

# Media influence and ethnic identity

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



This paper gives a critical review of the literature on media depictions of minorities in Canada. I propose that the research tends to center on tabularize the under-representation and misrepresentation of ethnic minorities.

### Media Influence and Ethnic Identity

The depiction of ethnic minorities in Canadian media serves to play an alarming part in determining the structure of Canadian minority identities. Researchers have insisted that it is imperative to research media-minority relations because the media play a crucial part in the creation of social identities (Henry). The media gives a vital source of data through which people gain information about their country, and our approaches and viewpoints are formed by what the media distinguishes as public information. The media is directly accountable for how Canada, in all its multiplicity, is interpreted among its people. Simply put, the media is accountable for the ways that Canadian society is interpreted, considered, and assessed among its habitants.

The media influences attitudes in Canada by siphoning and selecting the data we receive to make choices about our day-to-day realities. Though, this selection procedure is governed by a series of vitals. Media images of Canadian ethnic minorities are not just a random panoply of depictions. Verdicts about depictions of cultural multiplicity must be envisaged within a series of opposing discourses taking place within media institutions. In spite of what we would like to consider, Canadian media is not just and

democratic, nor objective in nature (Hackett, Gruneau, Gutstein, Gibson and NewsWatch).

Ethnic Minority groups are regularly disqualified and marginalized, and the leading culture is reinforced as the custom. As researchers have established (Fleras and Kunz; Henry) the media push certain traits, most often negative, about ethnic minorities into the limelight, at the same time as others are downplayed or totally absent from depictions. How does this influence identity creation among ethnic Minority groups?

Negative depictions of ethnic minorities teach ethnic minorities in Canada that they are hostile, abnormal, and inappropriate to country-building.

Canadian media persist to transmit negative and conventional images that only serve to degrade ethnic Minority Canadians. In other words, ethnic minorities do not see themselves precisely mirrored in Canadian media, and that marginalization effects feelings of segregation.

In Canada, questions adjoining the association between identity development among ethnic minorities and media are mainly weighed down because of multicultural policy. It has been recommended that in countries where official multiculturalism is legislated, multifaceted forms of racial discrimination can materialize through a variety of media depictions of ethnic minorities (Dunn and Mahtani, 163-171).

Ethnic Minority Depiction: Under-representation And Mis-representation

Since its beginning in the late 1960s to the 1980s, research on media-ethnic minority relationships was largely distant with probing the two main ways in which ethnic minorities are problematically treated in media accounts. First is the under-representation (or absence) of ethnic minorities. The second refers to the misrepresentation (or negative depiction) of ethnic minorities

#### A) Under-representation

The under-representation of a variety of cultural groups in Canadian media has been evocative of their insignificance or their nothingness. Most of the early research on ethnic depiction was concerned with inducting their nonexistence in the media sequentially to exhibit this argue. Different researchers have found that regardless of the culturally miscellaneous nature of Canadian society, that very multiplicity is frequently missing from media depictions (Fleras and Kunz 2001; Fleras 267-292).

As Fleras (1995) spots out, the lack of ethnic minorities in the Canadian media is the law, rather than the exemption. In Canada, interracial relationships in spectacular series are rare. This efficiently reveals that the media is not exactly providing a mirror in which ethnic minority Canadians can see themselves -- and their dating models -- mirrored.

In a study of ethnic minorities' depiction in Canadian amusement programs, MediaWatch scrutinized eight made-in-Canada dramatic series and exposed that only 4 percent of the female characters and 12 percent of the male characters were from diverse ethnic or racial locale (MediaWatch). This exposes that ethnic minorities (and in particular ethnic minority women) are

relentlessly underrepresented in equally dramatic series and in news. Miller and Prince (1994) gave a comparable assessment from a news point of view by looking at the photos and news stories printed in six foremost Canadian newspapers. They concluded that out of the 2, 141 photos printed, ethnic minorities were presented in only 420 images.

Media researchers have specified that the impact of ethnic Minority eccentricity in the media merely serves to more embed the invisibility of ethnic minorities in the general public (Fleras 1995). Ethnic minorities in Canada do not see themselves mirrored in the media, and this effects feelings of refusal, belittles their assistance, and lessens their part as people in their nations (Jiwani 1995). For example, in their paper " Media (Mis)Depictions: Muslim Women in the Canadian Country," Bullock and Jafri give extracts from their focus groups where Muslim women met to talk about the representation of Muslim women in the media. (35-40)

#### B) Mis-representation

A helpful result of these before time studies was that it gave a momentum for media researchers to examine how the media portrays ethnic minorities when they are actually represented. Researchers have recommended that the depiction of non-prevailing cultures normally prolonged in recent decades (Fleras 1995). One of the means in which Eurocentric domination is maintained is by restraining the kinds of depictions of ethnic minorities in the media to unconstructive or striking stereotypes.

Ethnic minorities have persisted that media images of their elements disclose a remorseless pessimism in their description. Media researchers have pointed to the negative depictions of ethnic minorities in a variety of studies. In studies emerging in the 1970s, researchers in Canada have time after time pointed out that the media "rot ... on race-specific and culture cognizant characterizations of people".

Canadian media keep it up to rely on both negative and conservative depictions of ethnic minorities (Roth 1996; MediaWatch 1994; Fleras 1994; Zolf 13-26). Fleras (1994) has explained how ethnic minority images in Canadian media are constantly conservative ones, "steeped in groundless simplifications that swerve towards the comical or bizarre" (Fleras 1994: 273), where the examples of ethnic minorities as "social problems" are regularly employed: namely, as pimps, high-school dropouts, homeless teens, or drug pushers in Canadian dramatic series.

Fleras argues a modicum of media depictions of First Nations people, counting "the noble savage," "the savage Indian," "blood-thirsty barbarians," and "the drunken Native," among other damaging stereotypes (Fleras 1994; see also Fleras and Kunz 2001).

In television and newsprint and political cartoons, media's fighters were altered primitives, colossal depictions of Indian activists" (Valaskakis 224-234). Gender is a relatively unfamiliar feature of studies about ethnic Minority depiction, as Jiwani (1995) has designated.

Several actors and news anchors have spoken out candidly about their apprehensions about ethnic falsification in the media. Rita Deverell, senior producer of Vision TV, has expressed her views about the awkward interpretation of ethnic minorities in television. Deverell has pointed out that, compared to American images, " we have very few negative, wicked depictions of women of color.

Undoubtedly, many researchers be in agreement that in typical media in Canada, ethnic minorities are offered as intimidation, with explicit positionings of " us" and " them" in which the former is an understood mainstream audience, and the latter is the ethnic minority (Fleras and Kunz 2001). This occurrence is unhappily not restricted to television dramas -- it happens in newspapers and television news too. In a study of ethnic minorities and First Nations peoples' depiction in two major Winnipeg papers, a report conducted by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (1996) found that ethnic minorities are often shorn of admittance to the media and quote the problematical reportage of ethnicity when it is inappropriate to the event or incident.

Tator (1995) has established that ethnic minorities are continuously being " singled out" and identified as the cause of a " social problem" in media depictions. Using the example of the " Writing Through Race" Conference held in Vancouver of 1994, she explains that the media continually misrepresents and distorts issues of importance to ethnic minorities.

A few of the most inquisitive work on the continuation of typecasts has discovered the ways ethnic minorities have been normalized in Canadian

news reports. Numerous government reports furnished through official multiculturalism have scrutinized the reporting of variety in the media, closing that stereotypes and negative images flourish (see Karim 1995). Ducharme (1986, 6-11) scrutinized national newspaper reporting of the Canadian immigration policy for a five-year period.

Through the early 1990s, researchers gave a helpful Canadian equivalent to U. S. studies that were worried with anti-Islamic images reproducing in American news. Support groups have also added toward this discussion -- a working example includes the report created by the Afghan Women's Organization, which appraises research, local activism, and community viewpoints on the portrayal of Muslim women in Canadian media.

Supported on a six-month assessment of coverage of numerous Canadian newspapers, the MediaWatch Group of the Canadian Islamic Congress carried out a study of anti-Islamic media exposure, advocating results to the media industry (Canadian Islamic Congress 1998, 51).

Henry et al. (1995) propose that this type of racism remains acutely surrounded within media institutions, where structuralist racism still permeates depictions, and regular patterns of under- and misrepresentation continue to strengthen uneven power relations.

The tapered range of images of ethnic minorities has successfully reduced the aptitude of ethnic minorities to be distinguished as optimistic providers to Canadian society. Media researchers have pointed out that these unconstructive stereotypes are reason for concern because it creates a



divide between ethnic minorities and so-called "real" Canadians -- visible ethnic Minority Canadians are seen as "others" or "foreigners" who potentially have the power to threaten the country (Fleras 1995). The reinforcement of negative stereotypes ethnically pathologizes ethnic minorities, advancing racial divides.

...Through examining the depictions of people of color in the media ... [it seems clear that the] dominant culture continues to establish its power and protect its supremacy by inculcating negative and conservative images of ethnic minorities ... generating a indistinct awareness on the part of the conventional of ethnic minorities. (Henry, 1999: 135-136)

## Conclusion

This paper maintains that the ways the media expose and account on ethnic minority groups in Canada very much affects the ways the public distinguishes ethnic Minority groups in Canadian society. Wide-ranging research crossways disciplines show that ethnic minorities are frequently typecasted in mass media. Media images can promote manners of acceptance and agreement or of fear and pessimism. When media representations fail to represent Canada's ethnic minorities with compassion, the entire country undergoes the consequences.

Media workers require believing and creating substitute depictions of ethnic minorities and it may well be our duty to build up coalitions with them to give confidence other sorts of images.

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