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Oy Vey, the Shtick: Exploring the Relationship between Audience Consumption of Jewish Television Characters and Attitudes toward Jewish Populations

Lyric Mandell[a] (iD) and David L. Stamps[b] (iD)

[a]Manship School of Mass Communication, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA; [b]Information Design and Corporate Communication, Bentley University, Waltham, Massachusetts, USA

ABSTRACT

The current set of studies adopts cultivation theory and mediated contact to explore the relationship between viewers' consumption of Jewish television characters, endorsement of negative Jewish stereotypes (study 1; $N = 150$), anti-Semitism, and support for Jewish-related social issues (study 2; $N = 584$). Study 1 revealed a significant relationship between viewers' consumption of Jewish television characters and Jewish stereotype endorsement. Study 2 showed a significant relationship between viewers' consumption of Jewish television characters and anti-Semitic attitudes; however, consumption was also related to viewers' favorable support for Jewish-related social issues. Findings indicate a complicated relationship and suggest that the consumption of Jewish television characters may intensify negative attitudes, including stereotype endorsement and anti-Semitism, but the ethnic and cultural identity contributes to confounding feelings toward social issues. We offer a discussion of the results regarding media cultivation, intergroup contact, and the Jewish community.

Discrimination toward Jewish individuals has increased globally (Anti-Defamation League, 2021; Small, 2020). Scholarship that has examined Jewish television representation have speculated that portrayals are often unflattering and can negatively shape non-Jewish viewers' perceptions of Jewish people (Byers & Krieger, 2005). However, the contradiction of Jewish representation in the governance of media output and the repeated depictions of unfavorable Jewish characters in television remains a perplexing issue. Jewish individuals have played an influential role in film and television production and creation (Horowitz, 2017; Leib, 2021). The founders of influential entertainment studios include William Fox and Fox Studios; Adolph Zukor and Paramount Studios; Jack and Harry Warner and the infamous Warner Bros. Studios; Carl Laemmle and Universal Pictures; Sam Goldwyn and Louis B. Mayer, who created Metro Goldwyn Mayer; and Harry Cohn and Columbia Pictures– each of whom is Jewish (Leib, 2021). Decades later, the entertainment industry has presidents, chairpersons, and chief executives of motion picture organizations, each of whom identifies as Jewish. These individuals include Brad Grey (chairperson of Paramount Pictures until 2017), Robert

Iger (Walt Disney chief executive officer until 2020), and Jeff Zucker (former president of NBC Universal and Cable News Network until 2022), to name a few (Marks, 2008). Despite many early Jewish decision-makers in Hollywood, and recent prominent Jewish corporate leaders in the entertainment industry, discrimination toward Jewish individuals has not decelerated. TV consumption may cue how audiences relate to Jewish individuals outside of a mediated context.

Jewish television depictions tend to generalize the 'stereotyped minority– [who is] marginal, alien, [and] not integrated into the mainstream', thus exacerbating the exclusion and vilification of the group (Talmon, 2013, p. 56). Research that examined the relationship between viewers' consumption of Jewish television characters and the stereotypes or attitudes audiences uphold about Jewish individuals remains underdeveloped. However, Hecht et al. (2002) argued that Jewish identity is a fascinating area to explore as Jewish identity exists as a religious subsect (e.g., Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox) and as a cultural or ethnic identity (e.g., Ashkenazi and Sephardic), creating the potential for dynamic intergroup engagement. Jewish identities are ripe for exploration regarding group perceptions and intergroup contact (Sakal, 2021). Amid a contentious time when intergroup conflict—particularly between vulnerable groups and majority individuals (i.e., White Europeans)—is prevalent, understanding the relationship between television consumption and its implications to uphold stereotypes and foster group conflict is necessary.

The current set of studies adopts cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 2002) and mediated contact (Park, 2012) to examine the relationship between viewers' consumption of Jewish television characters and individuals' attitudes toward Jewish stereotypes, anti-Semitism, and Jewish-related social issues. Study 1 investigates the relationship between viewers' consumption of Jewish television characters and Jewish stereotype endorsement. The exploration of stereotype endorsement is noteworthy as belief in negative stereotypes often leads individuals to judge, express bias, and hold negative sentiments toward others (Mastro & Tropp, 2004; Stamps, 2020). However, how these beliefs may manifest specifically toward Jewish individuals is underexamined; therefore, we conducted a second study. Study 2 extends the examination of study 1, using a larger population sample, and explores group-specific outcomes, including anti-Semitism and attitudes toward Jewish social issues (e.g., civil rights protections for Jewish temples and synagogues). Across study 1 and study 2, we expect that when controlling for distinct audience demographic variables such as race and interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals, consumption of Jewish television characters will positively correlate to viewers' Jewish stereotype endorsement (study 1), as well as increased anti-Semitic attitudes and decreased support for Jewish-related social issues (study 2).

Jewish television characters

Television characters that are not straight, White, or Christian are often underrepresented and portrayed negatively in television programming (Mastro & Stamps, 2018). When seen on screen, underrepresented television characters are represented as one-dimensional or presented in tactless cultural storylines (Stamps, 2019). Castle Bell and Harris (2017) discussed how Black television characters are frequently portrayed as violent, overly sexualized, and societal failures. Tukachinsky et al. (2017) found that

Latino television characters are repeatedly depicted as poor, law-breaking, and uneducated. Stamps (2019) contended that Asian characters in television shows are portrayed as the model minority, tiger moms, science fanatics, and bewildered immigrants. The consistent pattern of nonwhite, underrepresented television characters portrayed using negative stereotypes is alarming. Research has established that consumption of unfavorable television portrayals can contribute to audiences' negative perceptions of the groups depicted on screen (Figueroa-Caballero et al., 2019). Moreover, negative perceptions may contribute to decreased support for social issues related to those same vulnerable communities (Ramasubramanian, 2011; Saleem et al., 2016).

Research that examined Jewish television characters has acknowledged negative stereotypical Jewish depictions and the exclusion of salient Jewish storylines (Cooper, 2013; Schrank, 2007; Topic, 2014). Scholars have debated whether Jewish 'portrayals draw upon anti-Semitic tropes, provide realistic depictions of the Jewish-American experience, or sidestep considerations of what it means to be Jewish (Fields, 2020, p. 18). Like other stereotypical television depictions of vulnerable groups (e.g., Latino/a or Asian), Jewish stereotypes are not frequently challenged or questioned within television programming. Rather, the negative stereotypes are reinforced by the Jewish television characters and seen repeatedly across numerous television programs (Cooper, 2013; Topic, 2014).

Jewish television characters often rely heavily on stereotypes that focus on physical appearance, personality traits, and group conduct (Byers & Krieger, 2005). These stereotypes and negative features include Jewish television characters as greedy, guilty, untrustworthy, manipulative, and cold. Researchers have noted that Jewish television characters are often portrayed as anxious, neurotic, and stingy (Mandell, 2020). Ruggieri and Leebron (2010) argued that since the 1950s, there had been a lengthy list of stereotypical portrayals of Jewish women on television, including portrayals that are

> …selfish, pushy, materialistic, domineering, manipulative, assertive, loud, shallow, whiny, demanding, man-hunting, weight-conscious, high-maintenance, shopping-crazed bargain hunters, possessive, controlling, unmarried, success-oriented, food-oriented, asexual, and unattractive. Physical qualities that epitomize these characters include large noses, big hair, and issues with their bodies (p. 41).

Literature that has drawn attention to Jewish television characters often adopts a critical approach and the utilization of case studies. Pickette (2020) examined Rebecca Bunch (Rachel Bloom) from The CW's television series *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (2015–2019) and noted numerous Jewish stereotypes that the character upheld. The stereotypes included the 'Jewish American Princess' and 'Jewish Mother', as well as the traits related to the smothered, neurotic Jewish daughter (Branfman, 2020). Within the television series *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, Rebecca's mental illness was tied to her Jewish identity, and the overarching storyline suggested that she was successful despite her Jewishness (Pickette, 2020).

Similarly, there are unfavorable Jewish television characters in the Netflix series *Orange Is the New Black* (OITNB; 2013–2019). The character, Larry Bloom (Jason Biggs), was depicted as the Jewish 'tortured, brooding, nebbish quality we've come to associate with Woody Allen' (Samuel, 2013, p. 1). Similarly, *OITNB*'s Nicky Nichols' (Natasha Lyonne) physical appearance (i.e., large unruly curly hair and thick New York

Jewish accent) and her manipulative and sarcastic nature are documented as embodiments of noted Jewish stereotypes (Fields, 2020; Ruggieri & Leebron, 2010). Recognition of Jewish television stereotypical depictions is meaningful; however, the relationship between consumption of these depictions and audiences' attitudes may add understanding toward the ever-growing anti-sentiment toward Jewish people. The relationship between increased television consumption and the viewers' attitudes toward such content is best addressed with a discussion of cultivation theory.

Cultivation theory

Cultivation theory has suggested that the consumption of consistent and pervasive television messages can create a distinct relationship in which viewers adopt the version of reality presented on screen regardless of its accuracy (Gerbner et al., 2002). The theory alludes that heavy television viewing (compared to sparse viewing) is more likely to impact a viewer's perception as the images gain prominence due to repeated consumption. Researchers contend that the influence of cultivation may be universal; however, individual differences, such as direct contact or real-world experience with specific groups, are just as likely to impact viewer beliefs (Mastro et al., 2007). In other words, television content is most influential when images do not compete with a person's real-world knowledge. Repeated television images that reinforce specific behaviors or traits may be related to audiences' attitudes despite the lack of experience or exposure the viewers have had with a particular group (Stamps & Sahlman, 2021). Accordingly, if audiences possess firsthand experience with a group or group-based situation, consuming television representations or narratives may not yield assumptions about the group. However, when direct contact is lacking, cultivation effects may be influential (Stamps, 2020). We expect that cultivation effects, including amplified television consumption that reinforces narratives as reality, will impact viewers who lack direct contact with Jewish individuals (Mastro et al., 2007).

Cognitive mechanisms within the cultivation framework include first–order and second–order markers (Potter, 1991). First–order markers describe the concrete features of television content, such as the demographic representation of a group. Audiences may view a sizeable representation of a particular group and believe those individuals are overrepresented in real life. For example, undocumented individuals are often repeatedly seen on news programs as a sizable societal threat, and viewers' increased consumption of this content may create the narrative that their communities are overrun with the group and that their neighborhoods are in danger (Figueroa-Caballero & Mastro, 2019). Second–order markers illustrate the implicit meaning of television content and the inferences audiences make from viewing such material. As a result of second–order markers, audiences who consume news programs that overrepresent undocumented individuals may experience fear, uncertainty and promote tough-on-crime policies (Saleem et al., 2016). As such, this fear, inferred from the subjective representation of undocumented individuals presented on television, may shift audiences' attitudes to believe that when they encounter or interact with undocumented individuals, there is a possibility of unfavorable intergroup interactions (Schemer & Meltzer, 2020). According to cultivation theory, belief in negative stereotypes or judgment toward a group of individuals does not need to be situated in reality or based on real experiences.

The tenets associated with cultivation theory suggest that viewers' consumption of negative television depictions would be related to audiences' attitudes toward negative stereotypes. Appropriately, this would apply to increased television consumption of Jewish characters, many of whom are negatively depicted on television (Cooper, 2013; Topic, 2014). Television consumption denotes quantity; however, repeated viewing of specific characters (i.e., quality) suggests that a relationship between the viewer and the characters, noted as mediated contact, is also influential in the relationship between consumption and attitudes. Hence, a discussion of mediated contact is appropriate.

Mediated contact

Intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) argues that interpersonal engagement among diverse groups may promote distinct attitudes between individuals. The attitudes that result depend on whether contact is positive or negative; thus, positive engagement would render positive attitudes and vice versa. Grounded in intergroup contact theory, mediated contact (Ortiz & Harwood, 2007; Park, 2012) has argued that, similar to face-to-face interpersonal interactions, exposure to groups in mediated contexts (e.g., watching scripted television) may operate in the same manner. Audiences consume television programs that can shape their attitudes, including feelings about cultural or ethnic identities (Stamps & Sahlman, 2021). The Jewish community comprises approximately 0.2% of the global population, and consequently, audiences' interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals may be limited (Anti-Defamation League, 2021). However, the potential for audiences' mediated contact with Jewish characters and attitudes toward the cultural and ethnic traits of the depicted groups is complex and will vary based on the quality of media depictions (Lee et al., 2009).

Scholars have posited that positive television depictions can favorably reflect viewers' perceptions of the individuals seen on screen and contribute to prejudice reduction (Park, 2012). However, research that focused on audiences' consumption of negative television portrayals has noted adverse outcomes, including increased harsh attitudes toward the traits or characteristics of the depicted individuals and negative feelings toward intergroup engagement with that group (Lee et al., 2009; Mastro & Tropp, 2004; Ramasubramanian, 2011). Schemer and Meltzer (2020) found that participants' negative mediated contact with refugees increased prejudicial attitudes toward individuals with similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Ramasubramanian (2011) found that viewing negative media images of Black individuals was related to increased racial animosity and decreased support for race-related policies (e.g., affirmative action). The studies illustrate a salient relationship between audiences' viewing of media or mediated contact–specifically those that include negative depictions–and increased belief in negative stereotypes of various ethnic and cultural groups.

When taken together, theoretical assumptions and empirical evidence rooted in cultivation theory and mediated contact has suggested that negative mediated contact is more likely to occur among viewers due to the overwhelming negative stereotypical depictions of vulnerable groups (Figueroa-Caballero et al., 2019; Saleem et al., 2016; Schemer & Meltzer, 2020). Quantity (i.e., how much of the content is consumed) and quality (i.e., the type of portrayals) of depictions play an instrumental role in a viewer's attitude toward

the media figures (Stamps, 2021). Appropriately, audiences' increased consumption of Jewish television characters–often unfavorably depicted–may be related to increased stereotype endorsement. However, this relationship may depend on interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals and other group–based characteristics (see Figueroa-Caballero et al., 2019; Schiappa et al., 2006). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> H1: A significant relationship exists between viewers' increased consumption of Jewish television characters and Jewish stereotype endorsement (i.e., belief in negative stereotypes) when controlling for participants' demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, race, religion, age) and interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals.

Method – study 1

Participants and Procedure

Participants responded to an online prompt on Amazon Mechanical Turk that asked for participation in a survey on television consumption, and each individual agreed to a consent form before participation. Participants were compensated one dollar, and completion of the survey averaged 10 min. One hundred fifty individuals in the US were recruited and participation was voluntary and anonymous. No one missed the two attention check questions, and all participants completed the online survey; therefore, no one was removed from the final analyses. Seventy-one percent of participants identified as White ($n = 107$), 18% as Asian ($n = 27$), 7% as Black ($n = 10$), and 4% as mixed-race ($n = 6$). Sixty-four percent self-identified as male ($n = 96$), and 36% as female ($n = 54$).

Measures

Jewish television consumption

The study adopted Stamps and Sahlman (2021) measure of identity-based scripted television consumption, which included a list of scripted television shows that featured either a lead Jewish character or a majority of Jewish characters (see Table 1). The television programs were available on broadcast, cable (including basic cable and paid cable networks), and streaming services (e.g., Netflix). Participants rated their consumption of each television show on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = never seen an episode, 7 = watched every episode; $\alpha = .95$, $M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.76$). A composite measure of items was created, and higher scores indicated increased Jewish television consumption.

Interpersonal contact

A single-item question measured participants' interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals (Schiappa et al., 2006). The question stated, 'I have several Jewish people as personal friends', and was assessed on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; $M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.94$). Higher scores indicated increased interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals.

Jewish stereotype endorsement

Mastro and Kopacz (2006) racial stereotype measure was amended to include notable Jewish stereotypes, namely, the stereotypes that Jewish individuals are greedy, guilty,

Table 1. List of scripted television shows measuring Jewish television consumption.

Television Shows	Network	Run Date (in Years)
1. Seinfeld	ABC	1989–1998
2. Friends	NBC	1994–2004
3. Curb Your Enthusiasm	HBO	1999-current
4. Glee	FOX	2009–2015
5. New Girl	FOX	2011–2018
6. The Goldbergs	ABC	2013-current
7. Transparent	Amazon Prime	2014–2019
8. Broad City	Comedy Central	2014–2019
9. Crazy Ex-Girlfriend	CW	2015–2019
10. Schitt's Creek	CBC	2015–2020
11. Grace and Frankie	Netflix	2015-current
12. The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel	Amazon Prime	2017-current
13. The Kominsky Method	Netflix	2018-current
14. Hunters	Amazon Prime	2020-current

untrustworthy, manipulative, and cold (Cooper, 2013; Mandell, 2020; Schrank, 2007; Topic, 2014). Participants rated how much they agreed with the list of Jewish stereotypes on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; α = .93, M = 3.48, SD = 1.42). A composite measure of items was created, and higher scores indicated increased Jewish stereotype endorsement.

Demographic variables

Closed-ended questions asked participants to mark their gender identity (e.g., male, female, gender non-conforming), racial identity (e.g., White, Black, Latino/a, Asian, Middle Eastern, Native American, mixed-race), and religious identity inclusive of atheism and agnosticism (as non-religious identities). Participants typed their ages in an open-ended text box.

Results – study 1

Before examining the proposed hypothesis, bivariate correlations among the variables were analyzed and demonstrated a reasonable association. Variance inflation factor scores were assessed and were within an acceptable range, and suggested a minimal presence of multicollinearity, and variables were mean-centered before data analysis. H1 proposed a positive relationship between Jewish television consumption and Jewish stereotype endorsement when controlling for participants' gender, race, religion, age, and interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals. Hierarchical regression analyses were used to test the proposed relationship. The first block included the variables: gender, race, religion, age, and interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals, the second block contained Jewish television consumption, and Jewish stereotype endorsement was the outcome variable (see Table 2).

The first block, containing the covariates, significantly contributed to participants' Jewish stereotype endorsement, $F(5, 149) = 5.81$; $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .139$. Specifically, non-religious individuals were more likely to express Jewish stereotype endorsement compared to religious persons ($\beta = -.204$, $p = .013$); and individuals lacking interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals were more likely to express Jewish stereotype endorsement than individuals with increased interpersonal contact ($\beta = .266$, $p = .002$).

Table 2. Regression analysis predicting stereotype endorsement, study 1 ($N = 150$).

Variable	ΔR^2	B	SE B	β	t
Block 1	.14***				
Gender		−0.27	.22	−0.09	−1.22
Race		−0.01	.07	−0.01	−0.04
Religion		−0.08	.03	−0.20**	−2.52
Age		−0.01	.01	−0.07	−0.96
Interpersonal Contact		.19	.06	.25**	3.22
Block 2	.27***				
Gender		−0.20	.21	−0.70	−0.95
Race		.03	.06	.03	.42
Religion		−0.02	.03	−0.05	−0.58
Age		−0.01	.01	−0.06	−0.77
Interpersonal Contact		.09	.06	.12	1.48
Jewish TV Consumption		.40	.08	.44***	5.07

Note. Gender (self-identified male = 1, self-identified female = 2); race (White = 1, nonwhite =2); religion (including Christian, Baptist, Buddhist, Jewish, etc. = 1, Atheist and Agnostic = 2) were dichotomously coded.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Participants' gender identity (β = −.09, p = .223), racial identity (β = .04, p = .965), and age (β = −.07, p = .337) did not correlate with Jewish stereotype endorsement. Adding Jewish television consumption significantly improved the model, F_{change} (6, 149) = 25.74; p < .001, ΔR^2 = .265. A significant relationship existed between the consumption of Jewish television characters and Jewish stereotype endorsement when controlling for interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals and demographic characteristics (β = .44, p < .001). H1 was supported.

Rationale – study 1

Study 1 proposed a positive relationship between individuals' consumption of Jewish television characters and Jewish stereotype endorsement. The results align with prior research that noted a significant relationship between the consumption of television characters, which, when centered on underrepresented groups, are often negative, and the potential for viewers to adopt stereotypical attitudes of the represented groups (Mastro & Tropp, 2004). The results from study 1 cautiously suggest that television consumption of Jewish characters may contribute to the socialization of audiences' endorsement of Jewish stereotypes. Although speculative, this may lead to negative perceptions of the group independent of a mediated environment (Saleem et al., 2016). Study 1 utilized a small population sample and explored the possibility of stereotype endorsement, which may not fully address the potential for attitudes outside of mediated contact. Examining stereotype endorsement is important as media scholars have acknowledged the robust relationship between media consumption of underrepresented groups (e.g., racial and sexual minorities) and audiences' increased endorsement of negative group stereotypes (Figueroa-Caballero et al., 2019). However, continued exploration, including using a larger sample and specific outcomes directly related to culture or ethnic identity (e.g., anti-Semitism), may benefit our knowledge of the relationship between media consumption and viewers' attitudes. A belief in a negative stereotype can be damaging in an interpersonal context. However, universally harmful attitudes

directed at a population may have detrimental implications. Jewishness, as a cultural and ethnic identity, is often stereotyped. However, anti-Semitism and the effort to vilify the the Jewish community are on the rise and have led to horrific outcomes (Anti-Defamation League, 2021; Cowan, 2019). As such, study 2 included a larger sample and examined the relationship between audiences' Jewish television consumption and attitudes toward anti-Semitism and Jewish-related social issues. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

> H2a-b: A positive relationship exists between viewers' increased consumption of Jewish television characters, (a) anti-Semitic attitudes, and (b) a decrease in support toward Jewish-related social issues when controlling for participants' general TV consumption, gender, race, religion, age, and interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals.

Method – study 2

Participants and Procedure

Six hundred nineteen US adults were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk and took part in study 2 voluntarily and anonymously. Data from 35 individuals were removed due to missing the attention check questions or having provided incomplete surveys. Of the remaining sample ($N = 584$), 62% self-identified as White ($n = 361$), 13% Asian ($n = 75$), 13% Black ($n = 75$), 7% Latino/a ($n = 39$), 4% Native American ($n = 21$), and 1% mixed race ($n = 13$). Sixty-six percent self-identified as male ($n = 387$) and 34% as female ($n = 197$), with an average age of 36 ($SD = 10.08$). Participants were told they were taking part in a survey to examine their television consumption and paid $3 for their participation. Completion of the survey averaged 20 min.

Measures – study 2

The same measures from study 1 were presented except for stereotype endorsement[1]. The following covariate, general TV consumption[2], and outcome measures, anti-Semitic attitudes, and Jewish-related social issues were added for study 2.

General TV consumption

A general TV consumption measure was created by asking participants to reflect on last week and answer the following questions on a (1) never to (7) everyday scale. 'How often during the weekday (Monday to Friday) did you watch television', and 'How often during the weekend (Saturday and Sunday) did you watch television?' Scores were averaged for both questions ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.55$), and higher scores demonstrated increased general TV consumption.

Anti-Semitic attitudes

Adopting the Anti-Defamation League's (2019) Anti-Semitic Attitudes in the US survey, participants were asked an array of questions regarding Jewish individuals. The eight-item measure included statements such as, 'Jews have too much power in the United States today', and 'Jews are more willing than others to use shady practices to

get what they want'. Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with the statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; α = .95, M = 3.79, SD = 1.79). A composite measure of items was created, and higher scores indicated increased anti-Semitic attitudes.

Jewish-related social issues

Stamps and Sahlman ([2021]) group-based social issues questionnaire was amended to gauge participants' attitudes toward Jewish-related social issues[3]. The six-item measure asked participants to rate their level of support for issues such as 'protections for Jewish individuals under the Civil Rights Act' and 'federal support for Jewish cultural museums[4]'. Participants rated their level of support with the social issues on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = non-supportive, 7 = fully supportive; α = .90, M = 5.55, SD = 1.36). A composite measure of items was created, and higher scores indicated increased support for Jewish-related social issues.

Results – study 2

Similar steps from study 1 were taken before the final analysis of study 2 data, including examining the bivariate correlations and assessing the variance inflation factor scores. H2a proposed a positive relationship between increased consumption of Jewish television characters and anti-Semitic attitudes when controlling for general TV consumption, gender, race, religion, age, and interpersonal contact. Hierarchical regression analyses were used to test the proposed relationship. The first block included general TV consumption, gender, race, religion, age, and interpersonal contact. The second block contained Jewish television consumption, and anti-Semitic attitudes were the outcome variable. The first block, containing the covariates, significantly contributed to anti-Semitic attitudes, $F(6, 582) = 48.76$; $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .330$. Adding consumption of Jewish television characters significantly improved the model, $F_{change} (7, 582) = 106.88$; $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .560$. A significant relationship existed between increased consumption of Jewish television characters and increased anti-Semitic attitudes when controlling for viewer distinct characteristics (β = .56, $p < .001$). H2a was supported (see Table 3 for full results).

H2b proposed a positive relationship between increased Jewish television consumption and decreased support for Jewish-related social issues when controlling for general TV consumption, gender, race, religion, age, and interpersonal contact. The first block included general TV consumption, gender, race, religion, age, and interpersonal contact with Jewish individuals. The second block contained Jewish television consumption, and Jewish-related social issues were the outcome variable. Similar to previous analyses, the covariates significantly contributed to participants' support for Jewish-related social issues, $F(6, 582) = 100.94$; $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .536$. Adding consumption of Jewish television characters improved the model, $F_{change} (7, 582) = 98.74$; $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .546$. A significant relationship existed between the consumption of Jewish television characters and attitudes toward Jewish-related social issues when controlling for viewer distinct characteristics. However, the relationship was counter to the expected hypothesis. Results suggest increased Jewish television consumption is related to increased

Table 3. Regression analyses predicting anti-Semitic attitudes (top) and support for Jewish-related social issues (bottom), study 2 ($N = 584$).

Variable	ΔR^2	B	SE B	β	t
Block 1	.53***				
Gender		.13	.08	.05	1.64
Race		−0.03	.02	−0.04	−1.37
Religion		−0.01	.01	−0.03	−0.92
Age		.01	.01	.02	.61
General Media Consumption		.08	.03	.09**	3.15
Interpersonal Contact		.78	.03	.73**	23.91
Block 2	.54***				
Gender		.16	.08	.06*	1.98
Race		−0.01	.02	−0.02	−0.72
Religion		.01	.01	.01	−0.08
Age		.01	.01	.03	1.07
General Media Consumption		.05	.03	.06	1.86
Interpersonal Contact		.79	.03	.73**	24.29
Jewish TV Consumption		.09	.03	.12**	3.52

Variable	ΔR^2	B	SE B	β	t
Block 1	.34***				
Gender		−0.40	.13	−0.11**	−3.11
Race		−0.16	.03	−0.16**	−4.63
Religion		−0.14	.02	−0.23**	−7.02
Age		−0.02	.01	−0.11**	−3.21
General Media Consumption		.21	.04	.18**	5.08
Interpersonal Contact		−0.38	.05	−0.27**	−7.34
Block 2	.57***				
Gender		−0.23	.11	−0.06*	−2.18
Race		−0.07	.03	−0.07*	−2.46
Religion		−0.06	.02	−0.11**	−3.51
Age		−0.01	.01	−0.05	−1.65
General Media Consumption		.01	.04	.01	.25
Interpersonal Contact		−0.35	.04	−0.24**	−8.21
Jewish TV Consumption		.61	.04	.56***	17.39

Note. Gender (self-identified male = 1, self-identified female = 2); race (White = 1, nonwhite =2); religion (including Christian, Baptist, Buddhist, Jewish, etc. = 1, Atheist and Agnostic = 2) were dichotomously coded.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

support for Jewish-related social issues (β = .14, $p < .001$). H2b was not supported (see Table 3 for full results).

Discussion

Based on extant literature and noted tenets of the theoretical frameworks, it was theorized that the consistent patterns of heavy consumption of Jewish television characters would be related to increased Jewish stereotype endorsement, anti-Semitism, and a decrease in support for Jewish-related social issues. The results suggest the appropriate application of cultivation and mediated contact theories and extend our understanding of audiences' relationship to additional vulnerable communities within the media-effects landscape. Jewish television consumption was related to audiences' stereotypical beliefs about the characters depicted on screen. This may transfer into a real-world context, such as group distinct bias in the form of anti-Semitism.

In line with cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 2002), study 1 results show that increased consumption of stereotypical television depictions may shape audience attitudes regarding

the groups depicted. Over time, heavy television consumption can cultivate an understanding of individuals absent face-to-face interpersonal engagement. Research has shown that these potential relationships are present across audiences' television consumption and stereotype endorsement of Black (Mastro & Tropp, 2004), Latino/a (Figueroa-Caballero et al., 2019), and lesbian and gay individuals (Bond & Compton, 2015), and this may hold for Jewish individuals. Understanding the relationship between television consumption and how it can shape viewers' interpretation of Jewish individuals may increase our knowledge of one mechanism that contributes to and exacerbates intergroup conflict.

Building on study 1, study 2 investigated the relationship between the consumption of Jewish television characters and attitudes toward anti-Semitism and Jewish-related social issues. The proposed hypotheses were partially supported as consumption of Jewish television characters was related to increased anti-Semitic attitudes. The outcome related to H2a further demonstrated the role of negative television depictions of Jewish individuals and the potential for explicit media consumption's relationship to group-specific disdain (Riles et al., 2019). However, H2b was counter to our prediction as there was a positive and significant relationship between Jewish television consumption and support for Jewish-related social issues. This outcome was somewhat surprising but speaks to the complex nature of group identity, the historical context of Jewishness, and the need for recognizing and investigating often underrepresented identities in media effects research (Stamps, 2020).

Previous mediated contact literature has posited a significant relationship between media consumption that featured Muslim (Saleem et al., 2016) and Black individuals (Ramasubramanian, 2011) and audiences' negative attitudes, such as racism and xenophobia, along with decreased support for social issues related to each group. However, the outcomes from study 2 suggest that audiences' consumption of Jewish television programming may be related to a particular level of contempt (i.e., anti-Semitism) and still support the social issues related to the group. Further investigation, including scrutiny of the social issues included in the current study, is needed to help clarify the inconsistent outcomes. From a speculative standpoint, the results from H2b may be related to the malleability of Jewish identity as 'an ethnoreligious group that has a history of racial positionality often [associated with] white-skinned privilege in the United States' (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006, p. 268). In addition to Jewishness' potential benefits as nonracial or lacking a racial distinctiveness, many Jewish individuals (but not all) may seek to assimilate and embrace an 'American' identity, including changing their last names and embracing xenophobic practices (Weinstock, 2021). The collective examples insinuate that audiences may not view Jewish identity and race as synonymous or may consider social issues that align with a nonracial group (e.g., homelessness) as non-confrontational. At this point, this is hypothetical but deserves continued exploration. Study 1 and study 2 aimed to contribute to media effects research and, in doing so, demonstrated cultivation patterns among audiences, particularly mediated contact with stereotypical Jewish television characters and related attitudes toward the group.

Conclusion

The current climate of anti-Semitism and hate crimes against Jewish people in the US and globally highlight the need to explore potential mechanisms that may contribute to

group conflict and recognize policies that could mitigate harm directed at the group (Anti-Defamation League, 2021). The possibility that stereotypical depictions of Jewish individuals on television may cultivate harmful attitudes toward Jewish people can have frightful consequences. The results here noted that religious individuals and those who lack interpersonal contact with the group demonstrated a significant difference in beliefs about Jewish stereotypes (study 1). Moreover, study 2 results showed notable differences among demographic traits concerning anti-Semitic attitudes. For example, age was inversely related to anti-Semitic attitudes and suggests that younger (compared to older) participants may demonstrate increased anti-Semitic attitudes. However, age was positively correlated with interpersonal contact and support for Jewish social issues. The latter results suggest that older participants are more likely to have interpersonal relationships with Jewish people and potentially support issues related to Jewish individuals. Although assessed as covariates, each outcome supports the need for continued investigation of audiences' characteristics and how viewer traits may impact negative attitudes toward vulnerable groups.

To help illustrate the egregiousness of beliefs in negative stereotypes and anti-Semitism, the Jewish Virtual Library (2020)–which tracks hate demonstrations directed toward Jewish individuals–lists over 2,000 anti-Semitic demonstrations in the US. Many of these demonstrations have resulted in direct attacks on Jewish community members. Examples include an assault at Chabad of Poway in Poway, California; a shooting at JC Kosher Supermarket in Jersey City, New Jersey; an attack at a Rabbi's home in Monsey, New York; and a fire at the University of Delaware's Jewish center (Beauchamp, 2019; Cowan, 2019). The explicit actions and expressed anti-Semitism may be attributed to the validation of xenophobia and far-right extremism by the Republican Party, its leadership, and the revival of white nationalism into the mainstream (Finley & Esposito, 2020). It is without question that many non-Jewish individuals are more accepting of Jewish people and other underrepresented groups than in the past (Baker & Bader, 2022). However, amid heightened levels of anti-Semitism, attempts to examine intergroup conflict and additional contributors to such disagreement (e.g., TV consumption) are important and indispensable.

As with most research, the current study is not without limitations. First, like other survey studies, the current set of studies relied on self-report assessments, which could have been impacted by participants' ability to provide socially acceptable responses. Steps were taken–such as providing filler questions that did not focus on Jewish groups or anti-Semitism–to disguise the study's intent, but this issue could have remained. Second, data collection was conducted online for convenience amid a pandemic that necessitated social distancing for researchers and participants. However, the potential for participants to multitask and consequently limit their concentration on the survey questions was possible. Moving forward, researchers may consider controlled environments for data collection. Third, the sample population concentrated on US audiences and therefore limited generalizability. Jewish communities represent global groups, and anti-Semitism is not limited to a specific geographic location. Further research that expands the sample population is needed to reflect the international community better.

Furthermore, survey research does not provide evidence of causality, and the variables' directional influence is somewhat indistinct. Participants may view negatively depicted Jewish characters in scripted television, which drives negative Jewish stereotypes endorsement and anti-Semitism. Conversely, participants may hold biases toward Jewish individuals, and the consumption of scripted television reinforces preexisting attitudes.

Experimental designs are necessary to clarify the directional effect of the measures under investigation. Lastly, additional steps, such as using a longitudinal design, which may include data collected in multiple intervals, thus testing change over time, may help explain patterns (Saleem et al., 2016). Despite the limitations, this work offers preliminary insight into audiences' consumption of Jewish characters in scripted television and the potential for consumption to influence viewers' attitudes toward Jewish communities.

Notes

1. The measure, Jewish-stereotype endorsement, was not included in study 2 as extant literature has repeatedly supported the assertion that audiences' mediated contact with underrepresented groups is often related to negative stereotype endorsement. Study 1 aimed to extend that literature to include Jewish individuals, and the results suggest the group's inclusion. Due to the veracious and reliable literature, we aimed to use study 2 to shift the conversation and explore different outcomes, including attitudes (e.g., support of social issues) and explicit forms of bias related to Jewish individuals (e.g., anti-Semitism).
2. Cultivation studies often examine general consumption outside of identity-focused consumption. We did not examine this measure in study 1, and as a corrective tool, we introduced the measure as a covariate in study 2.
3. Stamps and Sahlman's group-based social issues measure focused on Black communities and included social issues related to affirmative action, segregation, and actions geared toward diversity, equity, and inclusion.
4. The amended Jewish-related social issues measure included the following topics: (1) Protections for Jewish individuals under the Civil Rights Act; (2) Federal support for Jewish cultural museums; (3) Zero tolerance for anti-Semitic Hate Crimes; (4) Safeguarding of Temples/Synagogues; (5) Protection from anti-Semitism for Jewish community centers; and (6) Safeguards in place for Jewish college organizations and student groups.
   There are no competing interests to declare, and we confirm that there are no relevant financial or non-financial competing interests to report for the current submission.
   Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on request.

ORCID

Lyric Mandell 🄳 http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2387-8484
David L. Stamps 🄳 http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7435-853X

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