

Empathy and the Hostile Media Phenomenon

By

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Abstract

The hostile media phenomenon (HMP) is commonly found and studied across a variety of contexts. In most settings it is considered a dysfunctional process that derails thoughtful deliberation. While the majority of the literature has explored factors causing HMP as well as its mechanisms, few have studied how to reduce it. Given that empathy involves the sharing of others' emotions, the creation of tender responses and the act of perspective-taking (placing oneself into others' shoes), this study proposes the use of empathy as a solution. Given how controversial immigration issues have become, this dissertation investigates whether and how empathy impacts HMP regarding news coverage of undocumented immigrants. This study is based on an online experiment conducted in February, 2017, through Amazon Mechanical Turk (N = 585), with two 2 (emotion manipulation: non-empathetic vs. empathetic) \times 2 (measured preexisting attitude: pro-immigrant vs. pro-deportation) designs; one for a balanced article and one for a slanted article (toward pro-immigrant).

In these data, HMP is present in the balanced non-empathetic condition while relative HMP is present in the slanted non-empathetic condition. In other words, the perceptions of media bias between pro-immigrant and pro-deportation participants are found to be significantly different from each other in both cases, and the differences went in the expected direction consistent with traditional HMP findings. However, such differences are not found in both conditions with empathetic narrative elements. In other words, empathy is shown to reduce HMP in the empathetic balanced condition and the relative HMP in the empathetic slanted condition. Additional analyses show that, among participants who viewed an attitude-congruent pro-immigrant news article, those in the empathetic condition found the reporting to be more favorable than those in the non-empathetic condition. Yet, empathy is not capable of making

those who viewed an empathetic incongruent news article perceive less hostility than those who viewed a non-empathetic incongruent article.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

It would be atypical to see a child get separated from his or her family and not feel a sense of sadness. It would also be odd to see someone get tortured and not feel a sense of discomfort. Such sharing of emotions upon seeing someone else's experience through taking another's perspective can be referred to as empathy (Davis, 1994; Decety & Jackson, 2006). Through anticipating the feelings and actions of others, as well as to consider and/or to adopt another's viewpoints (Davis, 1983; Piaget, 1932), individuals are likely to relate to another (Egan, 1990) and be concerned with another's misfortunes (Betancourt, 1990; Davis, 1983).

Many times, even though we have no prior contact nor knowledge of someone, we can still experience feelings within us simply by hearing something about an absent other's condition. As we often come to know about different things including other individuals or other groups of people through the media, we are likely to confront a variety of feelings, including but not limited to empathy, during daily news consumption. In fact, journalists do appeal to our empathy from time to time, and news coverage that contains elements of empathy are found to influence how audiences perceive controversial issues such as immigration (Haynes, 2013).

To extend the literature on affect and media effects, this research aims to look at whether and how empathy can impact the hostile media phenomenon (HMP). Such phenomenon refers to the way partisan individuals from both sides of an issue tend to perceive the exact same news story to be biased against their point of view (Vallone, Ross & Lepper, 1985). In other words, they fail to process news congruently. Several socially undesirable consequences have been suggested regarding HMP. First, according to the persuasive press inference theory (Gunther, 1998), partisans who perceive the media to be hostile against their opinions are also likely to

think that the public is in general hostile to their stance. Such perceived public hostility can then transfer into social alienation, especially among those who view themselves as minority (Tsfati, 2007). Moreover, perception of hostile public opinion can also motivate individuals to speak up more in order to counteract the perceived media's influence on the public (Rojas, 2010). Besides, HMP can drive individuals, especially those who experience psychological discomfort, to selectively seek confirming information while avoiding negative information (Fischer, Jonas, Frey, & Schulz-Hardt, 2005; Festinger, 1964; Tsang, 2017). This can then lead to polarization of views (Stroud, 2010). Most importantly, HMP has been shown to cause media distrust, a decrease in trust in democracy and the willingness to violently resist the government (Tsfati & Cohen, 2005). Hence, it is safe to conclude that, HMP undermines political legitimacy and democracy in various manners.

Given that HMP is generally undesirable, a few studies have attempted to reduce such phenomenon. Two studies found evidence that media literacy training can reduce audiences' perception of media bias by increasing trust in media as well as host and program credibility (Vraga & Tully, 2015; Vraga, Tully, & Rojas, 2009). In addition, the opportunity to opt out of disagreeing news programming or of news programming altogether was also found to be capable of reducing HMP through making audiences to perceive the news programming as fairer (Arceneaux, Johnson, & Murphy, 2012). Aiming to contribute to this line of research, this study proposes that empathy can reduce or eliminate HMP. In addition, given how often supporters of an issue can come to see a news story as significantly more or less biased than opponents of the same issue, empathy is introduced as an instrument to narrow that perception gap. This HMP study is therefore not only of academic interest to explore the relationship between empathy and HMP, but also of civic importance to reduce perception gaps given the increasingly polarized

political spectrum and the decline of media trust in the United States.

Indeed, studies have shown that the political climate is becoming more and more partisan (Manjoo, 2011; Price, 2014). Not only the differentiation between party platforms has grown wider, voters who identify with these distinctions have also increased (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008). A survey conducted in 2014 showed that the ideological overlap between the two major parties has diminished, whereas many Republicans and Democrats held negative views of the opposing party including viewing the opposing side as a “threat to the Nation’s well-being” (Pew Research Center, 2014). This seems to imply that people in general fail to appreciate other people’s perspectives and/or to compromise when needed.

Furthermore, trust in mass media has dropped to a new low. According to a Gallup poll in 2016, only 32% of respondents reported having “a great deal or fair amount” of trust in the media. Such decline in viewing the media “to report the news fully, accurately and fairly” (Jones, 2016) implies that citizens in general fail to see others’ positions as sincere and potentially reasonable (Ross & Ward, 1995). In other terms, many fail to accept the existence of an interpretation of an issue other than their own, and people often anticipate disagreeing arguments to be biased, irrelevant, and potentially lying for some personal gain (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979). This is consistent with what HMP suggests, that whenever one is exposed to information, in particular incongruent information, one is likely to disregard it and see it as biased against one’s own stance.

On one hand, we have news audiences who fail to see others’ perspectives as sincere and reasonable; on the other hand, empathy involves people recognizing others’ thoughts and feelings through perspective-taking (Davis, 1994; Decety & Jackson, 2006). According to the literature, empathy not only involves the sharing of emotional responses (Bandura, 2002; Davis,

1980; Zillmann, 2006), but it also includes the understanding and identification with another person's perspective (Burke, 1973; Davis, 1994; Dethier & Blairy, 2012). The goal of this dissertation is therefore to examine the link between empathy and HMP. Does empathy help attenuate HMP? Can imagination and estimation of another's thoughts and feelings (Strauss, 2004) aid perceiving others' perspectives as sincerer and less hostile? If HMP occurs because partisans are so immersed in their own way of thinking and lose sight with others' point of view, can empathy straighten out the gap of media bias perception between any two camps? Such findings will shed light on the mechanism of HMP as well as the conditions in which the public can restore trust in the press or even their opponents. More importantly, this research not only studies HMP in relation to non-empathetic news coverage, but also slanted news reports which are now, also readily available given the rise of partisan media outlets (Stroud, 2010).

To put empathy to the test, this study selected the issue of undocumented immigrants for its significance in recent years, especially after President Donald Trump's immigration ban on seven Muslim-majority countries, as well as his call to deport all illegal immigrants and to build a wall along the US-Mexico border. In fact, illegal immigration, being a controversial topic, greatly reflects the tension between left- and right-wing politics in the US. In general, Americans are divided as to whether all illegal immigrants should be deported. According to a Gallup survey in 2016, 32% of Americans reported favoring deportations of all illegal immigrants and 66% opposed such idea (Swift, 2016).

Given how controversial the issue is and how empathy has been found to soften stances through perspective-taking (Decety & Jackson, 2006), this research examines whether empathetic media coverage can reduce HMP using two 2 (valence: balanced vs. pro-immigrant) x 2 (emotion: non-empathetic vs. empathy) x 2 (measured preexisting attitude: pro-immigrant vs.

pro-deportation) experimental design. Participants were randomly exposed to one of four articles (non-empathetic balanced, empathetic balanced, non-empathetic pro-immigrant, and empathy pro-immigrant) and were asked to answer questions on media perceptions (i.e., persuasiveness, article objectivity, perceived influence, and perceived media biases).

Chapter 2

The Hostile Media Phenomenon

The hostile media phenomenon (HMP) refers to the way partisans on separate sides of an issue come to see the exact same news story to be hostile against their personal point of view (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). In other words, individuals with different stances fail to process news congruently. Such phenomenon has been found across a diversity of contexts, including politics (Eveland & Shah, 2003; Feldman, 2011; Hoge & Glynn, 2010; Reid, 2012; Rojas, 2010), Israeli settlements (Tsfati, 2007; Tsfati & Cohen, 2005), labor strikes (Christen, Kannaovakun, & Gunther, 2002), gambling issues in Singapore (Chia, Yong, Wong, & Koh, 2007), global warming (Kim, 2011), genetically modified food (Gunther, Miller, & Liebhart, 2009), genetically modified organisms (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006), primate research (Gunther & Chia, 2001), as well as sports (Arpan & Raney, 2003).

In one classic study, partisans who self-identified as pro-Arab and pro-Israeli viewed a news broadcast on the 1982 Beirut massacre (Vallone, Ross & Lepper, 1985). Interestingly, while the coverage contained reporting of both sides of the issue, pro-Arab and pro-Israeli partisans both interpreted the news report to be unfavorable toward their stance. Vallone and his colleagues (1985) then proposed that, it is due to the extreme positions each side held, such that balanced information could not conform to their strong preexisting belief system. Hence, partisans are likely to interpret neutral news content as biased; Vallone and colleagues (1985) called it the “hostile media phenomenon.”

Another study presented participants with a pamphlet containing both pro- and anti-death penalty messages (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979). Findings suggest that the participants were a lot more critical of the disconfirming information than the confirming information. Again, even

when a neutral reader would rate the news report as neutral and fair, partisans are likely to see the coverage as biased against their own point of view (Christen, Kannaovakun, & Gunther, 2002; Gunther & Schmitt, 2004; Schmitt, Gunther, & Liebhart, 2004). As a result, rather than causing doubt or softening of one's personal stance, any intake of new information, even neutral one, is likely to polarize attitudes toward the message.

Consistent with traditional HMP research using a stimulus which presents both sides of an issue (e.g., Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Gunther & Liebhart, 2006; Gunther & Schmitt, 2004; Schmitt et al., 2004; Vallone et al., 1985), this study anticipates HMP to be present among participants in the non-empathetic balanced condition in two manners. On one hand, both pro-immigrant participants and pro-deportation participants are expected to perceive the exact same balanced news story written in a non-empathetic tone on immigration to be hostile toward their personal position, moving away from strictly neutral. In this sense, "strictly neutral" acts as a point of reference to both sides' bias perceptions.

Besides such traditional HMP measure, this dissertation also tests whether participants from both sides perceive media bias congruently, regardless of whether their perceptions are hostile against the neutral point. In other words, perceptions of one side will be the reference point for the other side, and perceptions of both sides are expected to differ when HMP is present. According to Vallone, Ross, and Lepper (1985), partisan individuals in general fail to process news congruently. In this sense, a perception gap is expected between pro-immigrant participants and pro-deportation participants as both sides are likely to perceive media bias differently. The reason to examine such gap is due to the fact that even if both pro-immigrant participants and pro-deportation participants do not perceive the identical news stimulus to be different from strictly neutral, their ratings of perceived media bias might still be significantly

different, which means incongruent processing still exists regardless of the presence of HMP. In sum, both expectations are hypothesized as follow:

H1a: Both pro-immigrant participants and pro-deportation participants reading a non-empathetic balanced news story on immigration will perceive the content to be hostile toward their personal position.

H1b: Perceptions of bias rated by pro-immigrant participants and pro-deportation participants will be significantly different from each other in the non-empathetic balanced condition.

It should be noted that, implications of congruent news processing can be complicated. While reduction in HMP can imply both sides of an issue can come to be on the same page and perceive the “right” amount of media bias, they can in fact be failing to accurately perceive media content to be biased against them. In other words, as both sides have different agendas, the presence of HMP might not be due to erroneous perception but due to how both sides compare the exact same content against different standards and therefore interpret it through different point of views. Given both groups’ point of reference can be completely different, HMP can actually mean they both are capable of being aware of media biases against their stance.

Relative HMP

HMP is not only limited to messages which are unbiased (Vallone et al., 1985; Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994). Although early tests of the hostile media effect typically employ stimulus material that is objectively neutral or balanced, researchers have also experimentally tested HMP with slanted messages and found that partisans on opposite sides also interpreted the content to be biased or slanted in a “relatively disagreeable” direction (e.g. Choi, Yang, & Chang, 2009; Coe et al., 2008). This line of research is necessary as the relatively “fair and

objective” diet of news is no longer the norm given the increasingly diversified and opinionated media landscape (Harwood, 2009). While the order and relative distance between the two sides of partisans does not change, their perceived bias slides up or down along the spectrum depending on which side the coverage is slanted towards. In this sense, no matter whether the news is balanced or slanted, we should still find divergent perceptions from opposing camps; Gunther, Christen, Liehart, and Chia (2001) called it “relative hostile media perception.”

In the current study, relative HMP is expected to be present among participants exposed to a slanted (pro-immigrant) article on immigration written in a non-empathetic tone. While both pro-immigrant and pro-deportation participants will find the pro-immigrant article to favor illegal immigrants, pro-deportation participants will rate it to be even more biased in favor of illegal immigrations than pro-immigrant participants. In other words, the gap of perceived media bias between the two groups is still expected to be significantly different from each other, but the gap will now be situated towards the pro-immigrants’ end (H2). Based on relative HMP, the following hypothesis can be offered:

H2: Compared to pro-immigrant participants’ evaluations, pro-deportation participants will perceive pro-immigrant information presented as a slanted (pro-immigrant) news story to be more biased in favor of the pro-immigrant position.

Cognitive Mechanisms

Lord and colleagues (1979) proposed that biased assimilation could have caused HMP. Partisans who hold strong opinions are more likely to be subject to assimilation, which leads to flawed cognitive processing to defend a certain position. As a result, they tend to remember more strengths of confirming evidence and more weaknesses of disconfirming evidence. They also are likely to judge confirming evidence but not disconfirming evidence as more relevant and

reliable. In general, assimilation suggests that partisans accept congruent information at face value while scrutinizing incongruent information hypercritically. This is consistent with what Vallone and colleagues (1985) have claimed, that partisans process arguments in light of their pre-existing attitudes and beliefs, such that incongruent information is regarded as biased evidence that goes against their large pools of congruent arguments. As already seen, early HMP research mostly emphasized these cognitive processes. Later HMP studies focuses on three cognitive processes—selective recall, selective categorization, and different standards (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994), which were advanced as causal mechanisms underlying HMP.

Selective recall. HMP researchers hypothesized that because more cognitive resources are devoted to the disconfirming messages than agreeable ones, incongruent information will be recalled more proximately than confirming information; this was named selective recall (Schmitt, Gunther, & Liebhart, 2004). As individuals pay more attention to unfavorable content than favorable ones, the disagreeable content is therefore more dominant, salient, and better remembered. As an example, both pro-Arab and pro-Israeli partisans perceived that a much higher percentage of references to their side were unfavorable than favorable (Vallone et al., 1985). Nonetheless, most HMP experiments that have measured selective recall have found it to be otherwise. In other words, among those who exhibit HMP, individuals selectively recall more agreeable items when asked to list a small number of statements they recall from the stimulus (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Gunther & Liebhart, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2004) while Arpan and Raney (2003) found no relationship between partisanship and recall. In sum, selective recall has not been well supported, and findings in general lends support to biased assimilation, which is the tendency to interpret and process information such that the desired conclusion can be supported (Edwards & Smith, 1996; Lord et al., 1979). While assimilation is found to be more

common than selective recall, it should be noted that asking participants to recall items might not be the best way to test such hypothesis. In fact, partisans are more likely to hold more congruent schemas, and it is therefore not surprising for them to draw upon their existing beliefs and report more agreeable items when asked to recall statements from the stimulus.

Selective categorization. Selective categorization refers to how partisans assign valence to individual statements from a media message differently (Schmitt et al., 2004). In this sense, both sides tend to interpret more statements as contrary to their personal stance. It is hypothesized that partisans would perceive neutral or even positive argument as negative, compared to non-partisans (Schmitt et al., 2004).

This explanation has been tested in two manners. First, participants were first asked to recall items from the stimulus and then evaluate each item in terms of its valence (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994). Schmitt and colleagues (2004) found inconsistent results – one group of partisans categorized the majority of items as disconfirming whereas the other group of partisans categorized the majority of items as confirming. This can be expected, as similar to selective recall, partisan individuals tend to hold more congruent schemas, and therefore are more likely to recall agreeable arguments at the first place. Schmitt and colleagues (2004) argue that such method confounds with recall, and they therefore refined Giner-Sorolla and Chaiken's (1994) method by skipping the recall stage and listed six excerpts for participants to rate each excerpt's valence instead. Indeed, Gunther and Liebhart (2006) found that excerpt categorization positively predicts perceptions of bias. Nonetheless, this method can still be problematic. As pointed by the authors themselves, selective categorization of excerpts uses the same items used to measure HMP (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006), and therefore this explanation is weak.

Different standards. Instead of rating each statement with different perceptions of

valence, the different standards explanation states that partisans dismiss opposing arguments due to both sides holding different standards for what is deemed to be valid and relevant (Schmitt et al., 2004). In this sense, partisans from both sides have different standards as to what make a neutral article, and they reject disagreeable information because they tend to find the opposing statements to be irrelevant and invalid (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994). Hence, unlike selective categorization in which new information is rated as disagreeable, the different standards mechanism rejects new information entirely because partisans believe their own position is the only valid position (Schmitt et al., 2004). Even though studies have shown that partisans were more likely to judge an unfavorable excerpt as inaccurate and thus exercise different sets of standards to either assimilate or contrast new information (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2004), Schmitt and colleagues (2004) found that the different standards mechanism does not appear to explain HMP. As a result, new mechanisms are in demand.

Source reach. As HMP concerns developed about mass media, scholars started to manipulate source and message factors, which are believed to be responsible for bringing HMP effects. For instance, Gunther and Schmitt (2004) tested the reach hypothesis, which suggests that partisans tend to be concerned with how mediated content can reach a wide audience and therefore undesirable content might have negative influence on the public, especially people who they perceive to be less knowledgeable and vulnerable. In their study, source reach is manipulated by having identical content in two different media: a newspaper article (high reach) and a student essay (low reach). The findings support Gunther and Schmitt's (2004) expectation, that HMP is only present in the high-reach article condition but not in the low-reach student essay condition. In other words, partisans only get to perceive media hostility when exposed to the high-reach newspaper article. As a follow-up study, Gunther and Liebhart (2006)

manipulated whether an article is written by a student or a journalist, and findings have consistently supported the reach hypothesis together with some other studies (Christen & Huberty, 2007; Gunther et al., 2009). Furthermore, Gunther and colleagues (2009) examined whether the type of media source plays a role. They found that a national newspaper which is supposed to have the greater potential reach aroused less favorable perceptions than a daily regional newspaper and a student essay. Again, the findings support the reach hypothesis, that a prominent high-reach newspaper arouses HMP.

The rationale behind the reach hypothesis is that, given partisans are worried a large number of audiences will likely be reached and influenced by the media content, they are more skeptical towards the information and hence see more bias (Gunther & Schmitt, 2004). This is consistent with the persuasive press inference theory (Gunther, 1998), in which partisans perceive media hostility due to their fear of the reach and influence of those messages. While partisans are more involved in the issue, defensive processing is more easily activated among them. In sum, current explanations of HMP focuses on cognitive components, and this study suggests the need for more emphasis on affective components to complement current cognitively focused findings.

Affective Mechanisms

As we have seen, most theoretical expositions shed light on the cognitive explanations of HMP. Given that findings regarding those available mechanisms were not shown to correlate with HMP consistently and/or were impossible to measure using current tools (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2004), other explanations are left unexplored (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Gunther & Liebhart, 2006). In fact, many scholars have started to study emotions in political science (Marcus, 2000; Marcus, Neuman, & Mackuen, 2000). While Higgins, Kuiper,

and Olson (1981) stressed the importance of affect in social information processing, not much has been done to look at how emotions affect information biases. Such a shift from cognitive to affective mechanism suggests that emotion processes aroused by news stories influence evaluations of that content, not only in attitudes and thoughts but also in behaviors (Marcus, 2000).

There are three reasons why one should expect affect to play a role in HMP. First, affect can act as the motivational force for biased processing; second is the role of affect on decision-making; third is how affect is closely related to partisanship and involvement. According to Lazarus (1991), emotion is central to human activity and emotion provides a “source of insight into oneself” (p. 18). By studying emotions, one is able to learn about how a person makes sense of their environment or certain situations at the moment. Lazarus (1991) suggested that emotions can serve as two types of motivations. One is people’s dispositional or personality trait and the other is motivations based on the appraisal of their environment. For instance, when one encounters a disconfirming message, negative emotions are generally generated and such emotions motivate one to do something about such negativity. In this sense, emotions act like a motivational drive to HMP.

Second, psychological research has shown how affective states can impact decision-making (e.g., Forgas, 2000; Petty, Desteno, & Rucker, 2001). For instance, reactance theory suggests that individuals are free to hold a set of beliefs (Kornberg, Linder, & Cooper, 1970). However, when their beliefs are threatened with elimination, probably due to exposure to disagreeing information, psychological reactance will be motivated and aroused (Kornberg et al., 1970). When such a motivational state occurs, it is usually accompanied by negative emotional state (e.g., Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) as well as hostility (e.g., Berkowitz, 1973). In addition, the

functional emotion theory suggests that discrete emotions have their unique character and can exert different influences on information processing (Izard, 1993). As an example, Nabi (2003) has shown that fear and anger can differentially affect information accessibility as well as desired information seeking. In sum, affect, discrete or not, can play a vital role in news processing and news consumption habits.

Lastly, given that HMP is mostly found among partisans, and partisanship is widely defined as “an affective attachment to an important group-object in one’s environment” (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960, p. 143), a role of emotion in partisans' information processing could be expected. Indeed, recent literature has shown how affective polarization as a more adequate conceptualization of polarization (Garrett et al., 2014; Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016). This is not to suggest that partisanship is solely affective, but that its affective drive should not be neglected (Greene, 2002). In this sense, strong partisans could use their emotional states as a source of information when asked to evaluate media content. Meanwhile, the close relationship between affect and involvement is supported by the social judgment theory, in which ego involvement in social issues is said to predict evaluation of messages concerning those issues (Hovland, Harvey, & Sherif, 1957). The theory predicts that, as people’s ego involvement increases, the probability of a message being rejected also increases (Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1965; Sherif & Hovland, 1961). In fact, studies have looked at how different kinds of involvement affect HMP. For example, Johnson and Eagly (1989) tested the effects of value-relevant involvement and outcome-relevant involvement. According to the authors, value-relevant involvement (or ego involvement) represents values held by the in-group members or partisans. In this sense, the “psychological state that is created by the activation of attitudes that are linked to important values” (Johnson & Eagly, 1989, p. 290) plays a role in HMP. Given that

affect is part of individuals' social and personal values, emotions can be expected to explain HMP in some sense.

To sum up, if asked to complement HMP cognitive explanations, affective mechanisms might be a good place to start. In fact, Jervis, Lebow, and Stein (1985) suggested that bias could arise from the emotions generated by conflicts prevalent in politics. A way bias could undermine judgment is through attributing blame toward the media when negative affective responses are aroused. In other words, when disconfirming media messages cause psychological discomfort within an individual (Bright & Goodman-Delahunty, 2006), that individual is likely to blame the journalist or the news article as a whole for such unpleasantness. In this sense, HMP could be a mechanism to reduce cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1964).

Chapter 3

Empathy and the Hostile Media Phenomenon

Given that HMP creates different perceptions of media bias between two sides of an issue, this study aims to explore whether and how empathy can impact those perceptions.

Empathy is chosen among the many emotions due to its involvement with emotion-sharing as well as perspective-taking. As individuals put themselves in the position of others and/or feel for the others, it is anticipated that they will then see arguments of the opposing side to be more legitimate and therefore less hostile toward their personal stance.

Empathy

Originally, empathy meant “in suffering or passion,” and was later described as to “feel one’s way into” (Titchener, 1909, p. 21, 81). So far, a consensus as to how empathy should be defined and what it means to experience empathy has not yet been reached. According to Duan and Hill (1996), such disagreement can be attributed to the unclear nature of empathy. In general, the discrepancies lay in whether empathy is primarily affective, or both affective and cognitive (Davis, 1994; Decety & Jackson, 2006; Duan & Hill, 1996; Knafo, Zahn-Waxler, Hulle, Robinson, & Rhee, 2008; Preston & de Waal, 2002). While the affective aspect (i.e., shared emotional response) is considered to happen automatically, the cognitive aspect is thought to involve a conscious effort to imagine and understand someone else’s situation and feelings (Chiao & Mathur, 2010). According to Davis (1980), these two components are closely related and “each influences the other” (p. 86). In other words, empathy involves both understanding and sharing of another’s thoughts and feelings. Without the involuntary merge with another’s feelings but only the awareness of another’s feelings, it is called sympathy (Escalas & Stem, 2003). However, understanding and sharing of feelings do not always go hand in hand. Studies

have shown that perspective-taking, which is the anticipation, consideration, and/or adoption of another's feelings, thoughts and actions (Davis, 1983; Piaget, 1932), has a direct effect on customer service without the promotion of empathy (Axtell, Paker, Holman, & Totterdell, 2007). Such findings provide evidence that empathy is not necessary to motivate helping behaviors.

Affective empathy. Affective empathy is the sharing of another's feelings (Bandura, 2002; Davis, 1980; Zillmann, 2006). As suggested by Lazarus (1991), affective empathy is not a discrete emotion but it can include the sharing of multiple emotions at one time. In other words, it is important to distinguish it from other similar emotions such as sympathy. Sympathy is the feeling for another (e.g., sorrow, sad, pity) without the identification with the emotions of the other (Davis, 1994; Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). While sympathy is more voluntary and conscious, empathy is more an involuntary and unconscious emotional state which can be defined in two major manners. First, it can be used to refer to the "reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another" (Davis, 1983, p.113). In this sense, it is an emotional response to which one person can connect with someone else affectively (Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008); to feel with or feel for another (Zillmann, 2006). The process of emotion-sharing involves the identification and understanding of another's experiences (Egan, 1990). In other words, an observer loses his/her own emotional state, and his/her emotional state becomes more consistent with the situation of the target than with one's own (Hoffman, 1987). When something goes wrong with the target, empathy occurs when the observer feels the target's concern (Betancourt, 1990).

Some scholars go one step further to define what that reaction should be. In this case, empathy not only is the emotional response of an observer sharing a target's feelings, but the response should match the target's emotional state of a situation (e.g., Davis, 1994; Hoffman,

1987; Omdahl, 1995). Hence, it involves both feeling within another's feelings and achieving a congruence with that person's emotional response (Escalas & Stem, 2003). If the two emotional states do not match (i.e., feeling angry or unjust for a sad target in pain), empathy is said to be not present. Under this definition, the consistency between the observer's and target's emotional state is vital.

No matter which definition is used, most scholars agree that empathy requires an emotional response. Therefore, affective empathy and empathy will be used interchangeably throughout this research. For the purpose of this dissertation, empathy is considered to be a situation-specific affective experience which involves feeling touched, sorry, sympathetic, concerned, and/or compassionate for the target(s). In other words, it refers to the extent participants respond affectively to another person's emotional state, and the degree such a response is in line with the perceived welfare of another person in distress (Davis, 1994; Decety & Jackson, 2006).

Cognitive empathy. Besides being an emotional response, there is general agreement in the literature that empathy involves both cognition and emotion. This is similar to the appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991), in which emotions are a response to the cognitive interpretation of events or situations. In other terms, an observer understands another's situation, feelings, or actions before the arousal of affective empathy. This perspective-taking process therefore involves two stages: taking the perspective of another and experiencing some degree of emotion in response to the evaluation of the context. Taking another's perspective refers to the cognitive act of anticipating the feelings and actions of others, and considering and/or adopting another's viewpoints (Davis, 1983; Piaget, 1932). As a result, individuals are likely to relate to another (Egan, 1990) and be concerned with another's misfortunes (Betancourt, 1990; Davis, 1983). In

sum, cognitive empathy involves the understanding and identification with another person's perspective (Burke, 1973; Davis, 1994; Dethier & Blairy, 2012). Through perspective taking, one is able to imagine and estimate another's thoughts and feelings. Such imaginative reconstruction of another's perspective (Strauss, 2004) means that one develops mental images to recreate others' experiences given the information available. After visualizing the scenarios, people are more likely to feel less anger (Takaku, 2001) and perform prosocial behaviors (Johnson, Cushman, Borden, & McCune, 2013). Perspective-taking therefore contributes to cognitive appraisals of the shared emotions.

In fact, perspective-taking has an additional impact—individuals are likely to draw positive attributes a target has such as recognizing how a target's behaviors are due to external but not internal factors, and make those attributes salient for the target's behaviors (Parker & Axtell, 2001). In other words, after exposure to a news article about an undocumented immigrant, one is likely to recognize the effects of external circumstances (i.e., necessity to stay in the U.S. illegally) when there are unfavorable outcomes, as well as to consider internal factors (i.e., being hardworking after arrival to the U.S.) when there are favorable outcomes (Parker & Axtell, 2001). In fact, both the observer bias (Jones & Nisbett, 1971) and self-serving bias (Berstein, Stephen, & Davis, 1979) suggest that, while individuals have a tendency to attribute the behaviors or outcomes of others to those others' disposition, they attribute their own unfavorable behaviors to situational factors. In this sense, others' behaviors, especially people who we dislike, are likely to be explained in negative terms. However, studies have shown that such bias is reduced when people perform perspective-taking (Galper, 1976; Regan & Totten, 1975). Through the experience of taking others' perspectives, one is able to form more positive attributions about others' actions and thoughts (Parker & Axtell, 2001). Overall, perspective-

taking is found to contribute to being empathetic, improving interpersonal relationships, and performing helping behaviors (Axtell, Parker, Holman & Totterdell, 2007). Following Parker and Axtell (2011), this dissertation considers “perspective taking as a cognitive process that can result in the affective response of empathy” (p. 1087).

Empathy and Media

As “represented events can evoke empathetic affect” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 169), a victim does not have to be physically present in order for an observer to experience empathy. In other words, people can be empathetic toward others simply by reading literary fiction (Mar & Oatley, 2008) or even news (Haynes, 2013). In reality, people cannot have direct contact with everyone in a society, and they therefore often learn about others through the media (Economou, Richardson, Gramandani, Stalikas, & Stefanis, 2009). In fact, most journalists do not simply report the objective facts of an issue or event, but rather construct narratives that are in line with existing social schemata in order to make the stories more appealing, and may promote certain issues as social problems based on the news source or ideologies (Wondemaghen, 2014).

The literature has mostly focused on examining the combined effects of both empathy prime and empathetic content on attitudes (Batson et.al 1997, Finlay & Stephan 2000; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003). An empathy prime is language other than the content itself, which cues the audience to empathize with the subject and/or his/her extended group of people. In Haynes’ (2013) research, empathy prime refers to the manner by which the journalist “characterizes, treats, or approaches the undocumented subject in the ensuing story.” It is like an endorsement cue which encourages the reader to take a favorable, neutral or challenging stance toward the undocumented immigrant subject portrayed in the ensuing story.

Aside from primes, Haynes (2013) revealed that approximately 25–35% of immigration

coverage contained empathetic content or frames. After content analyzing 480 articles on immigration from the New York Times and USA Today from 2009 to 2011, Haynes (2013) revealed many empathy frames which trigger an empathetic reaction after engaging and inserting the audience member into the real life of undocumented immigrants. For instance, the victims' frames are said to portray the undocumented immigrant subjects as victims of some external force such as the government (i.e., the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency), society, other circumstances, and business entrepreneurs. Specific examples of victims' frames which depicts immigrants as victims are: (a) "harsh tactics in deportation frame": using excessive force; (b) "separating families frame": the breaking up of a family due to deportation, denial of family visas, or holding suspected undocumented immigrants in jail; and (c) "taken advantage of by employers frame": employers paying immigrant workers as little as possible or making immigrants work in poor conditions.

Besides content frames, Gross (2008) found that the rhetorical structure of media stories can also affect emotional response and policy preferences. In particular, episodically framed articles could induce more sympathy for convicted felons than articles which are thematically framed (Gross 2008). In other terms, articles that offer real-life examples and concrete case studies induce more empathy than articles which present an issue using general and abstract statements. According to Gross (2008), by making stories more understandable and compelling, episodic frames can actually heighten emotional response, in particular sympathy and pity, and thus lead to more favorable attitudes toward subjects portrayed in a story. In another experimental study, Oliver, Dillard, Bae, and Tamul (2012) found something similar. By comparing news stories written in either narrative (i.e., focus on a specific person) and non-narrative (i.e., focus on quotes from experts) forms, the authors found that participants exposed

to a narrative story felt more involved as well as more compassionate, compared to those exposed to a non-narrative story. Their findings imply that perspective-taking is much easier through narrative stories. This dissertation therefore creates empathetic stories by personalizing the undocumented immigrant with more vivid language as well as engaging the participants' hearts and minds in the immigrant's plight through the use of specific examples (i.e., specific stories of undocumented immigrants). This is consistent with what Merolla, Ramkrishnan, and Haynes (2013) have shown, that episodically-framed stories were significantly more likely to evoke feelings of empathy than those framed thematically. These all suggest how the rhetorical structure of a news story can affect the degree to which it evokes empathy.

Stephan and Finlay (2002) produced similar findings, that White students in the empathetic condition who read a series of first-person essays about the lives of Black students prefaced by similar instructions to empathize reported more positive evaluations of African-Americans than those in the control. Furthermore, Cao (2010) tested whether the overt emotional expressions of the victim and the presence of an image impacted empathetic concern and perspective taking. Findings suggest that, although exposure to a victim's overt emotional expressions increases affective empathy, it reduces perspective taking. This also applies to whether a picture is present. While a picture elicits empathetic concern for the victim as well as favorable attitudes toward helping the victims, it also reduces cognitive empathy. This implies that affective empathy and cognitive empathy do not always go hand in hand. Combining everything learned from previous studies, this research manipulates empathy by using more direct quotations (i.e., first-person narratives), more overt emotional expressions, as well as more concrete personal stories of undocumented immigrants.

Although the frames revealed by Haynes (2013) will all be used as the backbone of the

stimuli (i.e., content), they are not manipulated directly to induce empathy. In other terms, while Haynes (2013) studies the effects of empathetic frames, this research manipulates the narrative styles by holding the content constant. By holding the frames constant, the methodology holds more internal validity as the findings can rule out the possibility that the difference in bias perception between the empathetic and non-empathetic conditions is due to the choice of frames or the choice of arguments. As a result, this research aims to explore the mechanism of HMP by comparing how pro-immigrant participants differ between the two conditions: non-empathetic pro-immigrant vs. empathetic pro-immigrant, as well as how pro-deportation participants behave differently when exposed to the two pro-immigrant articles arousing and not arousing empathy. With respect to the mechanism, hypotheses are only presented for the slanted conditions because the balanced article presenting both sides of the issue is likely to result in arguments of both sides canceling out the potential effects of empathy.

Aside from empathy prime (Haynes, 2013), empathy content frames (Haynes, 2013) and empathetic rhetorical structure (Gross, 2008), perspective-taking has typically been manipulated by instructional sets designed to induce empathetic cognitive processing (Galinsky et al., 2008; Shih, Wang, Bucher, & Stotzer; Regan & Totten, 1975; Toi & Batson, 1982). These instructional sets usually ask the participants to imagine themselves in the target's situation, and to feel the target's thoughts and feelings under the target's circumstances (Davis, 1994). Responses are then compared to those of control participants, who are given instructions to simply observe the target (e.g., Archer, Foushee, Davis, & Aderman, 1979), or focus on some technical aspects of the stimulus manipulation (e.g., Finlay & Stephen, 2000). Research has shown that instructions asking participants to take someone else's perspective have increased empathetic concern for the target individual (Toi & Batson, 1982), liking for a target (Shih, Wang, Bucher, & Stotzer,

2009), positive emotions (Takaku, 2001; Takaku, Weiner, & Ohbuchi, 2001), as well as negotiation facilitation (Galinsky et al., 2008).

Empathy and outgroup. When individuals are exposed to empathetic frames about undocumented immigrants, empathy can serve as new pro-immigrant affective information which induces empathetic responses among readers (Haynes, 2013). Haynes (2013) found that a significantly higher percentage of articles with at least one empathetic frame managed to produce more empathetic response when compared with articles with no empathetic frames. Additionally, the separating families and harsh government tactics frames are among the most effective to induce empathy. Although frames are not being manipulated in this research, pro-immigrant participants exposed to a slanted article written to arouse empathy will report experiencing more empathy than those exposed to a slanted article without empathy inducement.

Nonetheless, individuals can choose what to imagine and what to avoid imagining (Batson, Ahmad, & Stocks, 2004). It is one thing to imagine someone's circumstances and another to interpret the world from his/her point of view. In fact, it can be difficult to perform perspective-taking if the imagined character is very different from one's accustomed frame of reference. In other words, for pro-deportation participants reading what illegal immigrants have gone through, it is not as easy for them to immerse themselves and to take the perspectives of those people they would like to deport out of the country. This is indeed consistent with Hoffman's (1987) proposed empathetic biases, that empathy is easier for familiar others. Fulkerson (2005) suggested something similar called the morality bias, in which people tend to experience empathy with people whose morals they appreciate. All this suggests that not everyone is going to fall for the pro-immigrant article and be empathetic toward illegal immigrants documented in the news story. As an example, evidence reveals that race can affect

empathy experiences. In a mock trial experiment, participants were asked to report the empathy they felt for both Black and White defendants (Johnson et al., 2002). The findings suggest white participants reported feeling more empathy and ask for more lenient punishments when the defendants were all White defendants, compared to when there was a Black defendant among the White defendants.

In sum, while empathy is found to promote pro-social action on behalf of stigmatized groups, pro-deportation participants, who will be exposed to a disagreeing article, might not. As they read about their rivals' pain, they are not as likely to get immersed and perform perspective-taking. Therefore, articles inducing empathy should only evoke a substantially higher empathetic reaction among pro-immigrant participants than pro-deportation participants. Among the pro-deportation participants, the empathetic gap between the non-empathetic and empathetic conditions are likely not to be significantly different.

H3a: Pro-immigrant participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone will experience more (1) affective empathy and (2) cognitive empathy than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone.

RQ1: Will pro-deportation participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone experience more (1) affective empathy and (2) cognitive empathy than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone?

Persuasiveness. In general, empathy is shown to enhance persuasiveness of a message (Aaker & Williams, 1998; Bae, 2008; Bagozzi & Moore, 1994; Campbell & Babrow, 2004; Foubert & Newberry, 2006). For instance, by inducing a state of empathy using testimonials from people who have tested HIV-positive, Campbell and Babrow (2004) found that empathy

not only can increase the persuasiveness of health-related appeals but also their personal risk perceptions of the dangers of risky behaviors in relation to HIV/AIDS.

First, affective sharing of emotions implies that an audience will likely experience similar or the same emotions as the target portrayed in the message. Due to such an associative process, news audiences are likely to experience emotional contagion. Hence, tender responses such as warmth and sympathy are likely to be aroused (Oliver, 2008). In turn, such tenderness is found to lead to a preference in the message and thus less counter-arguing and more favorable responses (Dillard, Shen, & Vail, 2007; Oliver, 2008). These all contribute to persuasiveness.

Second, Shen (2010) has found evidence that empathy can mitigate psychological reactance in persuasive messages. As a result, while multiple emotions might be aroused together with empathy during message exposure, empathy is capable of eliminating the effects of another emotion. For instance, when exposed to an incongruent message (i.e., pro-deportation participants exposed to an empathy pro-immigrant article), anger is likely to be aroused as it involves one being rejected or attacked (Lazarus, 1991). Given that empathy, which correlates positively with agreeableness and sensitivity, contradicts with anger, which focuses on aggressiveness (Parker & Axtell, 2001), anger arousal can be reduced or even shut off. As anger is not as activated, participants who view hostile news coverage can then understand and relate to the pro-immigrant supporters in the story. They might even construct fewer counter-arguments and find it easier to adopt their opponents' viewpoint. In sum, empathy enhances the chances for the message's persuasiveness by shutting off other potential emotions being aroused in the process.

Third, it is also suggested that empathy contributes to persuasiveness of media messages by facilitating involvement (Bae, 2008; Shen, 2010). Shen (2010) showed that individuals are

more likely to identify with empathetic public service announcements against smoking and drunk driving, and higher levels of empathetic response significantly predicted better perceived effectiveness and persuasiveness. Research on “mirror” neurons suggests similar effects, that witnessing someone else’s behaviors activates many of the same neurons that would be activated if the observers were actually experiencing the same sensations themselves (see Hollan, 2012). In this sense, empathy activates the observer’s brain as if the observer is experiencing the behaviors while witnessing. Such involvement with empathy messages thus not only improves identification with the message but also make it more compelling. Drawing on Kelman’s (1961) theory of attitude change, identification is key to persuasion. Being able to experience associative empathy through perspective-taking can therefore help promote persuasiveness. The more an observer perceives similarity with the target, the more they can identify with the target. Such identification could lead the audiences to consider the persuasive attempt as less external, which mitigates psychological reactance (Steensma & Erkel, 1999). Although not directly testing the relationship between news audiences and characters presented in news stories, Silvia (2005) has shown how similarity between communicators and recipients can increase persuasion by reducing reactance. In sum, empathy can spur deeper personal relevance that is established in empathy arousing messages. The above arguments and evidence all suggest that participants will view the empathy-slanted article to be more favorable and persuasive than the non-empathetic article:

H4a: Pro-immigrant participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone will perceive it to be more persuasive (1) on themselves as well as (2) on others than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone.

H4b: Pro-deportation participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone will perceive it to be more persuasive (1) on themselves as well as (2) on others than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone.

Perceived influence. As supporters from both sides of an issue are likely to view the empathetic message as more persuasive, people are also likely to think that media content reflects what the public will think tomorrow (Gunther, 1998), according to the influence of presumed media influence theory (IPMI theory; Gunther & Storey, 2003). The IPMI theory actually originates from the third-person effect (Davison, 1983), in which individuals see others to be more influenced by negative media content such that the media has the power to impact others' attitudes and behaviors. Different from the third-person effect, which emphasizes on the self-other gap, the IPMI theory focuses on the consequences of perceptions of media influence (Gunther, Perloff, & Tsfati, 2008). As an example, with regard to harmful media content on children, parents who perceived more influence of that negative content on their child were more likely to monitor their child's TV viewing (Tsfati, Ribak, & Cohen, 2005).

In this case of a pro-immigrant news story, pro-deportation participants are expected to perceive others to be more affected by such an undesirable message, and they are also expected to rate the more persuasive empathetic article as more influential than the less persuasive non-empathetic article. In other words, when the pro-deportation participants see their opponents delivering such a persuasive empathetic (pro-immigrant) message against their own stance, they are more likely to assume that the empathetic pro-immigrant article will change others' attitudes and behavior toward pro-immigrant ends to a larger extent than the non-empathetic pro-immigrant article. However, such a difference should not be expected among the pro-immigrant participants who perceive the news article to be neither biased nor hostile. In other words, such a

desirable message should not activate the third-person effect nor the influence of presumed media influence.

RQ2: Will pro-immigrant participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone perceive it to be more influential on the public (in favor of pro-immigrant) than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone?

H5: Pro-deportation participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone will perceive it to be more influential on the public (in favor of pro-immigrant) than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone.

Objectivity and perceived media bias. Continue with the above argument, given pro-deportation participants see the empathetic pro-immigrant news story to be more influential than the non-empathetic story, they are likely to assume that the message will have some sort of effect in real life. Such a perceived effect is sure to be perceived as harmful to their own point of view, due to the message being slanted in favor of immigration (Davison, 1983). Together with the persuasive press inference (Gunther, 1998), in which partisans perceive media messages to be hostile because they fear the broad reach and influence of those messages, perception of undesirable influence can drive HMP. In other words, when pro-deportation participants are concerned with persuasive unfavorable influence on others, defensive processing can be activated and lead to perceptions of hostile bias. Therefore, pro-deportation participants are expected to see the empathetic pro-immigrant message as more hostile and therefore less objective and more biased than the non-empathetic message.

This is consistent with the literature on biased assimilation (Lord et al., 1979), in which partisans tend to remember more strengths of confirming evidence but more weaknesses of disconfirming evidence. Most importantly, they are likely to judge confirming evidence but not

disconfirming evidence as more relevant and reliable. Hence, pro-immigrant participants are likely to accept congruent information at face value while pro-deportation participants are likely to scrutinize incongruent information hypercritically.

In sum, pro-immigrant participants experience more empathy in the empathetic condition and tend to consider the slanted article to be more persuasive in favor of their own side, and therefore are more likely to form positive cognitive processing of the article. Together with how biased assimilation would assume them to accept confirming information without counter-arguing, they are expected to rate the empathetic article to be more objective as well as more slanted in favor of their own point of view. Compared to the non-empathetic slanted condition, they therefore rate it to be more biased in absolute terms (away from “strictly neutral”) in the empathetic slanted condition. Meanwhile, as pro-deportation participants also think the slanted article in the empathetic tone to be more persuasive and influential, but against their personal viewpoint, they are more likely to rate the article to be biased against their own point of view, which is equivalent to higher biases in absolute term as well. In other words, both sides will see it to be more biased in absolute terms, and more biased toward the pro-immigrant side.

H6a: Pro-immigrant participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone will perceive it to be more objective than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone.

H6b: Pro-deportation participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone will perceive it to be less objective than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone.

H7a: Pro-immigrant participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone will perceive it to be less biased than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone.

H7b: Pro-deportation participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone will perceive it to be more biased than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone.

H8a: Pro-immigrant participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone will perceive it to be leaning more toward pro-immigrant than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone.

H8b: Pro-deportation participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news story written in the empathetic tone will perceive it to be leaning more toward pro-immigrant than those exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone.

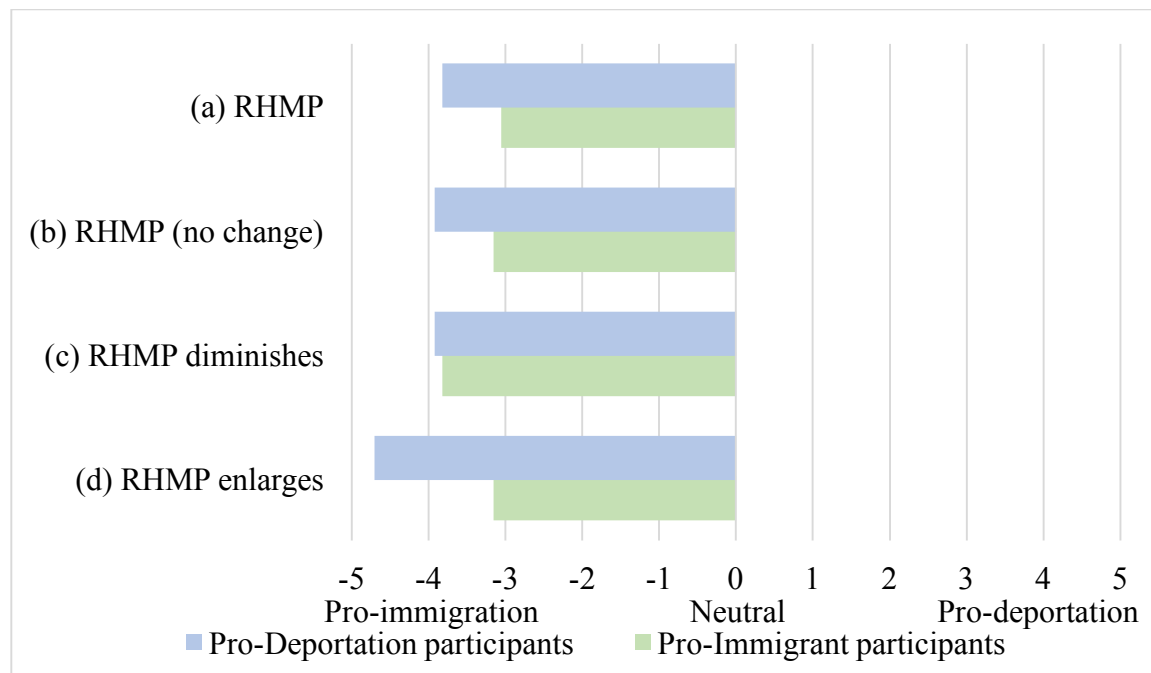
Empathy and HMP

To summarize, for pro-immigrant participants, we expect them to find the empathetic news story to be more persuasive, more objective, and less biased than the non-empathetic news story. In terms of the direction of media bias, they are likely to view the empathetic pro-immigrant article to be in favor of their own position even more, when compared to the non-empathetic slanted article. For pro-deportation participants, we expect them to find the empathetic news story to be more persuasive, more influential against their own stance, less objective, and more biased than the non-empathetic slanted news story. In terms of the direction of media bias, they are likely to view the article to be against their own position even more. In other terms, both sides are likely to see the pro-immigrant story to be in favor of undocumented immigrants. However, even though we have some expectations as to which direction they might

perceive the empathetic article to be slanted toward, no expectation can be formed with respect to the size of that difference between the non-empathetic and empathetic conditions.

Hence, that leaves us with three possibilities as to what will happen to relative HMP (see Figure 1). The first set of bars under RHMP represents relative HMP among participants in the non-empathetic pro-immigrant condition. In other words, it is the traditional RHMP. When empathy is introduced into the slanted pro-immigrant article, both sides are going to rate the bias toward the pro-immigrant side (see above). As mentioned, we have no idea to what extent the change will be, therefore there might be no change, where both sides move approximately the same degree to the left, and RHMP stays the same. Or there might be a reduction in RHMP, where pro-deportation participants move a little bit toward pro-immigrant, while pro-immigrant participants move a lot, probably due to finding the message to be extremely persuasive and influential favoring their side. Or there might be an increase in RHMP, in which pro-immigrant participants move a little to the left while the pro-deportation participants move a lot, probably due to perceiving the message to be extremely persuasive and influential against their point of view. As the literature provides little guidance with respect to the degree of their changes, a research question is presented:

Figure 1. Possible outcomes when empathy is applied to the slanted news article



Note: (a) RHMP = relative HMP in the non-empathetic pro-immigrant condition; (b), (c), (d) are three possible outcomes when empathy is applied. (b) RHMP (no change) = relative HMP in the empathetic pro-immigrant condition with no significant changes from the non-empathetic pro-immigrant condition. (c) Relative HMP diminishes or (d) enlarges depends on the extent both sides rated the article to be more pro-immigrant in the empathetic slanted condition, compared to the non-empathetic slanted condition.

RQ3: How will RHMP differ when empathy is introduced to the slanted (pro-immigrant) article, compared to the slanted article written in non-empathetic tone?

On the other hand, when the balanced news story is written in an empathetic tone, we expect HMP as well as the perception gap to be canceled out. First, both sides are of course going to see half of the article congruent and half of it incongruent to their position. Although they are likely to see the empathetic message as more persuasive and influential, the effects are probably going to be canceled out as the effects can go both ways with a balanced article. In other words, while they can both perceive more biases toward their own point of view, they are

also likely to see more biases against their own point of view; thus, the effects are expected to be compromised.

However, the literature suggests that almost every HMP experiment that has measured selective recall has found individuals to selectively recall more confirming information among those exhibiting HMP (Arpan & Raney, 2003; Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Gunther & Liebhart, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2004). Previous studies that have studied selective recall by asking participants to list a number of statements they can recall from the stimulus failed to find selective recall of more disconfirming statements, but mostly found evidence of assimilation (Edwards & Smith, 1996; Lord et al., 1979). Hence, if both sides tend to remember more congruent arguments and testimonies, both pro-immigrant and pro-deportation participants are expected to perceive the empathetic balanced article to be more biased in favor of their personal stance. The rationale behind is that, they are likely to recall confirming evidence, and this evidence in the empathetic balanced article is seen to be more persuasive and influential to their own side than the non-empathetic balanced article. This is in fact consistent with the literature on assimilation effects (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979), that partisans tend to remember more strengths of confirming evidence and judge confirming evidence as more relevant and reliable. Therefore, both sides are expected to see the congruent evidence to be more prominent. As pro-deportation and pro-immigrant participants see fewer biases against their position, they should rate the news story more toward being strictly neutral, and thus HMP is expected to be reduced or even terminated. Following this logic, as both sides are anticipated to rate the news story toward the neutral point, the perception gap between pro-immigrant participants and pro-deportation participants is therefore likely to be reduced or even eliminated as well.

RQ4: Will pro-immigrant participants and pro-deportation participants reading a balanced news story on immigration written in the empathetic tone perceive the content to be unfavorable to their own point of view?

RQ5: Will perceptions of bias rated by pro-immigrant participants and pro-deportation participants be significantly different from each other in the empathetic slanted (pro-immigrant) condition?

Chapter 4

Methods

This research presents data from an experiment embedded in an online survey administered to a representative sample of adults in the United States. The data was obtained through Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mechanical Turk) on February 21, 2017. Mechanical Turk maintains a pool of potential survey respondents and researchers can provide them with compensation in the form of small payments through the system. By using their quota sampling technique, this sample only contains U.S. adults. Even though Mechanical Turk samples are shown to deviate slightly from the national population due to self-selection into the sample pool, social science research has shown it to provide estimates similar to national probability samples (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). In fact, while Mechanical Turk samples can be biased for narrow samples, studies have shown that they are in fact less biased for broader ones such as the U.S. adult population (Berinsky, Huber & Lenz, 2012). Hence, this sample provides a reasonable representation of the U.S. population, certainly more representative than a student sample taken from a university in the United States.

Besides self-selection, bias can also be introduced by throwing out respondents who fail to answer attention questions correctly. Mechanical Turk allows researchers to place questions to make sure the respondents pay attention to the survey, and those who do not will be forced to quit the survey immediately and will not receive any payment. This survey contained three attention questions. Two were implemented right after the news story stimulus on immigration. To ensure they have read the instructions carefully and are aware it is a news article, participants were asked which news outlet published the article with a multiple-choice question. Also, to assure they read through the article and know whether it is slanted toward pro-immigrant or

balanced, they were asked whether the news article mentions pro-immigrant advocates, pro-deportation advocates, or advocates from both sides. A third question was added in the middle of the survey where there is a list of similar question options with the exact same scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). Instead of asking respondents whether the news article is persuasive or credible, the option says, “slightly.” Those who failed to choose “slightly” as their answer were then forced to terminate the survey. In this sense, bias can be introduced by only keeping those who are interested enough to pay attention to the survey. Given that we are testing effects of a stimulus, it would make sense to only examine participants who have at least read the stimulus. In terms of HMP, this might enhance the effect a little bit, as partisan individuals who are more likely to pay attention to the news story are going to experience higher levels of media hostility. This is helpful as this would allow the presence of HMP, and this study thus explores whether and how empathy influences such presence. The survey was accessed by 1541 Mechanical Turk workers, and a total of 723 completed responses were collected (48.4% female, *Mdn* age = 31 to 40 years).

Experimental Design and Stimulus

The hypotheses were tested using with two 2 (emotion manipulation: non-empathetic vs. empathetic) \times 2 (measured preexisting attitude: pro-immigrant vs. pro-deportation) designs; one for a balanced article and one for a slanted article (toward pro-immigrant).¹ Slant and tone were manipulated conditions, whereas preexisting opinion was a measured variable.

After providing informed consent, participants completed a pre-test questionnaire which included reporting their demographic background and their position on deportation. They were

¹ This research was taken from a larger design with an additional slanted threatening condition. As this study focuses on effects of empathy on HMP in relation to neutral tone, participants in the threatening condition are not included in this study (n = 138).

asked to what extent they agree or disagree that deportation of illegal immigrants is a good thing on a 6-point scale from “agree strongly” to “disagree strongly.” Such a 6-point scale forces them to either agree or disagree with the statement, with 3 levels of intensity (slightly, moderately, and strongly). Within the sample, 286 (48.8%) reported disagree, which constituted pro-immigrant participants, and 299 (51.2%) reported agree, who were then labeled as pro-deportation participants.

Participants included in the final analysis ($n = 585$), of which 279 were female (47.7%), were randomly exposed to one of the four news article prepared for this experiment. The article presents either both pro-immigrant and pro-deportation advocates (balanced), or only the pro-immigrant advocates (slanted/pro-immigrant). Furthermore, it is either written so that empathy is likely to be aroused (empathetic) or not (non-empathetic). At the end, a total of 130 participants (22.2%) were in the non-empathetic balanced condition, 165 (28.2%) in the non-empathetic pro-immigrant condition, 134 (22.9%) in the empathetic balanced condition, and 156 (26.7%) in the empathetic pro-immigrant condition.

Participants were prompted to read the article carefully before answering questions about the news story, and were told that the news article appeared in a recent issue of *USA Today*. According to previous research on HMP, a larger reach can enhance the likelihood of HMP (Gunther & Schmitt, 2004). Hence, participants were also told that the story was later carried nationwide by the Associated Press wire service. The article was presented as what online articles on www.usatoday.com would look like, and all the elements such as the author of the article, the date it was released, the number of Facebook connects, and the number of comments were held constant across all conditions.

Regarding the slant manipulation, the pro-immigrant article was titled “Rally to protect illegal immigrants,” while the balanced article was titled “Immigration Rallies: Deportation or Protection?” The pro-immigrant news story reported that immigrant advocates and participants rallied Saturday in cities across the country to push President Donald Trump to put a freeze on deportations. The article then followed with three sources who talked about why they participated in the rallies. For instance, they talked about how they were or would be separated from their loved ones due to deportation. On the other hand, the balanced news story introduced both sides: while deportation participants rallied Saturday to push President Donald Trump to deport all illegal immigrations, immigrant advocates rallied to push Trump to put a freeze on deportations. Point of views and sources from both sides were presented with approximately the same length. All articles started with: “U.S. immigration policy has been a touchstone of political debate for decades as policymakers consider U.S. labor demands and border security concerns,” and ended with: “While it is uncertain whether all illegal immigrants will be deported, it is clear that the national conversation about this issue will continue.”

There were two versions of pro-immigrant articles and two versions of balanced articles: non-empathetic vs. empathetic. To distinguish between non-empathetic and empathetic, three facets of the production were manipulated: reporting of the background of the source (their names and where they come from), the use of direct quotes, and the use of emotional words. This is consistent with what Shen (2010) has suggested, that low and high empathy messages can be distinguished by the amount of suffering and/or distress portrayed by the characters and the degree the message is affect-loaded. The use of quotations from the participants can achieve two aims. One is to intensify the sources’ emotions, and the other is to personalize the storytelling so that readers can fall for the characters more easily (Keen, 2011). Though this may not represent

all the factors that go into making a message an empathetic message, together with content frames such as separation from families, these mimicked how news outlets have been reporting on immigration issues (Haynes, 2013). For instance, the empathetic pro-immigrant article read:

Natally Cruz, an organizer with a grassroots group in Eloy, Ariz., said many of the people in attendance have relatives who have been separated from their loved ones. “We want President Trump and his administration to really hear our community members across the country, to understand we do not want one more person separated,” said Cruz, who entered the U.S. at age 8 illegally with her parents. “Every night, one family goes to bed missing somebody in their family.”

On the contrary, articles written in a non-empathetic tone did not contain a character’s emotional response or provide minimal character background, and would try to use facts and not appeal to participants’ emotions. To illustrate, the non-empathetic pro-immigrant article, which also touches upon separation of families, read:

Organizers with a grassroots group said Trump has the executive power to stop deportations that separate immigrants living in the country illegally from their loved ones. They want President Trump and his administration to hear their community members across the country.

The same was applied to the balanced article. The empathetic article had pro-deportation advocates as well as pro-immigrant participants, who both showed some sort of emotional responses and would make a strong appeal to the viewer’s emotions. For example, a typical paragraph in the empathetic balanced article read:

Along the same line, Adelle Fisher in Eloy, Ariz., who just lost her job to illegal immigrants, claimed that immigrants are likely to increase unemployment in the country.

“With illegal aliens taking our jobs away would be hard to live life. I just couldn’t bear the idea,” she said.

On the other hand, the non-empathetic article presented more facts and arguments in favor of, as well as against, illegal immigrants with minimal emotional narratives. A paragraph which presents the same theme (i.e., undocumented immigrants are the cause of unemployment in the U.S.) in the non-empathetic balanced condition read:

Along the same line, Adelle Fisher in Eloy, Ariz. said illegal immigrants are taking jobs away from Americans and are likely to increase unemployment in the country. She believes deportation can help solve economic issues in general.

Extreme care was taken in balancing internal and external validity while operationalizing the non-empathetic and empathetic conditions. Within both balanced and pro-immigrant conditions, the content (i.e., frames) within the story was maintained as consistently as possible, maximizing the internal validity of the manipulations. In other words, differences in media perception are not due to the difference in frame strengths, but in empathetic narratives. Furthermore, all content for the initial drafts of the stories was taken from existing news articles and related material found online.

Measures

Affective empathy. Affective empathy is measured by participants self-reporting to what extent the article made them feel: (a) touched, (b) sorry, (c) sympathetic, (d) concerned, and (e) compassionate on a 5-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). The mean of all five items were then calculated to measure affective empathy ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.12$, Cronbach’s alpha = .94), which is the emotional response from connecting and feeling with someone else affectively (Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008; Zillmann, 2006).

Cognitive empathy. Two measures, understanding and identification, were used to tap into the two aspects of cognitive empathy. Such categorization is supported by results from factor analysis. First, a measure of understanding was composited by asking participants whether they can see the point of view of immigrant advocates and whether reactions of immigration supporters to the current situation are understandable. The mean of both items was calculated and formed the first measure, “understanding” ($M = 3.81$, $SD = .97$, Cronbach’s alpha = .83). Another two questions were asked to form the measure, “identification”: “I can relate to what the illegal immigrants are going through in the article,” and “I can identify with those illegal immigrants who are quoted in the article” ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.18$, Cronbach’s alpha = .91). All four items were measured using the same 5-point scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly).

Persuasiveness. Persuasiveness was measured by asking participants whether the news article was in general persuasive to them ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.18$), and whether it was persuasive to other neutral readers ($M = 2.49$, $SD = .98$), from not at all (1) to extremely (5).

Perceived influence. In order to tap into which direction participants perceived the article to be influential, they were asked how likely the news article could (a) lead the public to support a legal pathway for illegal immigration, and (b) lead the public to form positive attitudes toward illegal immigrants on the same 5-point scale. The average was taken to form a perceived influence index ($M = 2.52$, $SD = .99$, Cronbach’s alpha = .78), and larger values suggest perceiving more influence toward pro-immigrant ends.

Objectivity. To measure perceived objectivity, participants reported whether the news article was objective on the same 5-point scale as above ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.23$).

Perceived media bias and perceived absolute media bias. To measure perceived media bias, the survey asks participants to rate whether (a) the news article and (b) the journalist who wrote the article were strictly neutral (0) or favored either illegal immigration (0) or deportation (11). They were also asked to rate whether (c) the news article and (d) the journalist was strictly neutral (6) or biased in favor of either illegal immigrants (0) or deportation (11) on the same 11-point scale. The means of all four items were then taken and formed a measure of perceived media bias ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.82$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .97$).

Perceived absolute media bias was then calculated by taking the absolute value of perceived media bias and 0 (neutral). This enables us to know how far participants rate the news to be biased away from being strictly neutral ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.53$).

Party identification. Participants were asked whether they consider themselves to be a Democrat ($n = 235$, 40.2%), a Republican ($n = 129$, 22.1%), or an Independent or something else ($n = 184$, 31.5%). Those who reported being Independent or something else were then asked which of the two major parties they lean toward. In the end, there were 366 Democrats (62.6%) and 218 Republicans (37.3%).

Issue importance. The survey asks to what extent participants think the debate over illegal immigration is important on a 5-point scale from "not at all" to "extremely" ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .99$).

Chapter 5

Results

Manipulation Checks

With the attention questions asking participants to identify the correct news outlet which published the news article, and whether the article mentions pro-immigrant advocates, pro-deportation advocates, or advocates from both sides (see Methods), it is certain that all participants knew the news article was published by *USA Today*, as well as whether the article was balanced or slanted towards pro-immigrant views. Besides the slant manipulation, below is a test on the empathy manipulation. An independent-samples t-test was conducted with empathy as the dependent variable. The results show that, the empathetic conditions did induce higher levels of empathy than the non-empathetic conditions ($t = -3.09, p < .01$). Overall, participants in the empathetic conditions ($M = 2.76, SD = 1.14$) reported experiencing more affective empathy than those in the non-empathetic conditions ($M = 2.48, SD = 1.08$).

It should also be noted that the manipulation failed to induce more cognitive empathy in terms of understanding ($t = .15, df = 583, n.s.$) and identifying ($t = .28, df = 583, n.s.$) with the pro-immigrant supporters depicted in the news article. As both items rely on self-reported measures, participants might not be cognitively aware of their cognitive empathy. In addition, many factors could have interfered with their self-reporting on understanding and identification with the pro-immigrant supporters. For instance, pro-deportation participants might refrain from admitting being attached to their opponents. Also, the manipulations only differ in narrative styles but not frames, and therefore they might not be strong enough to make such a difference in cognitive empathy. In any case, while the manipulations did not induce participants to undertake

perspective taking, it is safe to conclude that the empathy manipulation performed well in terms of affective empathy and analysis can be continued.

Presence of HMP

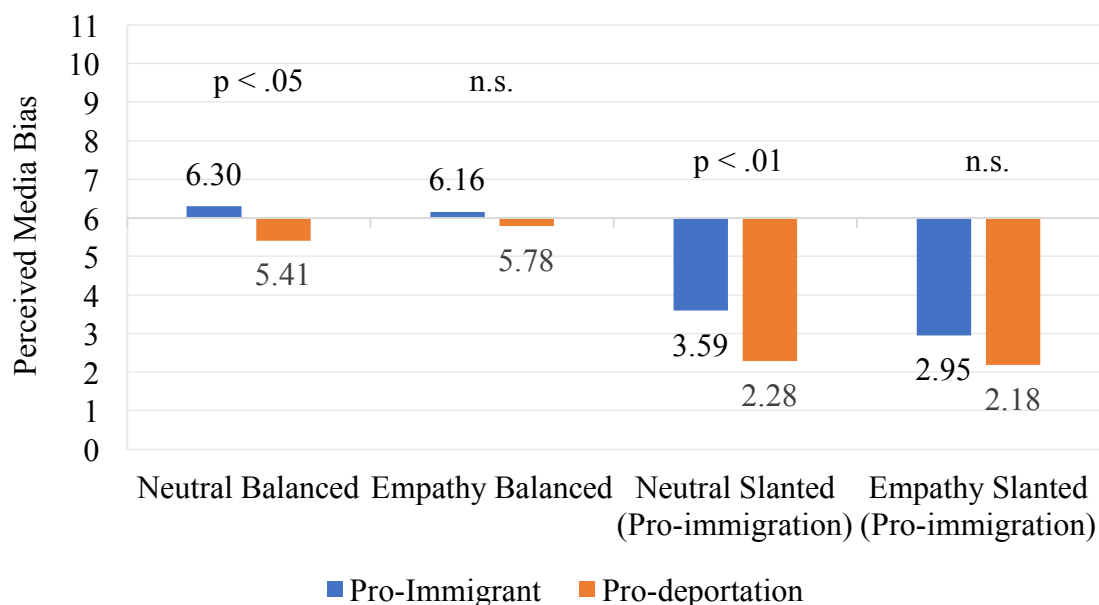
To examine the presence of HMP in all four conditions (non-empathetic balanced, non-empathetic pro-immigrant, empathetic balanced, and empathetic pro-immigrant), two-way analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were used to compare the amount and direction of media bias pro-immigrant and pro-deportation participants perceived within each condition (H1a, H1b, H2, RQ3, RQ4, and RQ5), while controlling for age, income, education, party identification, and issue importance. ANCOVA was employed in this case because preexisting attitude was not and could not be manipulated. Among all covariates across all conditions, only party identification predicted perceived media bias in the non-empathetic balanced condition ($F(1,122) = 4.23, p < .05$). Additional analysis shows that Republicans ($M = 2.15, SD = 1.76$) were more likely to perceive media biases toward pro-immigrant views than Democrats ($M = 3.40, SD = 1.79$). This is consistent with HMP literature, in which Republicans, who were more likely to hold pro-deportation views, saw the content to be more biased against their point of view when compared to Democrats who were more likely to hold pro-immigrant views. In other words, Republicans saw the article as more hostile than Democrats in the non-empathetic balanced condition, but not the other three conditions.

Results from ANCOVA are presented in Figure 2. As shown, pro-immigrant participants ($M = 6.30, SD = 1.48$) saw the non-empathetic balanced article to be in favor of deportation; on the other hand, pro-deportation participants ($M = 5.41, SD = 1.78$) saw it to be in favor of immigration. Additional analysis shows that, with “6” being strictly neutral, pro-immigrant participants perceived the article to be marginally significantly different from neutral biased in

favor of their opponents at a .10 significance level ($t = 1.80$, $df = 77$, $p = .08$) while pro-deportation participants also perceived the article to be significantly different from neutral biased against their personal point of view ($t = 3.09$, $df = 86$, $p < .01$). The findings thus supported HMP hypothesis (H1a). In addition, as the difference between the two groups was significantly different ($F(1, 158) = 5.80$, $p < .05$), H1b regarding the perception gap is thus supported.

However, such difference was not found to be significant among participants in the empathetic balanced condition ($F(1, 147) = .27$, n.s.). Besides, pro-immigrant and pro-deportation participants no longer perceived the article to be biased against their view with “6” as the neutral point ($t = .77$, $df = 76$, $p = \text{n.s.}$ and $t = 1.00$, $df = 76$, $p = \text{n.s.}$, respectively). As a result, pro-immigrant participants and pro-deportation participants reading a balanced news story on immigration written in the empathetic tone did not perceive the content to be unfavorable to their own point of view (RQ4). As a result, while HMP is found in the non-empathetic condition, it is not found in the empathetic condition in relation to the balanced news articles. With respect to RQ5, additional analyses were then conducted to look at whether participants of each side differ in perceived media bias. Results from an independent samples t-test suggest that, pro-immigrant (Mean difference = .11, $t = .32$, $df = 93$, n.s.) and pro-deportation (Mean difference = .50, $t = 1.80$, $df = 166$, n.s.) participants in the empathetic conditions did not view the story to be more or less hostile than those in the non-empathetic conditions. In this sense, perceived media bias reported by both sides were not found to differ between the two conditions.

Figure 2. Mean differences and significance between pro-immigrant and pro-deportation participants



Note: The differences between pro-immigrant and pro-deportation participants in the non-empathetic balanced and non-empathetic slanted conditions are significant at .05 level, whereas the differences in both empathetic balanced and empathetic slanted conditions are not. While 6 represents “strictly non-empathetic,” 0 represents biased in favor of pro-immigrant and 11 represents biased in favor of pro-deportation.

Similarly, support for relative HMP is present in the non-empathetic pro-immigrant condition. Both pro-immigrant participants ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.83$) and pro-deportation participants ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 1.66$) perceived the non-empathetic pro-immigrant article to be in favor of immigration; however, pro-deportation participants perceived it to be more biased in favor of immigration than pro-immigrant participants ($F(1,122) = 8.05$, $p < .01$). Hence, H2 is supported as relative HMP was present in the non-empathetic pro-immigrant condition, where

pro-immigrant participants perceived the article to be less biased than the pro-deportation participants did. Again, t-tests were run to see whether pro-immigrant or pro-deportation participants viewed the content as more or less hostile in the empathetic conditions, when compared to the non-empathetic conditions. Results show that both pro-immigrant participants (mean difference = $-.07$, $t = .29$, $df = 1.96$, n.s.) and pro-deportation participants (mean difference = $-.13$, $t = -.39$, $df = 121$, n.s.) do not perceive media bias differently when placed in the non-empathetic vs. empathetic conditions.

Consistent with what happened in the empathetic balanced condition, no relative HMP is found in the empathy pro-immigrant condition ($F(1, 121) = 1.80$, n.s.). Although the differences went in the expected direction (i.e., pro-deportation participants still perceived it to be more biased toward immigration than pro-immigrant participants), the empathy factor reduced the differences so that there is not a significant difference between groups. In other words, the difference between the two perceptions is no longer large enough to constitute the relative HMP (RQ3). In sum, in both cases, balanced and slanted, HMP is only present among participants who read the articles written in the non-empathetic tone but not articles written in the empathetic tone.

Mechanisms

Given that we would like to know the rationale behind the disappearance of HMP in conditions where empathy was induced, a series of planned comparisons using the Bonferroni correction were conducted. In other words, estimated marginal means were compared between the non-empathetic pro-immigrant condition and the empathetic pro-immigrant condition among pro-immigrant participants and pro-deportation participants separately. It should be noted that hypotheses were not constructed for the balanced condition as arguments from both sides in a balanced article are expected to offset each other's effects.

The results below therefore speak to whether pro-immigrant participants in the empathetic slanted condition experienced more affective and cognitive empathy (H3a1, H3a2), found the article to be more persuasive to themselves and others (H4a1, H4b2), more or less influential (RQ2), more objective (H6a), more biased in favor of their own side (H7a), and more biased in absolute terms (H8a) than in the non-empathetic slanted condition. Similar analyses will be applied to pro-deportation participants; whether they experienced more or less affective and cognitive empathy (RQ1), perceived the article to be more persuasive to themselves and others (H4b1, H4b2), more influential (H5), less objective (H6b), more biased toward the opposing side (H7b), and more biased in absolute terms (H8b) in the empathetic pro-immigrant condition when compared to those in the non-empathetic pro-immigrant condition.

Balanced Condition

Before presenting results on the slanted conditions, analysis was performed to confirm that both sides of arguments did offset each other in the balanced condition. Pairwise comparisons show that pro-immigrant participants in both the non-empathetic and empathetic conditions did not differ in terms of empathy, persuasiveness, perceived influence, objectivity, and perceived media bias (see Table 1). Similar results were found among pro-deportation participants, except that participants in the empathetic balanced condition ($M = 2.46$, $SD = .96$) reported higher levels of affective empathy than those in the non-empathetic balanced condition ($M = 2.06$, $SD = .85$). This suggests that, pro-deportation participants in the empathetic condition experienced more empathetic responses than pro-deportation participants in the non-empathetic condition. However, due to the nature of balanced arguments, no conclusion can be drawn as to which side they were empathetic towards.

Table 1. Pairwise comparisons between non-empathetic balanced and empathetic balanced conditions

	<u>Pro-immigrant</u>			<u>Pro-deportation</u>		
	Non-empathetic (SD)	Empathetic (SD)	Mean difference (SE)	Non-empathetic (SD)	Empathetic (SD)	Mean difference (SE)
Affective empathy	2.82 (.89)	3.01 (1.11)	-.19 (.15)	2.06 (.85)	2.46 (.96)	-.40** (.14)
Cognitive empathy (understanding)	3.47 (.99)	3.47 (.85)	-.00 (.13)	4.26 (.52)	4.07 (.86)	.19 (.13)
Cognitive empathy (identification)	2.58 (1.12)	2.51 (1.06)	.07 (.16)	3.39 (1.09)	3.27 (.91)	.12 (.17)
Persuasiveness to self	2.23 (1.01)	2.01 (1.12)	.17 (.17)	2.23 (1.06)	2.06 (1.01)	.17 (.16)
Persuasiveness to others	2.46 (.94)	2.36 (.90)	.10 (.15)	2.44 (.96)	2.53 (1.03)	-.09 (.15)
Perceived influence	2.86 (3.38)	2.27 (1.30)	.59 (.41)	2.02 (3.20)	2.58 (1.46)	.45 (.40)
Objectivity	2.88 (.93)	2.71 (1.13)	.17 (.17)	3.02 (1.11)	2.95 (1.03)	.07 (.16)
Media bias	6.30 (1.48)	6.16 (1.83)	.15 (.28)	5.41 (1.78)	5.78 (1.75)	-.37 (.27)
Absolute media bias	.99 (1.14)	1.26 (1.34)	-.27* (.19)	1.30 (1.34)	1.20 (1.29)	.11 (.20)

Note. ** $p < .01$.

Slanted Condition

Results with respect to the slanted pro-immigrant conditions are shown in Table 2. As seen, pro-immigrant participants in the empathetic condition ($M = 3.61$, $SD = .90$) experienced more affective empathy than those in the non-empathetic condition ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.06$). This suggests that when individuals see people from their own side to be in pain or suffering, they are likely to experience affective empathy. However, the empathy article did not make pro-deportation participants experience more affective empathy than the non-empathetic one. In

other words, learning how illegal immigrants are in pain did not help pro-deportation participants perceive more affective empathy (RQ1). H3a1 and H3b1 are therefore supported.

Table 2. Pairwise comparisons between non-empathetic slanted and empathetic slanted conditions

	<u>Pro-Immigrant</u>			<u>Pro-deportation</u>		
	Non-empathetic (SD)	Empathetic (SD)	Mean difference (SE)	Non-empathetic (SD)	Empathetic (SD)	Mean difference (SE)
Affective empathy	3.13 (1.06)	3.61 (.90)	-.48** (.18)	1.87 (1.03)	2.14 (1.10)	-.27 (.18)
Cognitive empathy (understanding)	3.12 (1.06)	3.34 (1.11)	-.22 (.15)	4.35 (.60)	4.50 (.54)	-.15 (.15)
Cognitive empathy (identification)	2.24 (1.09)	2.45 (2.45)	-.20 (.20)	3.41 (1.12)	3.48 (1.02)	-.06 (.20)
Persuasiveness to self	2.69 (1.22)	3.52 (1.05)	-.83*** (.19)	1.50 (.91)	1.92 (1.08)	-.42* (.19)
Persuasiveness to others	2.31 (1.00)	2.97 (.94)	-.65*** (.17)	2.37 (.88)	2.59 (1.06)	-.23 (.17)
Perceived influence	2.54 (1.02)	2.81 (1.02)	-.27 (.17)	2.18 (.90)	2.55 (.93)	-.37* (.17)
Objectivity	2.87 (1.18)	2.92 (1.20)	-.05 (.19)	1.95 (1.14)	1.61 (.86)	.34 ⁺ (.19)
Media bias	3.59 (1.82)	3.02 (1.54)	.57 ⁺ (.31)	2.28 (1.66)	2.20 (1.86)	.08 (.30)
Absolute media bias	2.56 (1.60)	3.05 (1.40)	-.49* (.25)	3.80 (1.48)	4.12 (1.13)	-.32 (.24)

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, ⁺ $p < .10$.

For article persuasiveness, pro-immigrant participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the empathetic tone ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.05$) perceived it to be more persuasive than those exposed to the same news article but written in the non-empathetic tone ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.22$). Meanwhile, pro-deportation participants also saw the same, that those in the

empathetic condition ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 1.08$) rated the article to be more persuasive than those in the non-empathetic condition ($M = 1.50$, $SD = .91$). In sum, both sides saw the empathy article to be more persuasive to themselves than the non-empathetic article, which provides support for both H4a1 and H4b1.

However, no significant difference was found among the pro-deportation participants on persuasiveness to other neutral readers, while pro-immigrant participants did perceive it to be more persuasive to others in the empathy pro-immigrant condition ($M = 2.97$, $SD = .94$) than in the non-empathetic condition ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.00$), supporting H4a2 but not H4b2. Although pro-deportation participants did not find the empathetic slanted article to be more persuasive than the non-empathetic one, the results in general provide support for the empathetic article to be more persuasive, to both themselves as well as others. It is interesting to find out how pro-deportation participants, when exposed to an incongruent piece of news content, found the article to be persuasive only to themselves but not others. This is contrary to the third-person effect, in which others are usually perceived to be more vulnerable to incongruent information regarded as “wrong.”

As shown in Table 2, only pro-deportation ($M = 2.55$, $SD = .93$) participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the empathetic tone were found to perceive it to be more influential on the public than pro-deportation participants exposed to a pro-immigrant news article written in the non-empathetic tone ($M = 2.18$, $SD = .90$). Therefore, H5 is supported while such a difference is not found among the pro-immigrant participants (RQ2). According to how perceived influence was measured, pro-deportation participants found the empathetic article to be more likely to lead the public to support a legal pathway for illegal immigration as well as to form positive attitudes toward illegal immigrants than the non-empathetic article.

As pro-deportation participants found the empathetic pro-immigrant article to be more influential toward driving the public to support illegal immigration as well as a legal pathway for illegal immigrants, it is not surprising to find participants in the empathetic pro-immigrant condition ($M = 1.61$, $SD = .86$) perceiving the news story to be less objective than those in the non-empathetic pro-immigrant condition ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 1.14$). In this sense, as it is persuasive toward the opposing side, pro-deportation participants will likely find it to be less objective. H6b is marginally supported at .10 significance level, while H6a is not supported.

Lastly, pro-immigrant participants in the empathetic slanted condition ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.54$) saw the article to be more favorable toward their own point of view than those in the non-empathetic condition ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.82$), on a 11-point scale from 1 (favoring immigration) to 11 (favoring deportation), with 6 being strictly neutral. This makes sense, as they perceived the pro-immigrant article to be more persuasive, they were likely to perceive the empathetic article to be more in favor of their position than the non-empathetic article. As they move away from the neutral point (6) to favoring their own side (1), their absolute media bias increased and constituted to the significant difference between the empathetic ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.40$) and non-empathetic conditions ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.60$) on absolute media bias. In other words, the empathetic article led pro-immigrant participants to hold even more extreme views than the non-empathetic article. H7a and H8a are thus supported. On the other hand, no evidence was found to support H7b and H8b with regard to pro-deportation participants on both perceived media bias and absolute media bias.

Summary

In summary, HMP is only found in non-empathetic slanted conditions but not the empathetic slanted conditions due to pro-immigrant participants perceiving the pro-immigrant

article to be more biased and/or in favor of their own point of view. In other words, even though pro-deportation participants did not change how they perceived media bias, pro-immigrant participants closed the gap between the two perceptions. The mechanism behind this is that the empathetic article was seen to be more persuasive by pro-immigrant participants as well as more persuasive and influential to the public in favor of immigration by pro-deportation participants.

Although pro-immigrant participants did not differ in their perceptions of the empathetic and non-empathetic articles in the balanced condition, so were the pro-deportation participants; the disappearance of HMP can then be attributed to how both sides were more affected by congruent information than incongruent information when it comes to the balanced stimulus. Therefore, despite the fact that effects of arguments from both sides can offset each other, both pro-immigrant and pro-deportation participants become closer to their own point of view in terms of perceived media bias.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Journalism is vital to individuals' political life as a democratic engine (Schudson, 2002). However, according to the hostile media perception (HMP), individuals with different stances fail to process news congruently, such that partisans on separate sides of an issue come to see the exact same news story to be hostile against their personal point of view (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). While many scholars have suggested many undesirable consequences of HMP including false perception of public opinion (Tsfati & Cohen, 2007), "corrective actions" to correct the influence of perceived biases (Rojas, 2010), selective exposure to likeminded sources (Festinger, 1964; Tsang, 2017), few have attempted to reduce HMP nor to narrow the gap between bias perception from opposing sides of an issue.

This study therefore proposed and tested whether and how empathy can help shut down HMP and promote congruent news processing. Besides examining whether participants from both sides perceived the news stimulus to be biased toward the neutral point, this dissertation proposes measuring the gap between both sides' perceptions as the presence of such gap implies incongruent news processing. Even when neither side of participants deviate their bias ratings from being strictly neutral, a perception gap between both sides can still exist. Such additional measure makes the study of HMP to be more comprehensive. While comparing perceived media bias between the empathetic condition and the non-empathetic condition among pro-immigrant participants informs us how this particular side changed in terms of bias perception from one to another, the perception gap tells us whether and how the two groups, pro-immigration and pro-deportation participants, changed together in terms of bias perception; the same applies to

comparison among pro-deportation participants. In sum, such perception gap provides additional information on top of the traditional HMP measures.

Empathy was chosen among the many discrete emotions because it involves sharing emotions with others and taking the perspective of others (Davis, 1980). While anger signals ego threat and/or anxiety (see Novaco, 1976), empathy involves the sharing of emotional responses (Bandura, 2002; Davis, 1980; Zillmann, 2006) as well as the adoption of what others feel and think through perspective-taking (Decety & Jackson, 2006). Besides yielding empathetic responses upon learning about a person or a group of people, we are also producers of empathy. Very often, when we tell stories about ourselves, especially painful ones, we expect our listeners to place themselves into our shoes and share our feelings. Sometimes, we even manipulate empathy to persuade others to get something done. Given that journalists do appeal to audiences' empathy when it comes to immigration reporting (Haynes, 2013), this dissertation aims to explore the potential effects of empathy on news processing. The findings suggest that, although empathy is able to eliminate the hostile media perception as well as the perception gap between participants from both sides, no evidence shows that it can make disconfirming arguments or the opposing side look less biased.

Empathy Manipulation

Consistent with Haynes' (2013) findings, participants in the empathetic condition reported experiencing higher level of affective empathy than those in the non-empathetic condition. While Haynes (2013) explored the effects of empathy by studying content frames, this research manipulated journalistic narratives such as the presence of overt emotional words (Cao, 2010), the use of direct quotes (first-person narratives; Oliver, Dillard, Bae, & Tamul, 2012; Stephan & Finlay, 2002), and the supply of background of the characters (concrete stories of the

undocumented immigrants; Gross, 2008; Merolla, Ramkrishnan, & Haynes; 2013). In other words, holding the frames consistent across conditions, the manner in which journalists deliver stories on illegal immigrants is found to influence the extent to which readers experience affective empathy. Participants in general responded affectively to another person's emotional state (Davis, 1994; Decety & Jackson, 2006), and such empathetic response is in line with the perceived welfare of illegal immigrants in distress. This brings support to Shen's (2010) findings, that a message which is affectively loaded and also involves the portrayal of distress is more empathy-arousing than a message with none of those elements. Together with the application of direct quotations, these kinds of news stories can arouse more affective empathy than news stories without those narrative elements. Unfortunately, as all three elements were examined at one time, the findings cannot inform us which of the three elements contributes the most to empathy arousal. Nevertheless, this study provides empirical evidence as to how empathetic narratives can impact media perceptions.

It should be noted that, while the empathetic news stimulus was able to induce higher levels of affective empathy when compared to the non-empathetic stimulus, it failed to breed cognitive empathy. In general, participants did not self-report performing more perspective-taking (i.e., understanding and identifying with the undocumented immigrants). This finding therefore lends support to how empathetic concern does not always have to go hand in hand with cognitive empathy (Cao, 2010). Learning from past studies on empathy, we might need to insert an instruction to prompt readers to imagine themselves as illegal immigrants before the news story manipulation (see Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997), or to build the news stimuli solely on one victim instead of a few protestors. In other words, individuals might need to spend a longer period of time in order to form more intimate relationships with the character(s) for perspective-

taking to happen. The above are just a few examples that could assist readers to get immersed into the characters' shoes. Again, as citizens often learn about other people that they have little contact with from the mass media, media narratives can be vital to formation of opinions about those unfamiliar others in a society. Hence, future research should continue to investigate the relationship between different journalistic narratives/frames and empathy experiences.

In line with previous research on imagination, individuals can choose what to imagine and what to avoid imagining (Batson, Ahmad, & Stocks, 2004). To be more specific, the findings confirm morality bias (Fulkerson, 2005) as well as empathetic biases (Hoffman, 1987). While pro-immigrant participants exposed to the empathetic pro-immigrant article experienced higher levels of affective empathy when compared to pro-immigrant participants exposed to the non-empathetic pro-immigrant article, no difference was found between pro-deportation participants in the two conditions. In this sense, it can be hard for pro-deportation participants to fall for the victims and to perform perspective-taking as the imagined characters in the pro-immigrant stimulus are illegal immigrants who they would like to deport out of the country. According to the morality bias (Fulkerson, 2005), pro-deportation participants could find it difficult to immerse themselves and to take the perspectives of those people whose morals they do not appreciate. This suggests that news stories with empathetic elements might not evoke empathetic responses in everyone but only among audiences who hold consistent views with those characters documented in the news. This thus speaks to the limitation of empathy on reduction of perceived media hostility.

Empathy and HMP

As mentioned, given how often balanced news coverage is seen to be biased by partisans (Vallone, Ross & Lepper, 1985), empathy seems to be a plausible solution to this phenomenon as

it brings on tender emotions (Oliver, 2008) as well as perspective-taking (e.g., Davis, 1994). Similar to what traditional HMP studies have found, when participants were exposed to a balanced article written in non-empathetic tone, both sides viewed the coverage to be hostile against their personal stance. In other words, they both rated the news article to be significantly different from being strictly neutral, and at the same time, against their personal position. While pro-immigrant participants perceived it to be pro-deportation, pro-deportation participants perceived it to be pro-immigrant. However, with regard to a balanced article written in empathetic tone, both sides no longer perceived the story to be hostile against their personal point of view. Furthermore, perceptions of bias rated by both sides were found to significantly differ in the empathetic non-empathetic condition, but not in the empathetic balanced condition.

It is speculated that both sides found the empathetic article to be more persuasive, and the confirming evidence with empathetic elements appeared to be more vivid and prominent than the ones in the non-empathetic balanced article. Together with possible assimilation effects (Lord et al., 1979), both pro-deportation and pro-immigrant participants considered the empathetic balanced article to favor their side more than the non-empathetic balanced article. Hence, HMP was reduced. Due to how both sides' perceptions move toward each other, the perception gap was also eliminated.

Similar to the balanced conditions, while relative HMP was found among those exposed to the non-empathetic slanted article, relative HMP was not found among those exposed to the empathetic slanted article. Even though people's perceptions of media bias can come to be more aligned when empathy is introduced to the pro-immigrant news stimulus, pro-deportation participants exposed to such an incongruent article were not found to perceive the story as less hostile nor more in favor toward their stance. In other words, no evidence was found to support

that empathy makes people see less bias and learn about the opposing side better. This is consistent with how pro-deportation participants in the empathetic slanted condition did not report experiencing higher levels of empathetic responses than those in the non-empathetic slanted condition. The findings therefore suggest empathy does have the potential to eliminate HMP as well as the polarized perception of media biases between two camps; however, it cannot reduce perceived media hostility among individuals exposed to disconfirming information when compared to the non-empathetic article.

Four rationales can be accounted for such findings. First, audiences exposed to disconfirming information can find it hard to empathize with those they disagree (e.g., Batson, Ahmad, & Stocks, 2004; Hoffman, 1987). Second, pro-deportation participants might find those incongruent pro-immigrant arguments to be irrelevant and therefore do not pay attention to the victims illustrated in the disconfirming news stimulus. Third, empathy might just do not have the power to reduce perceived media hostility. Lastly, the strength of the manipulations created for this study is not strong enough to induce such change, especially when all conditions utilized empathetic frames. As this study held the content frames constant and only manipulated journalistic narratives, future studies can combine the two to enhance the strength of empathy arousal. In that case, we might be able to not only see the disappearance of HMP but also reduction in perceived media hostility in which individuals can come to see others' positions as sincere and potentially reasonable (Ross & Ward, 1995; 1996).

On the other hand, pro-immigrant participants who were exposed to confirming pro-immigrant information perceived more media favorability toward their own stance. Instead of reducing perceived media hostility, we know for sure that the rationale is the increase in media favorability toward personal position due to the pro-immigrant news stimulus did not contain

anything hostile to them. In other words, there was no/little hostility to be reduced, but mostly confirming evidence which can confirm their preexisting point of view. Such increase in favorability toward personal stance is found to be the most plausible drive behind the reduction of HMP as well as the reduction of perception gaps.

These findings speak to the current partisan political climate (Manjoo, 2011; Price, 2014) as well as the wide gap between the two major party platforms (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008). Overall, the news media suffers from a credibility crisis and the public is cynical about the accuracy and truthfulness of news reports (Jones, 2004; Tsfati & Peri, 2006), which can further increase political polarization. Although empathy cannot make both balanced and slanted disconfirming news stories to be seen as less hostile, it can at least promotes congruent news processing (i.e., eliminating perception gaps between the two sides). As a result, empathy does have the potential to make sure everyone in a society is on more or less the same page. In addition, the way they tend to perceive the empathetic news stimulus to be more in favor of their own side, compared to the non-empathetic condition, might be able to bring beneficial outcomes to the declined in media trust. With empathy, audiences are more likely to perceive media content as favorable and thus the public less likely to be influenced in a negative way. In this case, empathy can reduce the chance in social alienation (Tsfati, 2007) as well as corrective actions (Rojas, 2010). Moreover, perceiving more media favorability implies that individuals are not as likely to experience negative emotions when exposed to the empathetic media content. By feeling less psychological discomfort, empathy also aids in smoothing selective exposure behaviors (Festinger, 1964; Lavine, Borgida, & Sullivan, 2000; Tsang, 2017). Such outcomes may then decrease polarization indirectly (Stroud, 2010) while increasing trust in the government and democracy (Tsfati & Cohen, 2005).

Nonetheless, empathy might advance political polarization as participants tend to only emphasize on victims they agree with. As a result, participants, in particular those exposed to an empathetic congruent news article, tend to feel the article to be more agreeable as well as more in favor of their own side than a congruent article written in non-empathetic tone. In absolute terms, they actually see more bias away from the neutral point; in other words, becoming more extreme. Hence, whether empathy produces socially desirable outcomes in relation to democracy depends on how you conceptualize and measure HMP. In other words, empathy in general is shown to have the potential to increase media trust but not to reduce polarization. As both Republicans and Democrats hold negative views of the opposing party including viewing the opposing side as a “threat to the Nation’s well-being” (Pew Research Center, 2014), this line of research is in demand. In this sense, future studies should further investigate the application of empathy across media platforms and contexts, and to pay attention to whether elimination of perception gap and/or perceiving the article to be neutral is/are socially desirable.

Mechanisms

Overall, empathy is shown to have greater persuasive power, at least in the eyes of participants in this study when asked to rate the article’s persuasiveness on themselves. This finding contributes to the literature on persuasion by providing empirical evidence showing empathy in general is more persuasive (Aaker & Williams, 1998; Bae, 2008; Bagozzi & Moore, 1994; Campbell & Babrow, 2004; Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Shen, 2010). Just as Campbell and Babrow (2004) found, implementing testimonials from people who have tested HIV-positive significantly increased the persuasiveness of health-related appeals. Although this study did not further investigate why empathy has such power, Oliver (2008) suggests empathy can produce some sort of tenderness which later leads to a preference in the message while Bae (2008)

suggests empathy can reduce psychological reactance as well as facilitate involvement with the message.

An interesting finding is that, when exposed to an incongruent news story, pro-deportation individuals rated the empathetic article to be more persuasive to themselves but not to others, compared to the non-empathetic article. It is commonly expected that, pro-deportation participants would perceive the empathetic pro-immigrant news story to be more persuasive to others than themselves, according to the third-person effect (Davison, 1983) and the influence of presumed media influence theory (Gunther & Storey, 2003). In other words, as the message is disconfirming, they would not only perceive others to be more affected, but also find the empathetic slanted news story to be more influential against their point of view, the latter of which is supported by the findings. In this sense, even though the message is not perceived to be more persuasive to others, pro-deportation participants still felt that the news content reflects what the public will think tomorrow (Gunther, 1998). This might be due to the nature of empathy. Research on third-person perception usually looks at socially undesirable media content, and people are found to perceive others to be more likely to be influenced than oneself when it comes to content in relation to pornography (Gunther, 1995) and violence (Rojas, Shah, & Faber, 1996). In this case, it might be different for empathetic content as empathy is a socially-desirable trait and empathetic news articles can be considered socially desirable (see Happ & Melzer, 2014). In other words, pro-deportation participants might view themselves as able to be empathetic while less likely for others, and the first-person perception interferes with the third-person perception. This is consistent with what Gunther and Thorson (1992) found, that perception of influence on oneself is seen to be larger than others when it comes to socially desirable media content such as public service announcements.

Summary

To summarize, pro-immigrant participants found the empathetic news story to be more persuasive, both to themselves as well as to others, than the non-empathetic news story. They also perceived significantly more media bias favoring their personal position. Meanwhile, pro-deportation participants found the empathetic article to be more influential to the public and more persuasive only to themselves. While the pro-deportation participants did not rate the empathetic slanted article to be significantly more biased than the non-empathetic slanted article, pro-immigrant participants rated the empathy article significantly more biased in favor of their stance than the non-empathetic one; therefore, downsizing the gap between the perception of both few have studied how to eliminate it. This study therefore contributes to HMP literature by proposing and showing how empathy can terminate HMP as well as to reduce the perception gap between opposing sides of an issue. In addition, aside from studying HMP's cognitive mechanism, affective elements are investigated. In other words, more research is needed for affective mechanism and affective elements in HMP research. Although this study solely examines effects on media perceptions, empathetic media content can have latent and unnoticed effects on the general public as public agenda relies heavily on media representations (see Wallack & Dorfman, 1996). In particular, the way stories are presented could make a difference in perpetuating negative or positive attitudes toward an out-group and policy change (Adair, 2016; Wallack & Dorfman, 1996). As empathy is shown to put an end to HMP and narrow perception gap between two camps, more research should explore how media advocacy could take advantage to advance social welfare and social justice issues.

This study therefore contributes to the literature on HMP mechanisms. While many scholars have studied the cognitive elements of HMP (e.g., Arpan & Raney, 2003; Giner-Sorolla

& Chaiken, 1994; Gunther & Liebhart, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2004), this study extends that line of research by investigating how affect can come into play. This is in fact consistent with how scholars have suggested that many processes like selective categorization can be reflexive (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006), or even effortless and automatic (Kahneman, 2003), and how motivated reasoning can depend on motivation instead of non-motivating terms (Kunda, 1990). Although empathy has such potential, more research should be done to look at how empathy can be manipulated in news stories, as well as how different levels and/or definitions of empathy can impact media perceptions. In other words, this current dissertation only provides effects of a particular type (i.e., narrative style) and a particular level of strength of empathy, and the tipping point of where empathy can reduce HMP is still unknown. In addition, the findings also contribute to the literature on empathy and persuasion (Bae, 2008; Shen, 2010) by providing support to the positive relationship between empathy and persuasiveness.

Limitations

The findings of this study are tempered by several limitations. First, the manipulations in this research failed to induce cognitive empathy. The news stories could only induce simple cognitive processes (affective sharing of another's emotional state) but not advanced cognitive processes (perspective taking), as distinguished by Davis (1994). It can be due to how individuals are not aware of their perspective-taking experience cognitively and/or they are not willing to admit that they related and identified with their opponents. Moreover, perspective-taking is typically manipulated by instructional sets to prompt participants to imagine the victim's circumstances and/or feel for the victims explicitly (Davis, 1994; Galinsky et al., 2008; Shih, Wang, Bucher, & Stotzer, 2009; Regan & Totten, 1975; Toi & Batson, 1982). Hence, scholars should continue to manipulate perspective taking without presenting instructional sets

before the exposure of stimulus as well as to study the nature of empathy in more detail.

With respect to the sample, some considerations must be given to the use of paid subjects. However, the practice of compensating study respondents is common in the communications field, particularly in experimental research. Given the representative nature of the sample obtained and the existing research supporting this approach (Babbie, 2013), any effects stemming from the sample recruitment techniques should be minimal. Furthermore, the results of the study may not be generalizable beyond the context of immigration issues. Different informational contexts could produce different reactions when empathy is applied to different groups of stigmatized individuals. This study only studies immigration, and other controversial topics should also be studied to see if the findings can be replicated. For instance, healthcare issues can be another topic of interest. Nonetheless, given that illegal immigrants have very strong negative social stigma compared to all other groups of people in the U.S., this current test of empathy on HMP is a relatively strict test to pass and empathy has been shown to reduce HMP successfully.

As mentioned in previous sections, besides narrative styles, many frames can be employed to report immigration issues (Haynes, 2013), and hence more should be done to explore the effects of every single empathetic element available in news reporting. As this study aims to manipulate empathy and to arouse different levels of empathy but not to study the effects of particular empathetic elements in news reporting, three tactics were included at one time to achieve that end (i.e., source background, direct quotes, emotional words). In other words, we cannot untangle which brings the greatest effect and which brings the least. Perhaps sources' background does not even play a role in empathy arousal. However, as studying what makes an empathetic frame is a secondary aim in this study, isolation of effects of particular narrative style

is not as relevant in this case. In addition, as sources were being quoted in the stimuli, the findings cannot be certain that the name of those sources did not play a role in inducing or inhibiting empathetic responses. Anyhow, it would be interesting to learn which empathetic condition(s) (empathy prime, content, and/or the different narrative styles) leads to the largest shifts in support of permissive immigration policies and how might source influence the relationship between empathy and HMP. Lastly, the current design is fairly weak in manipulating empathy as only narratives were manipulated. Future research should ramp up such empathy manipulation and look at the effects of empathy at a larger extent.

Mostly importantly, as a 11-point scale, with 6 being neutral, was utilized to measure perceived media bias, a floor effect might be present in the slanted conditions. In other words, while most participants rated the balanced stimuli around the mean (see Appendix E and F), surrounding “strictly neutral (6),” those in the slanted conditions were bounded by the end of the scale (see Appendix G and H). In this sense, those exposed to the pro-immigrant article were not able to and/or were not likely to rate media bias any lower than 1 (Mode = 1), confirming a floor effect. The presence of such effect therefore suggests that, the scale was not able to fully capture what was happening in the slanted conditions, especially in the empathetic condition, where the ratings were even more skewed. For future reference, scales other than the one used should be included in the post-test. For instance, questions solely asking participants to what extent they find the article to be biased can be added to complement the current scale with two ends.

Another area of limitations is how affect is studied. Among the many emotions, only empathy is examined. As many have found, when exposed to a piece of information, multiple emotions can be aroused, and the interplay among emotions should be investigated. The widely studied emotions in relation to HMP are mostly negative emotions. For instance, Hwang, Pan,

and Sun (2008) found that partisan perceptions of media bias are often charged with negative emotions such as anger, rage, and indignation. According to the authors, when people encounter what they perceive as unfair media presentation, they are likely to experience negative moral emotions which they call “media indignation.” Other discrete emotions should also be studied. Furthermore, besides studying emotions using self-reports, we should also explore implicit processes like arousal as processes or mechanisms regarding HMP can be somewhat reflexive and motivating (Kahneman, 2003; Kunda, 1990). According to Kunda (1990), arousal can serve as a signal, making us aware and concern about a particular cognition. For instance, we can look into physiology and see how people react to news content physically, or tap into their psychology by measuring their body. These implicit measures might give us new insights into the interactions among emotions. Most importantly, as cognitive processes cannot fully account for the processing of news, and individuals cannot be expected to be cognitively aware of everything that is happening when exposed to a piece of information, tools besides self-reports should be investigated. Although cognitive explanations might still play a major role in the process of reasoning, motivation can be the initial trigger of cognitive processes (Kunda, 1990).

Finally, it should be noted that, while HMP studies usually make use of partisan samples only, this study did not separate partisans from non-partisans. In other terms, HMP is found even without isolating the partisans. As this issue of immigration was so controversial across the U.S. during data collection, HMP can be expected to be widely present among the U.S. population in general. Future studies should also continue to explore the effects of involvement and partisanship on HMP and empathy. It should also be noted that, while a balanced and a pro-immigrant article were tested, there was not a pro-deportation article. In other words, a follow-up study should be conducted to test articles with all possible valences simultaneously. Even though

this is the case, Haynes (2013) has shown that the narratives used in the current manipulations are dominant frames and narratives used in the U.S. on immigration issues, whereas not many pro-deportation frames could be found in the newspapers. Given the rise of President Donald Trump being more outspoken about deporting all illegal immigrants, we might need to start exploring some alternative frames. Nonetheless, those frames should aim to arouse threat more than empathy.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

While a democratic society celebrates peaceful conflict resolution, tolerance, and informed citizenship (Fishkin, 1995; Gastil & Dillard, 1999; Mendelberg, 2002; Mendelberg & Oleske, 2000; Price, Capella, & Nir, 2002), HMP works against these virtues. Not only does it encourage “corrective actions” (Rojas, 2010), it also promotes social alienation, media and democracy distrust, and selective exposure. Eliminating HMP as well as narrowing the gap between the perceptions of news audiences who hold different perspectives should help increase media trust but also extremity. This research therefore contributes to the literature by proposing the use of empathy to encourage congruent news processing and to eliminate HMP. In both cases, balanced or slanted, empathy is shown to reduce HMP, making sure that arguments on both sides are represented in media coverage (i.e., balanced coverage) can lead both sides to perceive the reporting congruently. Although such a move on either side was not found to be significantly different from the non-empathetic condition, HMP disappears. In other words, at least both sides move toward the expected direction, and future studies should continue to extend such line of research to magnify the effects of empathy to resolve current polarization and trust issues. Although news audiences viewed the balanced news coverage as hostile, those exposed to balanced reporting with an empathetic tone did not. Perhaps empathy has the power to make one feel that the journalists at least understand and feel for their own group, and therefore are seen to be more fair and inclusive. Lastly, learning that the opponents are also suffering fail to make the opposing side more sincere and opposing arguments potentially more reasonable. It is a “challenge to bring public perceptions of media influence more in line with decades of research that find this power to be limited” (Tsfati & Cohen, 2005), and this study provides a possible

solution. Although empathy might promote congruent news processing, the findings do not show its capacity to reduce perceived media hostility. Instead, empathy is found to increase media favorability by presenting more favorable tone and evidence toward their own stance.

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Appendix A

Stimulus: Non-empathetic balanced condition

Immigration rallies: Deportation or protection?

Matthew Brown, USA TODAY 2:09 p.m. EDT Feb 11, 2017

2506 CONNECT 9 TWEET 9 LINKEDIN 9 COMMENT 467 EMAIL MORE

PHOENIX — U.S. immigration policy has been a touchstone of political debate for decades as policymakers consider U.S. labor demands and border security concerns.

While deportation supporters rallied Saturday in a renewed effort to demand President Donald Trump to deport all illegal immigrants, immigration advocates rallied to push Trump to put a freeze on deportations.

According to Noah Evans in New York City, many illegal aliens commit serious crimes and pose significant threats to the U.S. He said the government is responsible for protecting legal citizens from undocumented criminals.

Along the same line, Adelle Fisher in Eloy, Ariz. said illegal immigrants are taking jobs away from Americans and are likely to increase unemployment in the country. She believes deportation can help solve economic issues in general.

Critics counter that illegal immigrants are only taking the most dangerous, dirty and low-paying jobs that no Americans are willing to do.

According to Arce, an immigration advocate in Hartford, Conn., U.S. entrepreneurs pay the immigrants as little as possible and get away with all the sub-standard working conditions or benefits. Immigrants basically work with no protection.

Besides, Arce said deportation will separate children from their parents, and U.S.-born children can wind up in foster care. Instead of deportation, the U.S. government should come up with better tactics to help immigrants.

While it is uncertain whether all illegal immigrants will be deported, it is clear that the national conversation about this issue will continue.

Appendix B

Stimulus: Empathetic balanced condition

NEWS SPORTS LIFE MONEY TECH TRAVEL OPINION 65° CROSSWORDS MORE

Immigration rallies: Deportation or protection?

Matthew Brown, USA TODAY 2:09 p.m. EDT Feb 11, 2017

2506 CONNECT 9 TWEET LINKEDIN 467 COMMENT EMAIL MORE

PHOENIX — U.S. immigration policy has been a touchstone of political debate for decades as policymakers consider U.S. labor demands and border security concerns.

While deportation supporters rallied Saturday in a renewed effort to demand President Donald Trump to deport all illegal immigrants, immigration advocates rallied to push Trump to put a freeze on deportations.

According to Noah Evans from New York City, whose father was killed last year, "I just want to be safe from illegal criminals. The killer was deported from the U.S. 12 years ago, but he came back to the U.S. again illegally. Immigrants don't love America. They hurt Americans."

Along the same line, Adelle Fisher in Eloy, Ariz., who just lost her job to illegal immigrants, claimed that immigrants are likely to increase unemployment in the country. "With illegal aliens taking our jobs away would be hard to live life. I just couldn't bear the idea," she said.

Critics counter that illegal immigrants are only taking the low-paying jobs that no Americans are willing to do.

Arce, an organizer with a grassroots group in Hartford, Conn., said that she has to work in a factory seven days a week. "Everyone live with fear because there is no measures to protect us from doing the most dangerous and low-paying jobs," said Arce. "People are dying and no one cares."

She continued to say that, many of the people in attendance have been separated from their loved ones. "Every night, one family goes to bed missing somebody in their family."

"I have not seen my mother for 17 years. My brother died, and I was not able to see him, hug him or pray with him." Arce asked for "mercy for (her) family and for all the undocumented immigrants in this country."

While it is uncertain whether all illegal immigrants will be deported, it is clear that the national conversation about this issue will continue.

Appendix C

Stimulus: Non-empathetic pro-immigrant condition

NEWS SPORTS LIFE MONEY TECH TRAVEL OPINION 65° CROSSWORDS MORE

Rally to protect illegal immigrants

Matthew Brown, USA TODAY 2:09 p.m. EDT Feb 11, 2017

f 2506 **t** **in 9** **467** **e** **m**

PHOENIX — U.S. immigration policy has been a touchstone of political debate for decades as policymakers consider U.S. labor demands and border security concerns.

Immigration advocates and supporters rallied Saturday in cities across the country in a renewed effort to push President Donald Trump to put a freeze on deportations.

Organizers with a grassroots group said Trump has the executive power to stop deportations. They want President Trump and his administration to hear their community members across the country.

In Eloy, Ariz., more than 100 supporters converged in front of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center after journeying more than 60 miles from Phoenix.

Many walked with signs saying "Not 1 More Deportation" and calling for deferred deportation action for all. They said they do not want anyone to be separated from their family members, and that undocumented immigrants should not be left to live in the shadows.

Amber Cargile, an ICE spokeswoman in Phoenix, said the agency respects the rights of people to protest outside its facilities.

In Hartford, Conn., dozens of immigrants gathered in front of a federal building after coming from 11 cities across the state. Many say they were angered into action by the Trump administration.

Protesters were concerned about immigrants not being acknowledged in the society as human beings, as well as how immigrants could suddenly get arrested by the authorities and be kicked out of the country without prior notice.

More than 50 people stood in front of a federal immigration office in New York City, chanting in Spanish and English, "Not one more deportation!" and "Trump, listen, we are in the struggle!"

While it is uncertain whether all illegal immigrants will be deported, it is clear that the national conversation about this issue will continue.

Appendix D

Stimulus: Empathy pro-immigrant condition

NEWS SPORTS LIFE MONEY TECH TRAVEL OPINION 65° CROSSWORDS MORE

Rally to protect illegal immigrants

Matthew Brown, USA TODAY 2:09 p.m. EDT Feb 11, 2017

2506 CONNECT 9 TWEET LINKEDIN 467 COMMENT EMAIL MORE

PHOENIX — U.S. immigration policy has been a touchstone of political debate for decades as policymakers consider U.S. labor demands and border security concerns.

Immigration advocates and supporters rallied Saturday in cities across the country in a renewed effort to push President Donald Trump to put a freeze on deportations.

Nataly Cruz, an organizer with a grassroots group in Eloy, Ariz., said many of the people in attendance have relatives who have been separated from their loved ones.

"We want President Trump and his administration to really hear our community members across the country, to understand we do not want one more person separated," said Cruz, who entered the U.S. at age 8 illegally with her parents. "Every night, one family goes to bed missing somebody in their family."

Arce, who now resides in Hartford, Conn., came on a visa and stayed after it expired. Lacking the money and connections to immigrate legally, she experienced similar fear but decided to declare her status in the rally, with half a dozen ICE officers watching. "I can't be in the shadows anymore," she said.

Holding her infant daughter, Arce said, "I live in fear that one day I will be deported and my kids will be without parents. I have not seen my mother for 17 years. My brother died, and I was not able to see him, hug him or pray with him." She asked for "mercy for (her) family and for all the undocumented immigrants in this country."

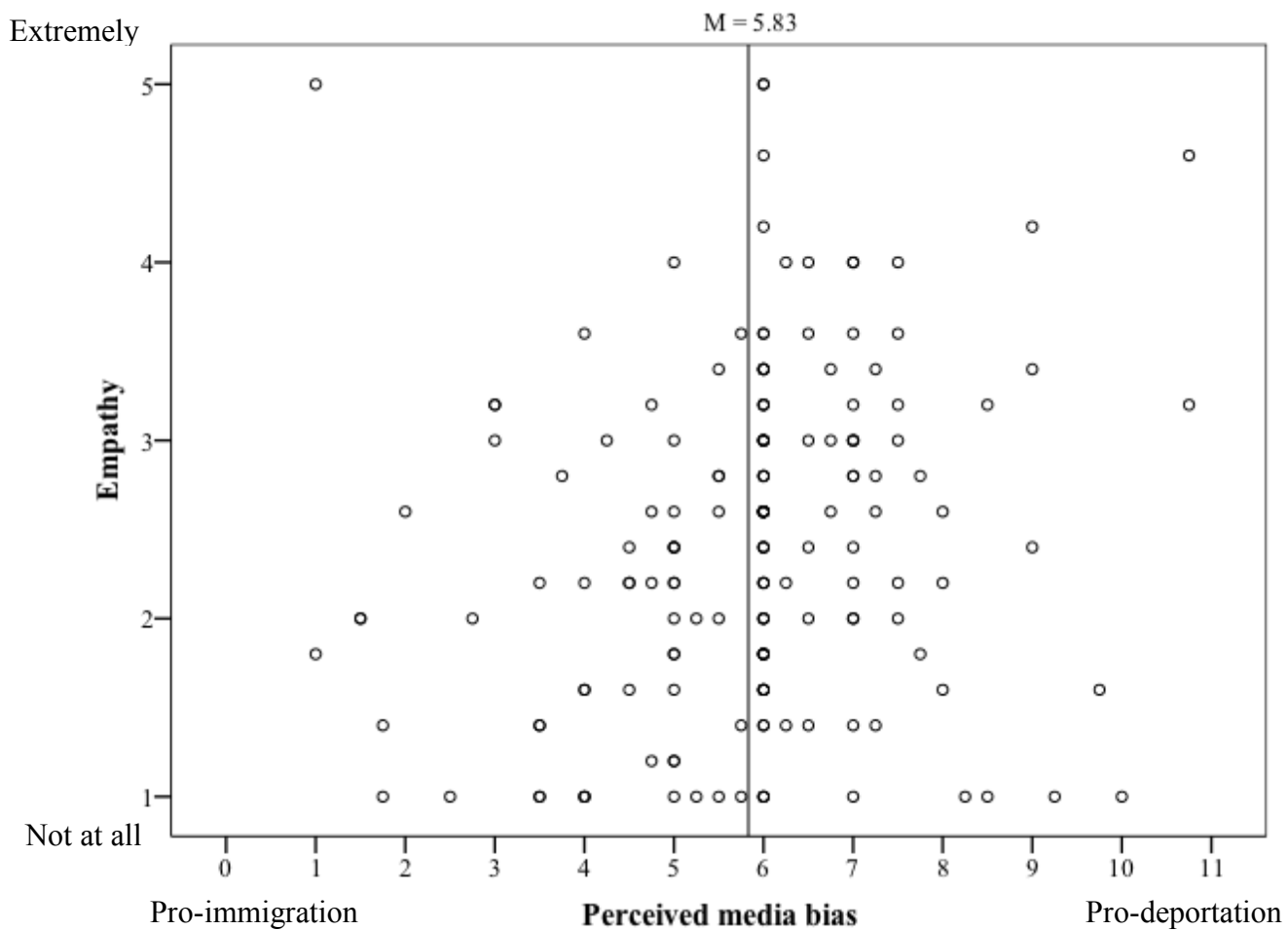
"We just want to be acknowledged in this society as human beings. I just want to be acknowledged that I exist," said Armando Ibanez, a 32-year-old undocumented worker in New York City who was once arrested. "The immigration authorities showed up to arrest me at 5 a.m. in front of my 11-year-old son three years ago."

"My family ended up having trouble getting food and my kid who was born in the U.S. was put in foster care. Deportation is painful. It kills us," Ibanez said. "In general, I think you have to live in fear of being separated from your family any time, any moment."

While it is uncertain whether all illegal immigrants will be deported, it is clear that the national conversation about this issue will continue.

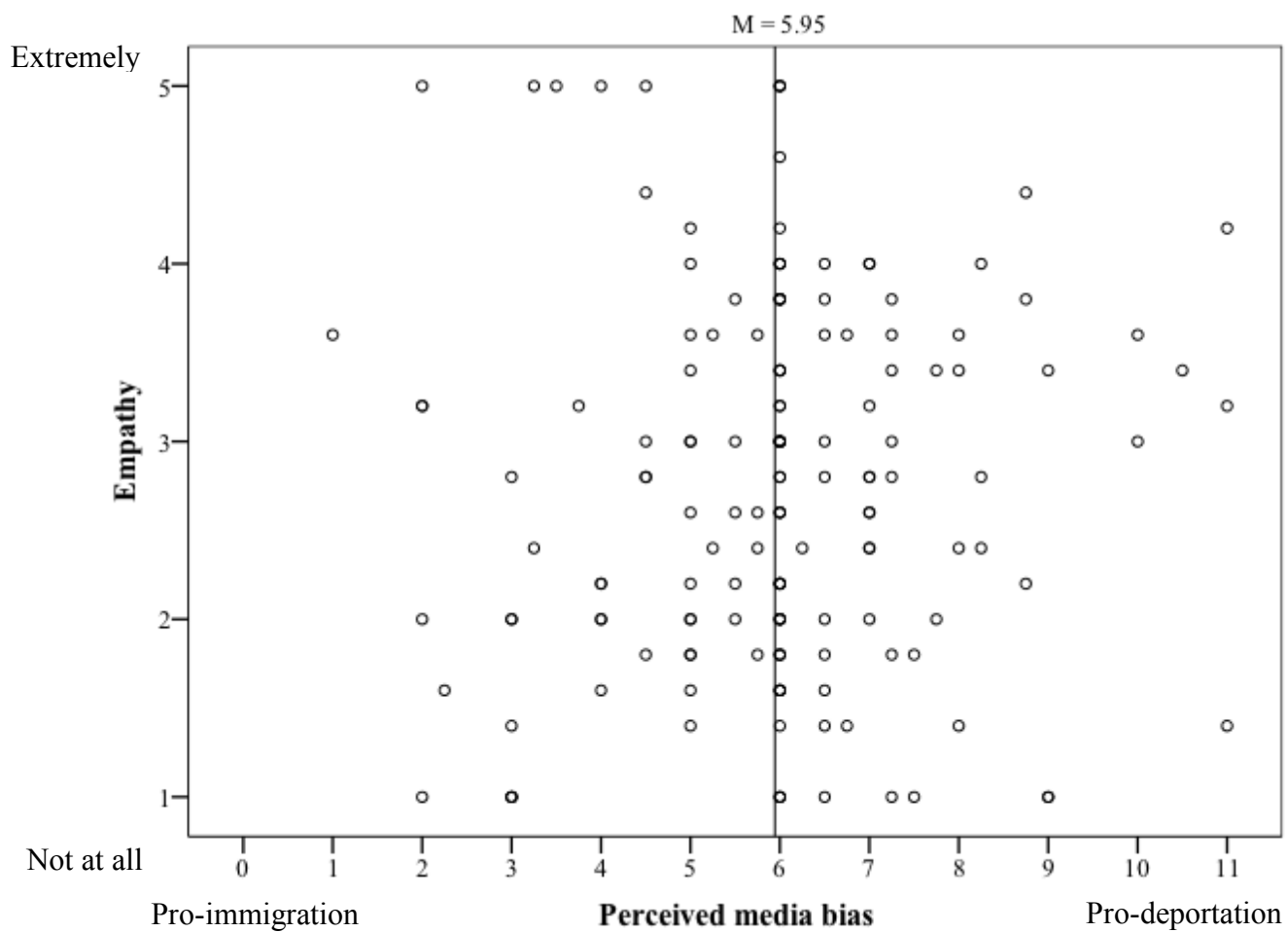
Appendix E

Scatter plot diagram for correlation of empathy and perceived media bias in the non-empathetic balanced condition



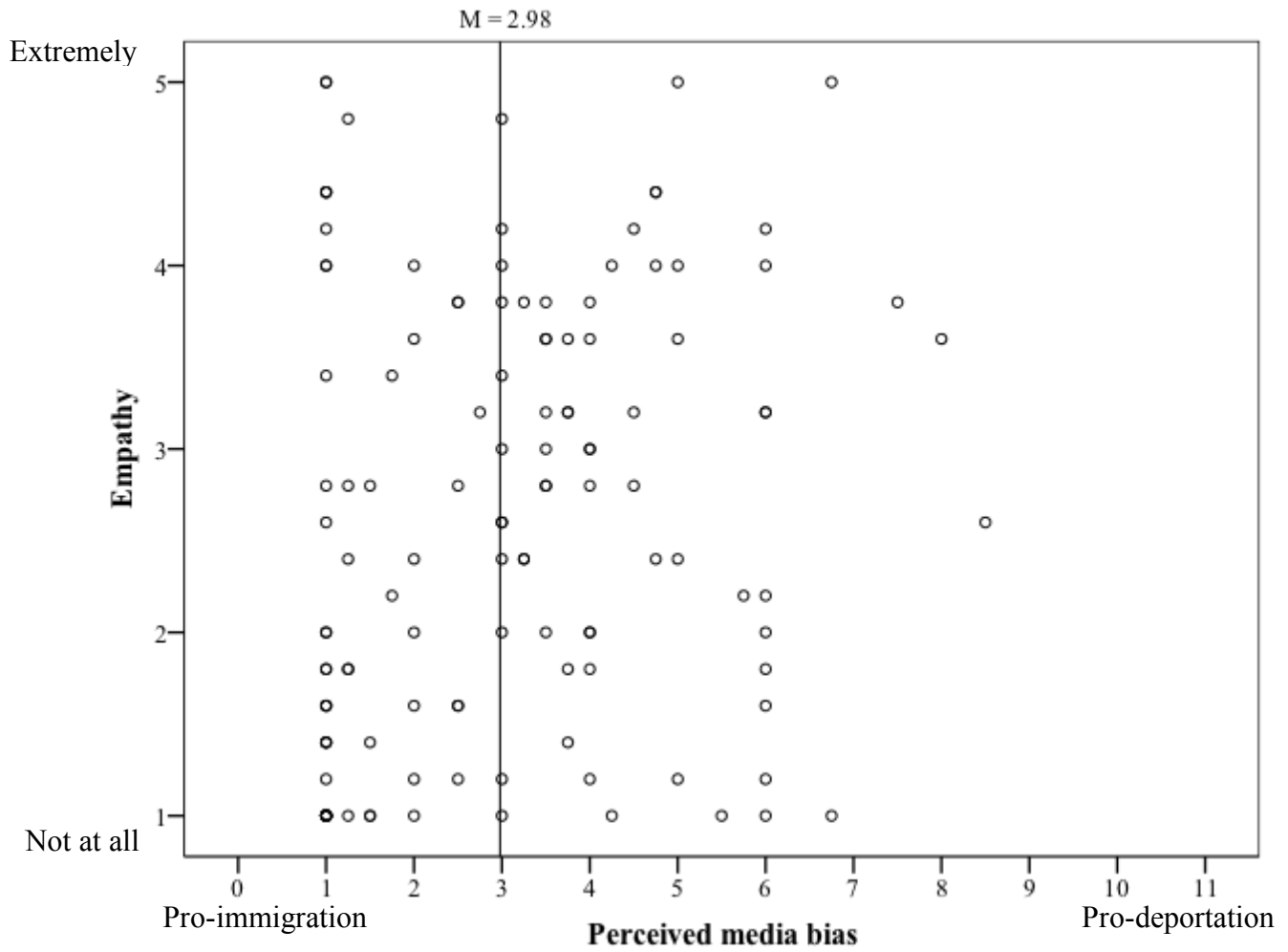
Appendix F

Scatter plot diagram for correlation of empathy and perceived media bias in the non-empathetic balanced condition



Appendix G

Scatter plot diagram for correlation of empathy and perceived media bias in the non-empathetic pro-immigration condition



Appendix H

Scatter plot diagram for correlation of empathy and perceived media bias in the empathetic pro-immigration condition

