

The Hostile Media Phenomenon: Biased Perception and Perceptions of Media Bias in Coverage of the Beirut Massacre

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After viewing identical samples of major network television coverage of the Beirut massacre, both pro-Israeli and pro-Arab partisans rated these programs, and those responsible for them, as being biased against their side. This *hostile media phenomenon* appears to involve the operation of two separate mechanisms. First, partisans evaluated the fairness of the media's sample of facts and arguments differently; in light of their own divergent views about the objective merits of each side's case and their corresponding views about the nature of unbiased coverage. Second, partisans reported different perceptions and recollections about the program content itself; that is, each group reported more negative references to their side than positive ones, and each predicted that the coverage would sway nonpartisans in a hostile direction. Within both partisan groups, furthermore, greater knowledge of the crisis was associated with stronger perceptions of media bias. Charges of media bias, we concluded, may reflect more than self-serving attempts to secure preferential treatment. They may result from the operation of basic cognitive and perceptual mechanisms, mechanisms that should prove relevant to perceptions of fairness or objectivity in a wide range of mediation and negotiation contexts.

Social perceivers, it has long been recognized, are far from passive, impartial recorders of the events that unfold around them. Everyday we have occasion to marvel at the capacity of political, social, or even scientific partisans to find strong support for their views in data that more neutral and dispassionate observers find confusing, contradictory, and utterly indecisive.

An impressive body of evidence documents the extent to which evaluations of social evidence can be distorted by preconceived theories and beliefs (Allport, 1954; Bruner, 1957; Chapman & Chapman, 1967; Hamilton, 1979; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Ross & Lepper, 1980; Snyder, 1981). In one particularly dramatic experiment, for instance, Lord, Ross, and Lepper (1979) asked advocates and opponents of capital punishment to review an identical pair of studies that provided mixed results on

the deterrent efficacy of such punishment. As predicted, this exposure to a common sample of inconclusive evidence produced no moderation or convergence of views on the part of the partisans. On the contrary, it resulted in increased polarization through the mechanism of biased assimilation; that is, each group readily assimilated or accepted at face value the evidence that seemed to support its position, but subjected to critical scrutiny the evidence that threatened or undermined its position. Obvious methodological limitations and alternative explanations were noted by the subjects and used as a basis for discounting results only when such results conflicted with preconceived beliefs. Outside the laboratory, of course, the same phenomenon seems ubiquitous whenever partisans dispute the status of their pet social or scientific theories.

In this article we seek to document and explore what seems at first consideration to be an exception to the tendency for partisans to find support in information that others find inconclusive or problematic. This seeming exception lies in responses to mediated presentations of information. Rather than perceiving confirmation and support, partisans frequently

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claim to perceive hostile bias, even in news coverage that most nonpartisans find even-handed and objective. Is the hostile media phenomenon really an exception to the rule of confirmatory bias in cognition and perception? Ultimately, we argue, it is not; indeed, it is our contention that perceptions and attributions of media hostility are, at least in part, a consequence of the same confirmatory bias that they superficially appear to contradict. The evidence for biased perceptions of media bias is, at present, anecdotal: bitter memories of defeated candidates and retired politicians about the "unfair treatment" they suffered from the press, or denunciations of the media by spokesmen for various interest groups who complain about "conspiracies" to ignore or distort their concerns.¹

Preliminary Study: Media Treatment of Carter Versus Reagan

Occasional protests of bias obviously cannot be treated as *prima facie* evidence of biased perception on the part of the protesters, however, because the media presumably are sometimes guilty as charged. Such protests do not even constitute evidence of *perceived* bias, for partisans sometimes are simply exerting pressure in the hope of more favorable media treatment. Furthermore, in the absence of some systematic sampling of responses, we disinterested bystanders may get a distorted picture because those partisans who are satisfied about the media's fairness (or even pleased by a media bias they perceive to be in their favor) are relatively unlikely to bring their views to our attention.

More compelling, albeit still anecdotal, evidence is provided when we catch glimpses of divergent responses by opposing partisans to the same media coverage—specifically, when both sides agree that coverage was biased, but disagree strenuously about the direction of such bias. A case in point was the 1980 U.S. presidential campaign. Letters to the editor, citizens' use of response opportunities provided by television and radio stations, and columns by political analysts frequently raised the issue of media bias, but there seemed to be sharp disagreement about the direction of the alleged bias. Supporters of both major candidates seemed to feel that their side was being

savaged but the other side was being coddled. Such divergent sentiments, for example, are illustrated in the following two brief letters to the editor of *Time* magazine; both were provoked by the same article reviewing then-candidate Ronald Reagan's campaign and published under the heading *Hatchet Job?* (1980).

Laurence Barrett's pre-election piece on Candidate Ronald Reagan [Oct. 20] was a slick hatchet job, and you know it. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for printing it disguised as an objective look at the man.

Your story on "The real Ronald Reagan" did it. Why didn't you just editorially endorse him? Barrett glosses over Reagan's fatal flaws so handily that the "real" Ronald Reagan came across as *the* answer to all our problems.

Prompted by such disagreements and by our theoretical concerns, we undertook a modest telephone survey three days before the 1980 presidential election (Vallone, Lepper, & Ross, 1981). Two main findings emerged from this preliminary study. On the one hand, a clear majority (66%) of the 160 registered voters responding claimed that the media generally had been fair and impartial. On the other hand, when partiality was perceived, it was almost always perceived to be against the respondent's favored candidate (89%). Among Jimmy Carter's supporters who thought that the media had favored one candidate over the other, 83% claimed that Reagan had been the favored candidate; conversely, among Reagan supporters who charged media partisanship, the consensus was even greater (96%) that it was Carter whom the media had favored. The majority of John Anderson's supporters reporting a bias in the media perceived the bias to be against Anderson (88%) and in favor of either Carter or Reagan.

Encouraged by these results, but mindful of the fact that only a minority of respondents had perceived any bias,² we conducted a series

¹ We are grateful to Bob Abelson for drawing our attention to this apparent exception to the general rule presented by confirmation or assimilation biases and for encouraging us to undertake the present line of research. Our intellectual debt to him, we are pleased to acknowledge, continues to grow.

² It is tempting to speculate about the possibly confounding role played by selective exposure and selective avoidance biases in determining our survey results. Specifically, it is possible that the people who exposed themselves disproportionately to coverage favorable to their

of postelection pilot studies in which specific newspaper and magazine articles were examined and rated by Carter and Reagan supporters. Our intent was to focus on responses to specific stimuli rather than evaluations of general media coverage, but our efforts were consistently frustrated. We found no general tendency for partisans to perceive hostile rather than friendly bias. We also found, however, that few of the partisans in these studies evidenced strong feelings for or against either candidate, and that the campaign and election were dead issues for most of our subjects. These results were disappointing, but they were not without value. They cautioned that perceptions of hostile media bias would not always occur, and they prompted us to think about the types of issues, interest groups, and contexts that would best serve any future attempts to document the phenomena under consideration. At the same time, these results also reassured us (and, we hope, some future critics) that findings of perceived hostile bias are not some simple and inevitable artifact arising from our method of inquiry or our choice of response items. In any case, our preliminary findings led us to search for perceptions of media bias and to probe the mechanisms underlying such perceptions, using more evocative stimulus materials and an issue that prompted fiercer and more enduring partisanship.

Media Coverage of the Beirut Massacre

In 1982, a tragic series of events in the troubled Middle East, culminating in the massacre of civilians in the refugee camps at Sabra and Chatilla, Lebanon, gave us a chance to explore biased perceptions of media bias with stimulus materials and partisan groups well suited to our research objectives. Our goal was to study the responses of pro-Arab and pro-Israeli observers to a specific, fairly extensive, and highly engrossing sample of media coverage: to de-

termine exactly how their perceptions and evaluations of these media presentations differed, and how such differences related to perceptions of media bias. In addition, we sought to examine two related but rather different mechanisms that might underlie partisans' contradictory complaints of media bias.

The first mechanism is straightforward and, in a sense, a direct derivation from the biased assimilation mechanisms discussed earlier by Lord et al. (1979). Partisans who have consistently processed facts and arguments in light of their preconceptions and prejudices (accepting information at face value, or subjecting it to harsh scrutiny, as a function of its congruence with these preconceptions and prejudices) are bound to believe that the preponderance of reliable, pertinent evidence favors their viewpoint. Accordingly, to the extent that the small sample of evidence and argument featured in a media presentation seems unrepresentative of this larger "population" of information, perceivers will charge bias in the presentation and will be likely to infer hostility and bias on the part of those responsible for it. Thus the partisan groups could essentially agree about the nature of the stimulus (i.e., its content and valence) but disagree about the appropriateness of the content and valence in light of their differing views about the larger truth that the stimulus was designed to portray. In cases in which both groups believe that actual program content favored neither side, for example, both groups are apt to protest such "unwarranted" objectivity.

Although such a mechanism is highly plausible and we attempt to document its operation, we doubt that it is sufficient to account fully for the type of anecdotal evidence that prompted our research. Complaints of media bias, especially when social or political passions run hot, suggest a further, more radical mechanism, one involving a difference not in the evaluation of a given stimulus relative to some standard but rather in the perception or recollection of its basic content and valence. In other words, the two partisan groups may perceive, or remember, very different stimuli; each partisan group may report that the media spent the most time and gave the most emphasis to the other side.

The suggestion that two groups of partisans may each see a different stimulus prompts us

candidate tended to be the ones who rated the media as unbiased (and vice versa), whereas the people who exposed themselves to more evenhanded coverage tended to be those who rated the media as hostile to their candidate. The research strategy that we followed subsequently, whereby all subjects are exposed to the same sample of media products, obviously reduces the role of such gross selectivity biases although it does not preclude differences in attention, learning, and subsequent recall.

to consider, at least briefly, the connection between this study and one of the classic studies of our field, Hastorf and Cantril's (1954) radical Amesian opus, "They saw a game." In Hastorf and Cantril's study, Dartmouth and Princeton supporters viewing a film of a particularly rough gridiron struggle between their respective teams seemed to see two different games: The Princeton fans saw a continuing pattern of Dartmouth atrocities and occasional Princeton retaliations, the Dartmouth fans saw brutal Princeton provocations and occasional, measured, Dartmouth responses. In the Hastorf and Cantril experiment the partisans apparently saw a struggle in which their side was clearly the hero and the other side the villain. Our suggestion is that viewers of media coverage of a continuing political struggle may see their side *portrayed* as the villain, and the other side as the hero.

In summary, we had two basic objectives. First we sought to provide a convincing demonstration of the hostile media or biased perception of bias phenomenon that had been suggested both by anecdotal evidence and by our preliminary telephone survey. Second, we sought to explore some underlying mechanisms or processes that might account for the phenomenon in question and might, as we suggest later, also play a role in other social contexts in which disputants form impressions about fairness or bias in the mediation process.

Method

Stimulus materials. Six segments of nationally televised evening and late-night news programs, aired over a 10-day period beginning with the Israeli move into West Beirut on September 15, 1982, were selected from an almost exhaustive sample of major network coverage. These six videotaped segments, presented in chronological order and offering 36 min devoted almost exclusively to the Beirut massacre and questions of Israeli responsibility for the civilian casualties, constituted the stimulus materials for our study.³

Subjects. Our subjects were 144 Stanford University students, who held varying initial views about the Middle East and were recruited within a 6-week period after these events to participate in a "study of the media coverage of the conflict in Lebanon." Members of pro-Arab and pro-Israeli student associations were specifically recruited in order to augment the basic sample of students drawn from introductory psychology classes. Before seeing the videotaped news segments, participants completed a questionnaire in which they rated, among other things, their factual knowledge about the Beirut massacre and its historical antecedents.⁴ Participants were also asked to indicate their

general sympathies in the Middle East and, more specifically, their views about Israel's responsibility for the massacre. We were able to identify three groups for subsequent investigation: (a) students ($n = 68$) who characterized themselves as generally pro-Israeli, (b) students ($n = 27$) who described themselves as generally pro-Arab, and (c) students ($n = 49$) who described themselves as having "generally mixed" or "neutral" feelings. These groups, not surprisingly, had very different views of Israel's responsibility for the massacre in relation to the responsibility of other parties such as Lebanese officials or the Christian militiamen who actually invaded the camps. On average, the pro-Israeli group assigned only 22% of the responsibility to Israel, whereas the pro-Arab group assigned 57% of the responsibility to Israel.

Most subjects were individually recruited by telephone and viewed the videotapes in small groups ranging in size from 6 to 12. These groups were generally of mixed composition, each containing pro-Israeli, pro-Arab, and neutral subjects.⁵

The subjects were told that they would be participating in a study of the media coverage of the conflict in Lebanon, and that they would be viewing six segments of nationally televised network news programs that were aired in the 10 days after the Israeli move into West Beirut in late September.

Procedure. After the videotape of the news programs, subjects completed a questionnaire designed to elicit their perceptions of the fairness and objectivity of the specific news programs they had just viewed. In addition to an item dealing with overall bias, subjects responded to several more specific items allowing them to elaborate their views about the "standards" applied to Israel in relation to the standards applied to its adversaries, the amount of attention focused on Israel's role in the massacre, the strength with which the positive case for and the negative case against Israel was presented, and the apparent personal views of the editors responsible for the programs. Subjects were also asked to identify the percentage of favorable, neutral, and unfavorable references to Israel, and to estimate the per-

³ The six segments were presented on the following dates and networks, respectively: September 15, 1982, NBC; September 18, 1982, ABC; September 19, 1982, NBC; September 21, 1982, ABC; September 22, 1982, CBS; September 24, 1982, NBC. These segments were chosen simply because they offered the most detailed coverage and the most film footage of those aired during the relevant time period.

⁴ We also attempted to assess knowledge objectively, via a 16-item quiz, but problems in interpretation and scoring that were due to factual disputes made its use questionable. We do not discuss this objective measure further, except to note that the results of analyses in which we used this measure were completely consistent with those that we performed using subjective assessments of knowledge, although significance levels were generally lower.

⁵ Generally, the subjects and the experimenter were unaware of the political affiliations or views of those seeing the videotapes. The single exception was a case in which the experimenter personally recruited eight subjects to participate in the study immediately after a meeting of the Committee for Justice in the Middle East.

Table 1
Mean Group Responses to Questionnaire Items Concerning Perceived Bias in Television News Coverage of the Beirut Massacre

Item	Subject groups		
	Pro-Israel	Neutral	Pro-Arab
1. Overall treatment of Israel in programs ^a	2.9	3.8	6.7
2. Standards applied to Israel in relation to other countries ^b	2.1	3.0	5.0
3. Degree of attention focused on Israel's role in relation to that of other parties ^c	2.9	3.9	5.9
4. Strength of case for Israel minus strength of case against Israel ^d	-3.6	-2.3	7.9
5. Percentage of favorable and unfavorable references to Israel ^e	16/57	19/54	42/26
6. Estimated percentage of neutral viewers who would become more negative to Israel after viewing the news coverage	68	65	37
7. Perceptions of the personal views of editors of these programs ^f	3.8	4.2	6.9

Note. All scale items (excluding percentages) have been reoriented so that higher numbers indicate perceptions of greater pro-Israel bias. For all items, the pro-Arab group differs from the pro-Israeli group, $p \leq .01$; for Items 1-4, the partisan groups differ from the neutral group, $p \leq .05$; for Items 5-7, the pro-Arab group differs from the neutral group, $p \leq .05$, but the pro-Israeli group does not differ significantly from the neutral group.

^a 1 = biased against Israel, 9 = biased in favor of Israel. ^b 1 = higher, 7 = lower. ^c 1 = focus too much on Israel, 9 = focus not enough on Israel. ^d 1 = stronger case against Israel, 9 = stronger case for Israel. ^e Favorable/unfavorable. ^f 1 = anti-Israel, 9 = pro-Israel.

centage of initially neutral viewers who would change to more positive or more negative feelings about Israel after viewing the news programs.

Results

Perceptions of bias. Responses to the questionnaires completed by subjects immediately after viewing the videotapes clearly document the basic hostile media phenomenon, as illustrated in Table 1. First, each side saw the news segments as biased in favor of the other side. Pro-Arabs saw the programs as generally biased in favor of Israel (a mean rating of 6.7 on a 9-point scale, whereby 5 = fair and impartial, 1 = strongly biased against Israel, and 9 = strongly biased in favor of Israel); pro-Israelis saw the same programs as decidedly biased against Israel (a mean of 2.9 on the same scale), a difference that was highly significant statistically, $F(1, 141) = 98.70, p < .001$.

Three additional items, each also revealing highly significant differences between pro-Arab and pro-Israeli viewers, allow us to elaborate on the bases for these charges of bias. Pro-Arab subjects saw the news programs as "applying lower standards to Israel" than to other coun-

tries (i.e., "excusing Israel when they would have blamed some other country"). They also felt that the news programs "did not focus enough on Israel's role in the massacre [in relation] to the role of other parties." Finally, they believed that in light of all the potential positive and potential negative information that could have been used, the editors of the news programs succeeded in making a stronger positive case for Israel than a negative case against Israel. Pro-Israeli subjects, in contrast, saw the news programs as "applying higher standards to Israel" (i.e., "blaming Israel when they would have excused some other country"), felt that the news programs "focused too much on Israel's role in the massacre [in relation] to the role of other parties," and believed that in light of the potential information available on both sides of the issue, the editors of the news programs had succeeded in making a stronger negative case against Israel than a positive case for Israel. It is also worth noting that the subjects' perceptions of a hostile media bias further led them to infer that the "personal views" of the editorial staffs of the news programs were opposite to their own. Pro-Arab

subjects believed that the editorial staffs were somewhat pro-Israel, whereas the pro-Israeli subjects believed they were somewhat anti-Israel, $F(1, 141) = 64.57, p < .001$.

Mechanisms. The questionnaire also allowed us to investigate the relative contributions to the hostile media phenomenon of the two mechanisms discussed in our introduction. In other words, it allowed us to ask to what extent the partisans' contradictory charges of bias were a matter of differing evaluation, and the extent to which they were a matter of differing perceptions or recollections of the programs' content. Did the two groups agree about the nature of program content and emphasis, and disagree only about the fairness, appropriateness, or representativeness of that content and emphasis, or did they perceive a different stimulus with different content and emphasis?

Two questionnaire items suggest that pro-Arab and pro-Israeli subjects "saw" different news programs—that is, they disagreed about the very nature of the stimulus they had viewed. First, pro-Arab subjects reported that 42% of the references to Israel in the news programs were favorable and that only 26% were unfavorable, whereas pro-Israeli subjects reported that only 16% of the references to Israel were favorable, and that 57% were unfavorable, $F(1, 141) = 54.84, p < .001$. Second, partisans on both sides believed that this overall sample of news coverage would lead undecided or ambivalent viewers to become more hostile to the side that the partisans personally favored: Pro-Arab subjects believed that only 37% of neutral viewers would become more negative toward Israel, whereas the pro-Israeli subjects believed that 68% would become more negative, $F(1, 141) = 34.02, p < .001$. In other words, pro-Arabs believed that the coverage as a whole, with its mix of facts, arguments, and images objectively offered the uncritical neutral viewer more basis for favoring Israel, whereas pro-Israelis believed that the same coverage offered that viewer more basis for opposing Israel.

Given these differences in partisans' perceptions or recollections of the programs' content, we must ask whether such differences were the sole basis for their charges of hostile bias; more specifically, we must ask whether they evaluated the fairness and objectivity of the programs differently, holding constant their

perceptions of the programs' content. We addressed this question via analyses of covariance, in which we treated perceived content as a covariate in comparing bias perceived by the two partisan groups. The results of such analyses are unequivocal: The pro-Israeli versus pro-Arab differences in perceptions of bias remain significant even when differences in perceived content were controlled $F(1, 92) = 30.89, p < .001$. This is also true for the difference in our partisans' complaints about the relative standards applied to Israel, $F(1, 92) = 40.11, p < .001$, the degree of attention focused on Israel, $F(1, 92) = 23.44, p < .001$, and the relative strengths of cases for and against each side, $F(1, 92) = 47.44, p < .001$. In other words, any given level of perceived pro-Arab versus pro-Israeli content was evaluated differently in terms of its apparent bias or evenhandedness by pro-Arab and pro-Israeli viewers. Thus both postulated mechanisms appear to make separate contributions to the hostile media phenomenon.

Additional findings. Two additional findings merit some consideration. Both prompt us to try to be more specific about which subjects showed evaluative and/or perceptual biases and which did not. The first finding deals with the role of intellectual and emotional involvement. The results of our disappointing postelection research hinted that perceptions of hostile bias are difficult to document unless subjects are intellectually and affectively engaged by the matters being covered in the media. In this study we now demonstrate (see Figure 1) that within both the pro-Israeli and pro-Arab groups it is the more knowledgeable subjects who were most inclined to view the media as biased against them. Among pro-Israeli students, high ratings of self-knowledge were associated with high levels of perceived media bias against Israel ($r = .31, p < .01$); among pro-Arab students, high ratings of self-knowledge were associated with low levels of perceived media bias against Israel ($r = -.41, p < .05$)—that is, with high levels of perceived media bias in favor of Israel. The difference between these correlations is highly significant ($z = 3.18, p < .001$).

These data are consistent with a relatively cognitive interpretation of our main result, namely, that those subjects with the most knowledge report the most bias because they

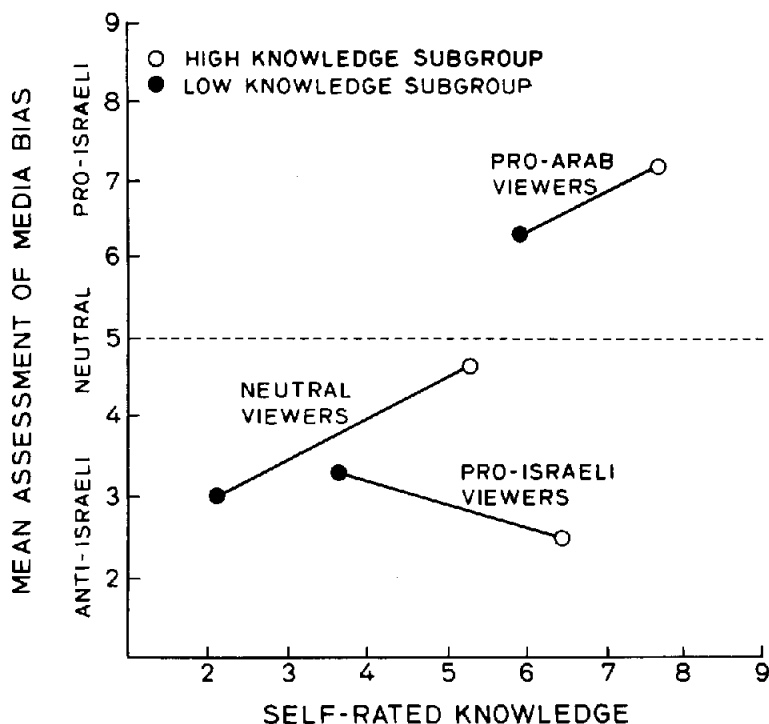


Figure 1. Perceived media bias among high-knowledge and low-knowledge raters within pro-Arab, pro-Israeli, and neutral groups. (High- vs. low-knowledge groups were designated via median splits within each group on the basis of subjects' self-ratings of knowledge concerning the historic Arab-Israeli conflict and the 1982 Israeli move into Lebanon.)

have the most basis for finding discrepancies between (a) the content and analyses offered in the program and (b) the content and analyses that they believe could and should have been offered in a fairer or more discerning treatment of the dispute. At the same time, we note that perceptions of bias were also more pronounced among subjects who rated themselves as higher in emotional involvement and concern. In our data, however, self-ratings of knowledge and involvement were highly correlated ($r = .74, p < .001$) and, as a result, it is difficult to assess the relative contributions of intellectual and emotional involvement. However, it is worth noting that the relationship between knowledge and perceived bias was consistently stronger than the relationship between involvement and perceived bias. This suggests, at the very least, that knowledge is not less important than, and does not appear merely to be a proxy for, emotional involvement.

The second set of findings has little theoretical significance, but we suspect that it nevertheless addresses, if not satisfactorily resolves, a question that has occurred to many readers. Simply put, is it the pro-Arab viewers, the pro-Israeli viewers, or both, who are "mis-perceiving" the media and demonstrating some sort of bias? (Or, to put the matter more bluntly, is one side correct in its charge of media bias?) Obviously, we have no measure of objective truth or fairness to guide us, and we leave it to others to approach this issue through careful content analysis of the media coverage itself. We can, however, compare the partisans' perceptions and evaluations to those of non-partisans. At first inspection, the data would seem to give comfort to pro-Israeli partisans who have complained so bitterly about media treatment of their cause, not just in our study, but in countless letters to the editor, columns, and informal conversations. As Table 1 indicates, the mean responses of the neutral group

more closely resemble those of the pro-Israeli than pro-Arab group on every single measure. Any conclusion based on this observation, however, would be ill advised. First, one could argue that American public opinion has generally favored Israeli interests over those of its Arab antagonists and, as a result, self-labeled "neutrals" may be more pro-Israeli in their stance than they realize. Second, among neutral subjects, as is evident from Figure 1, perceptions of media bias were related to knowledge of the conflict. Specifically, it was only the neutral subjects with relatively low levels of knowledge who shared the pro-Israeli subjects' perceptions of a media bias against Israel. The more knowledgeable neutrals (i.e., those with levels of knowledge comparable to that of the typical partisan) hold views about media bias that are midway between the views of the two partisan groups. In light of such findings, we must conclude the both partisan groups saw a degree of media bias against their side that was not apparent to more neutral (but not necessarily more accurate or discerning) non-partisans.

Discussion

Our results provide a compelling demonstration of the tendency for partisans to view media coverage of controversial events as unfairly biased and hostile to the position they advocate. Our results also highlight two mechanisms—one apparently evaluative or cognitive, the other apparently more perceptual in character—that combine to produce the partisans' conviction that they have been treated unfairly. According to the first mechanism, in which opposing partisans believe, respectively, that the truth is largely "black" or largely "white," each complain about the fairness and objectivity of mediated accounts that suggest that the truth might be at some particular hue of gray. According to the second mechanism, opposing partisans further disagree about the color of the account itself: One side reports it to be largely white (instead of the blackish hue that the other side thinks it should be), the other side reports it to be largely black (instead of the whitish hue that the first side thinks it should be), and both sides believe the discrepancy between the mediated account and the unmediated truth to be the intended result of hostile bias on the part of those responsible.

We note that our results do not permit us to speak authoritatively about either the source or the depth of the perceptual bias we have claimed to document; nor, obviously, do they shield us from the age-old difficulties of ruling out *all* cognitive interpretations for an ostensibly perceptual phenomenon. Do partisans pay more attention when their side is being attacked? Do they remember such information more, perhaps because they are frustrated and annoyed by the absence of any sufficiently forceful rebuttals to such attacks? The exact mechanism remains unclear, but we believe that it is not simply a matter of differing standards or criteria in labeling particular facts, arguments, or images as pro-Israeli or anti-Israeli. Perhaps our most important, and interesting, finding in this regard is the tendency for both groups to assert that neutral viewers will turn against their side when they view the media coverage. This finding is further evidence that the specific content and overall "hue" of the report is indeed perceived differently by the partisans, even when they would wish the truth to be otherwise, for partisans surely would prefer to believe and perhaps even expect that nonpartisans would assimilate mixed information in a manner congruent with the partisans' view of the truth.

Further research is obviously required in order to explore not only the underlying bases but also the range and domain of the phenomena we have sought to document. To disentangle the role of affective involvement and knowledge in producing these phenomena, one must seek out issues in which the two are less highly correlated. To explore the role of attention versus memory, and to focus more clearly on perceptual versus evaluative processes, one must examine attention, retention, and evaluation with regard to specific items of information. We would also hope to explore the extent to which the Middle East issue, with its long history and enduring passions, or the use of television, with its heavy reliance on images rather than facts or arguments, contribute to the perception of bias.

Finally, we note that our analysis and the questions it raises may also apply to perceptions of other types of mediation. Whether it is sports fans' perceptions of referees, spouses' perceptions of family-crisis counselors, or labor and management's perceptions of government

arbitrators, even the most impartial mediators are apt to face accusations of overt bias and hostile intent. Such accusations, our analysis suggests, may involve far more than unreasoning and unreasonable wishes for preferential treatment. Rather, they may reflect the operation of basic cognitive and perceptual mechanisms that must be understood and successfully combated if mediation or negotiation is to succeed.

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Special Call for Papers on the Personality and Social Psychology of Aging

The *Psychology and Aging* journal is gearing up for its first year of publication in 1986. Manuscripts have been received in the editorial office for a number of months, but more than 50% of the original submissions have been experimental. The Editor, M. Powell Lawton, and the Associate Editor, Donald H. Kausler, wish to emphasize that *Psychology and Aging* will be a broad-ranging publication, and manuscripts from all areas of psychology are desired.

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Psychology and Aging publishes original articles on adult development and aging. Such original articles include reports of research, which may be applied, biobehavioral, clinical, educational, experimental (laboratory, field, or naturalistic studies), methodological, or psychosocial. While the emphasis is on original research investigations, occasional theoretical analyses of research issues, practical clinical problems, or policy may appear, as well as critical reviews of a content area in adult development and aging. Clinical case studies that have theoretical significance are also appropriate. Brief reports are acceptable with the author's agreement not to submit a full report to another journal; a 75-100 word abstract plus 48-space lines of text and references constitute absolute limitations on space for such brief reports.

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