasts from post-hoc Bonferroni reported using superscripts (differences by column, variables listed by row). DN = descriptive norms; IN = injunctive norms; ID = identity.

The Effects of Norms and In-Group Preferences on Willingness to Watch In-Group Films

Hypotheses 1c and 2c predicted that in-group descriptive and injunctive norms would be positively related to participants' willingness to watch the sequel of the selected in-group films. In-group preference was expected to moderate the effect of descriptive and injunctive norms on participants' willingness to watch in-group films (Hypothesis 5c). Multiple linear regression was performed to see how descriptive norms, injunctive norms, and in-group preference predict the willingness to watch in-group films for all participants, $F(4,277) = 24.41, p < .01, \text{adj } R^2 = .20$. Only in-group descriptive norms significantly predicted willingness to watch in-group films, $\beta = .21, SE = .13, p < .05$. In-group injunctive norms, $\beta = .19, SE = .13, p = .07$, and in-group preference, $\beta = .10, SE = .11, p = .07$, were not statistically significant (Table 6). Thus, the data support Hypothesis 1c, but not Hypotheses 2c or 5c. The same multiple linear regression was performed with two interactions of descriptive norms and in-group preference, and injunctive norms and in-group preference for all participants to test the moderation effect of in-group preference on the normative effects (Hypotheses 3c and 4c). In-group preference did not moderate the effect of descriptive norms, nor injunctive norms on willingness to watch in-group films (Table 7). The results were consistent across White, Asian, and Black participants. Thus, Hypotheses 3b and 4b were not supported.

Post Hoc Analyses

For the post hoc analyses, we conducted the analyses described above (logistic regression predicting in-group film selection, hierarchical multiple regression models predicting anticipated enjoyment and willingness to watch, respectively) for White, Asian, and Black participants separately to see the role of in-group norms and preference among each ethnic group. Significant predictors by ethnicity are summarized below (full analysis at <https://bit.ly/2CBoppS>).

For White participants, in-group preference significantly predicted in-group film selection, $b = .89, SE = .30, p < .01, OR = 2.44$. The odds that White participants would select an in-group film increased 144% with a one unit increase for in-group preference. In-group preference significantly predicted anticipated enjoyment, $\beta = .24, SE = .18, p < .01$, and willingness to watch, $\beta = .29, SE = .15, p < .01$. In-group injunctive norms were also a significant predictor of anticipated enjoyment among White participants, $\beta = .26, SE = .19, p < .05$. Thus, the data suggest that in-group preference was the most influential determinant of White participants' selection behaviors.

Among Asian participants, descriptive norms were statistically significant predictors of in-group film selection, $b = 1.21, SE = .50, p < .05, OR = 3.35$. The odds that Asian participants would select an in-group film increased 235% with a one unit increase in descriptive norms, holding other variables constant. Descriptive norms were statistically significant predictors of anticipated en-

Table 4*Correlation Matrix*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Injunctive norms	—					
2. Descriptive norms	.77**	—				
3. In-group preference	.13*	.14*	—			
4. Anticipated enjoyment	.39**	.34**	.12	—		
5. Willingness to watch	.60**	.65**	.04	.48**	—	
6. Romantic comedy consumption	.37**	.42**	-.03	.30**	.66**	—

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5
Full Model of Effect of Norms and In-Group Preference on Selection

Variables	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cox-Snell <i>R</i> ²
Step 1					18.98	4	.001	.28
Romantic comedy consumption	.03	.08	.68	1.03				
DN	.07	.12	.54	1.08				
IN	.30	.13	.03	1.32				
IN-GRP	.36	.14	.01	1.44				
Step 2					2.42	6	<.001	.29
Romantic comedy consumption	.03	.08	.67	1.03				
DN	.02	.14	.86	1.02				
IN	.32	.14	.03	1.21				
IN-GRP	.19	.48	.69	1.38				
DN × IN-GRP	.11	.16	.49	1.11				
IN × IN-GRP	-.07	.16	.64	0.93				

Note. DN = descriptive norms; IN = injunctive norms; IN-GRP = in-group preference.

joyment, $\beta = .71$, $SE = .45$, $p = .01$, and willingness to watch the sequel of selected in-group films, $\beta = .71$, $SE = .47$, $p < .05$. Asian in-group preference was a significant negative predictor of anticipated enjoyment, $\beta = -.24$, $SE = .26$, $p < .05$. Descriptive norms seem to be especially powerful in affecting Asians' in-group film selection. For Black participants, none of our measured variables significantly predicted selection, willingness to watch, or anticipated enjoyment of in-group films.

Discussion

We set out to examine how social factors beyond identification, such as social norms and in-group preference, can influence media selection, enjoyment, and willingness to watch the media. Results show that social identity, norms, and in-group preference all affect the selection of entertainment, but in different ways. For example, participants tended to select movies featuring their own groups when they (a) had stronger preference for their own groups (as predicted by SIT) and (b) perceived stronger norms from their groups (as predicted by TNSB). Anticipated enjoyment and willingness to watch in-group films were only affected by in-group norms, such that in-group injunctive norms predicted anticipated enjoyment of in-group films, and descriptive norms predicted willingness to watch the in-group films. In sum, our results suggest that social norms are significantly associated with in-group film

selection, anticipated enjoyment, and willingness to watch, and social identity only with in-group film selection.

Our overall results not only explain how social norms and social identity affect media selection but also illustrate that these factors affect selection in different ways. Across all participants, in-group preference only predicted the selection of in-group films, but not anticipated enjoyment or willingness to watch. Injunctive norms affected participants' selections and norms were the sole predictors of anticipated enjoyment and willingness to watch selected in-group films. Together, these results support the notion that media selection can be affected by various social factors unique to the particular film or social group under consideration.

Notably, our study not only examined the effect of norms and in-group preference on broad selection processes but also conducted separate analyses within and across different demographic groups. These results tell a more nuanced story. Asian participants' selections were universally affected by in-group descriptive norms, whereas White participants' selections were mostly driven by in-group preference. Yet, among Black participants, all three outcomes were unaffected by norms or identity. The different directions of the results of identity on norms and selection could suggest that different cultural backgrounds of participants, beyond in-group and out-group considerations, might play a role on the effects of injunctive norms on selection and appraisal of media

Table 6
Full Model of the Effect of Norms and In-Group Preference on Anticipated Enjoyment

Variables	<i>t</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	adj <i>R</i> ²
Step 1					20.06	4,277	<.001	.21
Romantic comedy consumption	2.61	.09	.01	.15				
DN	0.46	.14	.65	.05				
IN	3.30	.15	.00	.34				
IN-GRP	1.36	.13	.18	.07				
Step 2					9.19	6,256	<.001	.16
Romantic comedy consumption	2.58	.10	.01	.16				
DN	-0.18	.17	.86	-.02				
IN	3.15	.18	.002	.31				
IN-GRP	-0.59	.55	.56	-.14				
DN × IN-GRP	1.33	.12	.19	.44				
IN × IN-GRP	-0.64	.12	.53	-.19				

Note. DN = descriptive norms; IN = injunctive norms; IN-GRP = in-group preference.

Table 7
Full Model of the Effect of Norms and In-Group Preference on Willingness to Watch

Variables	<i>T</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	adj <i>R</i> ²
Step 1					24.41	4,277	<.001	.25
Romantic comedy consumption	3.43	.08	.001	.20				
DN	2.00	.13	.05	.21				
IN	1.85	.13	.07	.19				
IN-GRP	1.83	.11	.07	.10				
Step 2					11.83	6,256	<.001	.20
Romantic comedy consumption	3.31	.08	.001	.20				
DN	1.20	.15	.23	.12				
IN	2.11	.16	.04	.21				
IN-GRP	-0.05	.48	.96	-.01				
DN × IN-GRP	1.16	.11	.25	.35				
IN × IN-GRP	-0.82	.10	.42	-.23				

Note. DN = descriptive norms; IN = injunctive norms; IN-GRP = in-group preference.

(Lapinski et al., 2007). These findings highlight that when testing SIT, TNSB, and other theories of social influence, researchers need to carefully consider the interaction of the sociographic qualities of their population of interest with effects on the behavior in question. Thus, we urge for more diverse samples in social identity and social norms research, and that researchers replicate findings across multiple groups.

Race and Identity in Media Selection and Appraisal

In regard to the effect of descriptive norms on Asian participants' film selections, we wonder if this effect may be owing to the salience of minority status for media selections in minority groups. For example, *Crazy Rich Asians* was a box office success in the United States (estimated \$238 million earned according to BoxOfficeMojo.com, 2019), where movies predominantly feature White actors (and to a lesser extent, Black actors; Eschholz et al., 2002). Given the relative paucity of Asian-cast films in the United States, perhaps our Asian participants were more sensitive to the behaviors of their in-group, and these behaviors, rather than identity, may have affected their selections. Thus, the prevalence of in-group depictions relative to all depictions in a given culture could be an avenue for future research (Appiah et al., 2013).

For White participants, the picture is clear: In-group preference drives in-group film selection. Contrary to previous research (Appiah et al., 2013), White participants with stronger in-group preference were (a) more likely to select in-group films, (b) anticipated more enjoyment of in-group films, and (c) more willing to watch in-group films than White participants with weaker in-group preference. SIT predicts that in-group identity predicts selection, especially when participants are presented with in-group versus out-group selections (Trepte & Loy, 2017), as we did in our paradigm. We think the in-group versus out-group contrast may have been especially salient for White participants, due to the prevalence of White-cast films in American cinema (Eschholz et al., 2002). The pervasiveness of White-cast films in cinema may have led to a stronger contrast in our experimental setup against the Asian- and Black-cast films for our White participants, as we presented equal representation in our casts. As such, White participants' in-group preference may have been especially salient in our paradigm, leading to stronger and more consistent effects on selection (see Weaver, 2011 for similar findings).

We can think of two explanations for why norms and identity failed to predict Black participants' in-group film selections and enjoyment. First, research has shown that Black viewers generally prefer media targeted at their demographic group (Ellithorpe & Bleakley, 2016). However, unique to the Black community, preference for in-group media does not lead to avoidance of media featuring other ethnicities. Rather, Black viewers tend to prefer and consume media content featuring both in-group *and* out-group cast members (Ellithorpe & Bleakley, 2016). Furthermore, Black audience's reactions to Black-cast entertainment differs when co-viewing with in-group members compared to watching with out-group members (Banjo et al., 2015). Thus, although Black participants in our study were more likely to select in-group films, these participants' selection and anticipated enjoyment may have been influenced by factors outside of norms or group identity.

Second, there was considerable variance in the strength of Black in-group identity in our sample ($M_{Black} = 5.14$, $SD_{Black} = 1.71$, $M_{White} = 5.38$, $SD_{White} = 1.43$, $M_{Asian} = 5.19$, $SD_{Asian} = 1.44$). Some participants stated that although they self-identified as Black, they felt like outsiders in the Black community. In our open-ended responses, one participant noted, "I am a Black man who is an outcast in the Black community, so my answers are different from what you probably expected." This emphasizes that some may not consider a group of people as in-group members simply because they are from the same demographic. Also, it has to be noted that the effect of group identity can yield different results based on how group identity is operationalized (e.g., Rimal & Lapinski, 2015; Rimal et al., 2005). Although our study results found that group identity plays a different role in media selection, enjoyment, and viewing behavior across ethnic groups, Black participants' in-group identity might not have been fully captured with our operationalization of perceived similarity and aspiration.

Returning to broader theoretical implications, those from collectivistic cultures tend to have smaller and more stable reference groups whereas individualistic culture is characterized by larger, less stable groups of referents (Lapinski et al., 2007). Thus, although our sample came from the United States, it is possible that some Asian and Black participants perceived a group of people with the same ethnicity as referents, but not necessarily their in-group. This might be the reason why in-group preference had a limited role for Asian and Black participants in our study, but

deserves further consideration. Future studies should address the difference between reference groups and in-groups to further elaborate on social norms and SIT.

Limitations and Future Directions

First, despite our efforts to recruit a diverse panel, in the end, we ended up with more White participants than other groups. Although we conducted separate analyses for different demographic groups to overcome this shortcoming, future studies should strive for equal representation in their samples. Second, in terms of our operationalization of constructs, our wording (e.g., “My Asian/Black/White friends will approve of me watching the sequel of the film I selected”) may be questioned in terms of the extent to which we measured perceived injunctive norms versus perceived quality of films. It is possible that people might think others’ approval indicates high quality rather than injunctive norms. We did not ask about perceived film quality, but we would suggest that the way in which norms varied in terms of their relationship to selection and appraisal would suggest that even if descriptive norms are indicative of quality, the way in which they are interpreted varies across demographic groups.

Third, although we measured selection in various ways, we did not measure multiple selection behaviors (e.g., number of selections, time spent watching; cf. Knobloch-Westerwick, 2014), future studies should address how media selection is influenced by participants’ feelings in relation to the content of the media based on the selective exposure self- and affect management model (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015). We also measured selection behavior as picking a sequel, not as a selection of the movie depicted in our selection paradigm. Certainly, the two are arguably similar. However, a hypothetical sequel and the original film are not the same, and thus future work should examine actual film selection rather than hypothetical sequel selection. Fourth, we did not analyze enjoyment or willingness to watch in a way that assessed the enjoyment of in- versus out-group media; instead, we analyzed in-group preference for films that had been selected. Thus, this relationship and differences in enjoying in- versus out-group media warrants further exploration. Overall, this series of findings point to a need to extend these findings through the use of different methodologies and an examination of potential mechanisms that explain normative versus identity-driven preference for in-group ethnic films.

Finally, we would like to revisit a few limitations concerning our sample and operationalization of group membership and norms. As noted earlier, for the purpose of this study, we assumed that individuals perceive their demographic group as an in-group. Although using demographic groups is a reasonable approach based on the theoretical framework, and was supported by measures of in-group preference and self-identified race in our study, it should be noted that some individuals might not consider a group of people as their in-group members simply because they mark the same demographic category on surveys. Other divisions, such as political beliefs or socioeconomic status, may be more salient than race when determining in-group, and thus the concept of in-group must be better explicated in future work. Similarly, participants only had the option to self-identify as ‘Asian’ in our sample, but Asia contains a diverse range of cultures and ethnicities (e.g., Russian, Korean, Indian, etc.). Our stimuli featured Pacific Asian

casts, and if those who self-identified as “Asian” were not of Pacific Asian descent, they may not see the casts of these films as their in-group. Although this concern was not borne out by our data, it is worth noting for future studies that a more nuanced understanding of culture would help interpret these findings. Thus, we would like to note that our measure of in-group was a gross measure, and more finely nuanced examinations of culture, within race, and among multiethnic groups are needed for future research.

Conclusion

Given the underrepresentation of minority groups in media in the United States (Tukachinsky et al., 2015), non-White groups’ media selection and evaluation are unsurprisingly influenced by their the potential gratifications of seeing in-group members on-screen (Abrams & Giles, 2007; Joyce & Harwood, 2018). We attempted to expand past findings by examining media selection, anticipated enjoyment and viewing behavior across multiple ethnic groups. Using social norms and group identity, the present paper was an attempt to understand (a) how social norms influence media selection, anticipated enjoyment, and willingness to watch the selected media, (b) how in-group preference can directly predict media selection, anticipated enjoyment, and willingness to watch the selected media, and (c) how these results change across different demographic groups.

Social factors have been underemphasized in media research, and social influence researchers rarely study media. We think that the application of social influence research to entertainment selection could help to predict variance that is not explained by current understandings of content and/or individual responses. For social influence researchers, entertainment provides a context in which to study the effect of norms and identity on illusive outcomes, such as private behaviors, anticipated affect associated with adhering to norms, and how norms and identity affect emotions. Although there is a substantial body of literature looking at how media can change norms and attitudes (Gunther et al., 2006; Rhodes & Ellithorpe, 2016), our work suggests norms also play a role in selection processes. Future work should look at the effect of norms and identity using studies with real selection behaviors, a full selection paradigm featuring actual exposure and multiple outcomes related to selection (e.g., time spent watching), and measures that indicate how norms affect consumption experiences and outcomes such as postconsumption enjoyment. Furthermore, the extension of media selection to norm and attitude formation may help us understand the role of media selection on societal attitudes. In our study, we created an unrealistic equivalence in the offerings of diverse cast members. However, we still observed normative and in-group pressures driving media selection. In order to understand the role of media representation on society and the role of norms and social identity in this process, we must better understand both the individual and social psychological forces predicting media selection and viewing behaviors.

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