

Framing in the Media: How Labeling Affects Perception

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### Abstract

The media is often framed to purposefully influence their consumers' perception and opinion, and in some cases empathy can be swayed by the frame and label presented. In the present study, the effects of framing and labeling on empathy were examined by testing participants levels of empathy after reading one of four short vignettes– each framed differently. Participants were given one of two frames: positive and negative; and had either identified or unidentified subject names. They were asked to rate their level of empathy towards the subject based upon the vignette they received. These results showed that subjects have higher empathy when the name of the celebrity was omitted from the vignette. Positive frames produced significantly higher empathy in comparison to the negatively framed vignettes. These findings speak to the importance of framing and labeling in regards to how individuals perceive the world, and how much control the media has on opinion and emotions.

*Keywords:* framing, identification, empathy, Kim Kardashian, labeling

### Framing in the Media: How Labeling Affects Perception

The way we see the world is constantly changing because of how things are presented to us (Goffman, 1974). For example: if you are given an apple and told that it was freshly picked from the orchard, generally speaking, you would not have a problem eating it. If you were presented with the same apple and told that it is ridden with worms and rotten on the inside, you would most likely not want to eat the apple. Regardless of the fact that in both scenarios the apple *is* the same, your perception of it changes because of what you are told– or how it is framed. Like the example highlights, frames have an effect on the attitudes and behaviors of their audiences (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

The origin of the term “framing” comes from the phrase “picture frame” which indicates how something is seen, but does not always show you the whole picture (Goffman, 1974). It is the basis– the foundation– that allows others to fill in the gaps of knowledge (Goffman, 1974). Chong and Druckman (2007) define framing effects as something that occurs when a change in the delivery of an event changes the individual’s perception of the event. Therefore, initial framing helps people develop an impression that is difficult to reorient (Chong & Druckman, 2007). After someone is able to form their initial opinion, it is generally used as the foundation of further opinions (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Knowing the concept of framing is important because it is something that influences almost every aspect of one’s daily life. Even still, acknowledging a framing effect does not make an individual immune to framing; it is still influential depending on how the frame is presented (Gross & D’Ambrosio, 2004).

Moving forward, a specific topic of framing called news framing, studied by Igartua, Moral-Toranzo, and Fernández (2011), illustrates how the process of framing a news story

includes the selection and emphasis of words, expressions and images that lead the consumer to develop a point of view on a piece of information. Each factor has a different function in framing, but as a whole relates to the same idea of changing the perspective on an issue. In addition, framing can be positive or negative depending on how the material is presented. One particular study focused on the risky-choice framing manipulation by Tversky and Kahneman (1981). This study found that 72% of individuals chose an absolute option when a question was positively framed by highlighting the amount of people who would live when making a choice, but when negatively framed, 78% of individuals indicated they weren't sure on the decision by choosing the uncertain option that there was a two-thirds probability that 600 people would die (Mandel, 2014; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). This shows that the type of frame is influential to individuals and will affect the outcome chosen. The study conducted by Mandel (2014) builds upon the risky-choice framing manipulation and further highlights the irrational thinking of individuals when placed in this situation.

Framing is a phenomenon in psychology that many researchers are fascinated with, due to the psychological processes that are still prevalent and not entirely clear (Gross & D'Ambrosio, 2004; Mandel, 2014). However, research suggests that framing can also influence one's emotions, as well as opinion (Gross & D'Ambrosio, 2004). In their study, Gross and D'Ambrosio (2004) found that, regardless of the frame, most participants felt empathy towards victims of riot and racism. However, it is important to note that emotions and opinions sometimes cannot be changed by framing (Gross & D'Ambrosio, 2004). In a broader sense, public opinion is influenced on the systematic framing of everyday events (Gross &

D'Ambrosio, 2004). While framing can influence emotion, it is dependent on what information is provided and how it is told.

Subsequently, it is important to consider how framing interacts with other variables. First, in looking at narratives and comprehension, research has found that changing the point of view affects the understanding a child will have of a popular fairy tale, and along the same lines, the presence of narrative cues shows a higher memory rate (Rall & Harris, 2000; Ziegler & Acquah, 2013). Children relate more to a story in which they can see it through the eyes of the protagonist, which in turn aids in their remembrance of the story later on (Ziegler & Acquah, 2013). Evidently, individuals tend to strongly associate stories with the protagonist; especially when, in their study, Ziegler and Acquah (2013) placed children literally inside of a story and found that they take on the perspective of the protagonist, or main character. This was expanded by making the conclusion that children are able to form vibrant mental models of stories they are told (Ziegler & Acquah, 2013). Perspective is important because it is entirely how a story is received, and individuals will closely relate with the protagonist in certain situations because there is often an obvious positive or negative tone of the story (Rall & Harris, 2000; Yost, Yoder, Chung, & Voetmann, 2015). Yost et al. (2015) said that stories act as vehicles to help readers comprehend their surroundings. They are means to make sense of the world around you, especially in young readers. Additionally, memory is affected when things are framed differently (Zwaan & Radvansky, 1998). If a story is told more monotonously, or the humor is taken away so it is framed more realistically, a reader might not remember it as well. Additionally, memory is an important factor when asked to recall the story told, if something is easier to relate to, or if it is narratively interesting, memory will increase (Igartua et al., 2011).

To develop this idea further, perception and framing show the importance of positive or negative framing, as it seems to predict the perception an individual will have (Levin, Schneider, & Gaeth, 1998; Slothuus, 2008; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Ultimately, the light in which a story is told will affect how its audience understands it and forms opinions about it. When stories are told, objective events do not remain the same but are reframed and re-crafted in new storytellings (Yost et al., 2015). Additionally, one's perception will be affected by individual values or beliefs, meaning that two individuals may experience different feelings or opinions about the same event (Gross & D'Ambrosio, 2004). On the other hand, the framing of news stories have been found to trigger stereotypes about the event (Dixon & Maddox, 2005). So, while framing is important in perception, it is not necessarily the only factor that predicts how an individual will react to an event, and if necessary, pre-existing biases should be considered. Similarly, results suggest that frames are impactful on things directly related to an issue (Mulligan & Habel, 2011). When portraying an issue, like a news story for example, the framing of it is even more imperative due to the quick development and guaranteed opposing sides that go along with most news stories. The constant interaction individuals have with the media impacts their perception of events, but illustrates the importance of the way media is presented to them.

Framing is also used frequently within politics, seen almost everyday and often influenced subconsciously (Hawdon, Agnich, & Ryan, 2014; Igartua et al., 2011; Van Gorp, Vettehen, & Beentjes, 2009). A particular study shows that those who felt more optimistic about the economy were more lenient to government spending than pessimistic subjects (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997). This shows the importance of one's perception of the political world,

and how those continue to form their opinions constantly by being involved in current events. Framing permeates all media outlets and news coverage, which tends to make individuals consciously choose which media they are consuming (Nelson et al., 1997). Framing promotes the biases that individuals have already formed, and perpetuates the usage of a media or outlet that reflects such. Additionally, framing effects suggest a disconnect with effective decision making because the same information presented differently can lead to contrasting opinions (Fagley, Miller, & Jones, 1999). This poses the danger of framing effects, and how influential they can be.

A study has also examined political questions in the news, an example being whether or not participants would have more compassion towards an individual coming to America seeking asylum from their country as an innocent victim than a malicious intruder on the run (Van Gorp et al., 2009). In three different scenarios, the individual seeking a sanctuary was framed in positive, negative, and neutral light. Results found that participants tend to feel more compassion towards an innocent or positively framed individual (Van Gorp et al., 2009). Clearly, if an individual were seeking a safe space for malicious reasons, the public would be less empathetic towards them, however this point is important to establish a tangible effect of framing (Van Gorp et al., 2009). While this seems self-explanatory, it is very prevalent in news and the media in today's society. Framing not only sets but also dictates the public agenda, and context is critical (Roberts & Doob, 1990). In a time where information is digitally everywhere, the media must tell the most eye-catching story, which may or may not always be fully accurate. Some news outlets may focus more upon the excitement of a story rather than the truth (Hawdon, Agnich, & Ryan, 2014). This further solidifies the need for awareness on framing.

While studies show that compassion can be influenced, it is also essential to note the impact on empathy based upon a framed story. Batson, Lishner, Cook, and Sawyer (2005) studied the empathic response of college students based upon perceived similarity. In their study empathy was categorized as the feeling one has for another based upon their plight (Batson et al., 2005). They observed self-reported feelings of empathy after placing the participants into three groups receiving different vignettes; the first being about a 20 year-old female student at the college running the study, a 20 year-old woman from a nearby town, and a 40 year-old woman from the same nearby town (Batson et al.,2005). The expectation was that there would be a hierarchy of compassion based upon similarity to the participant (in order: college student, 20 year-old woman, 40 year-old woman) (Batson et al.,2005). The study yielded non-significant results, but definitely left the door open for more robust studies on empathic response and framing (Batson et al., 2005).

Additionally, the type of frame has an effect on cognitive channeling and the perception of how important an event will be (Igartua et al., 2011); for example, in Igartua et al.'s study (2011), immigration attitudes were significantly swayed by different framing in the media. When immigrants were described as "delinquent" in a news story, individuals produced significantly more negative emotions towards the story and the immigrants (Igartua et al, 2011). Finally, if opinions can be manipulated by a simple framing technique, it seems there is no accurate reflection of public opinion or interests (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Not only does this suggest that opinions are generally arbitrary, but that the life of a typical opinion is very short.

Often, news media is ridden with report of crime and destruction. Crimes in the media do not represent the crimes that are committed in real life, and furthermore do not accurately reflect



the truth of the justice system at any given time (Roberts & Doob, 1990). For instance, when the media covered the Virginia Tech shooting, news outlets provided their opinion and ideas of what the consequences and preventions tactics should be moving forward (Hawdon et al., 2014). This immediately influenced the public's perception and opinion while the event was still presently unfolding (Hawdon et al., 2014). It is clear that the media seeks to frame things to capitalize on emotional responses rather than providing the facts (Hawdon et al., 2014). Touching back on the fact that today's society has information available at their fingertips, it is important to consider that people read the types of stories that subconsciously match their own viewpoints. This ties back into the idea that not all news stories are factually correct, and may be focusing more upon what will gather attention and support preexisting opinions.

Further, gender differences can occasionally play a role in the way things are framed, and how they are perceived (Toll et al., 2007). There have been reports that suggest that men will make a riskier choice that is aligned with the risky choice framing effects referenced earlier (Miller, Fagley, & Casella, 2009; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). On the other hand, women are more likely to choose a more stable option (Levin, Gaeth, Schreiber, & Lauriola, 2002; Miller et al., 2009). This presents areas of further research, as the research is not indicative of whether or not risky choices will be persistent in society. Gender differences could be seen in both the framed situation and whether or not the gender of the individual in question will change the opinion/outcome of an event, as well as what type of choices individuals of different genders will make. While it has been found that empathy may be more prevalent in women, it is not clear exactly how this may play a role in relation to framing (Mestre, Samper, Frias, & Tur, 2009). In a study that examined the effectiveness of framing on gender, it was found that there was no

significant interaction between framing and gender, suggesting that framing affects men and women to the same degree (Toll et al., 2007). Ultimately, this ties into the decision of the current study to not focus upon gender differences.

Moreover, opinions are also constantly being formed, just like framing is always around us. To define opinion: it is a view or judgment formed by an individual that is not factual (Merriam Webster, 2017). Individuals change their opinions based on what they learn from others in order to develop their own. Opinions are constantly evolving and being adapted. The individual is more likely to reconstruct their opinion if it is more in line with the opinion they have already developed towards an event (Yaniv, Choshen-Hillel, & Milyavsky, 2009). Furthermore, studies show that a participant will be more confident in an inaccurate judgment when they strongly believe in the accuracy of their opinion (Yaniv et al., 2009). Because opinions are not based on facts, an individual whose opinions align with a larger group are shown to feel surer of their opinion (Yaniv et al., 2009). An example of this could be: individuals feeling that their opinion is a minority until a politician or celebrity articulates their same feeling. The individual then may feel validated in their choices, even if factually incorrect.

Studies also show that individuals feel confident forming an opinion on prison sentences from small overviews that reflect their beliefs (Roberts & Doob, 1990; Yaniv et al., 2009). This is alarming because one's prison sentence is a large matter that is determined by due process. Many individuals, however, believe their uninformed opinion is correct based on little knowledge and heavily on a belief system. People are known to change beliefs based on a well-worded argument or sometimes even just the idea that someone may hold a conflicting

opinion; this shows how influential social impact and the media can be (Nowak, Szamrej, & Latané, 1990). Opinions are essential to daily life, and can impact one's general life decisions.

In analyzing framing and media, as well as media and opinions, it can be argued that framing things specifically in the media can affect an individual's opinion on a matter. If framing of the media is constantly happening, is there a way to manipulate the framing to influence opinions in a certain way? Researchers suggest that public opinion can be altered by how often and heavily a subject is covered (Boomgaarden & de Vreese, 2007). Von Sikorski and Schierl (2012) developed a study focusing on disability athletes and how the frame can essentially affect the future of an athlete and how the public views disabled athletes. The research shows the willingness for a company to turn down an athlete because of a negative portrayal that they encountered in the media, rather than any personal interaction with the athlete (von Sikorski & Schierl, 2012). Further studies could fill in the holes to determine if this could translate to able-bodied athletes, or across cultures. The opportunities for growth in the field of framing is immense. This is important to recognize as disabled athletes are a small percentage of athletes studied.

For the purpose of this study, it is now important to note the significance of proper name anomia: the process of name retrieval (Rizzo, Venneri, & Papagno, 2002). Unfortunately, there is little to no literature on the ability to recall names purely from stories, but research does indicate the importance of popular faces and the ability to recall names easily (Rizzo et al., 2002). This particular study discusses one's ability to relate a famous face to a name much quicker than an unfamiliar set of faces paired with names. Because of this study, it would be important to note

and develop the research towards total recall of names paired with familiar stories, instead of faces.

As discussed, framing has shown significant results in areas from school setting to politics (Miller et al., 2009; Nelson et al., 1997), so does this mean that framing can be used to manipulate opinions of media subjects or events? Unfortunately, this is a gap in research in the psychological field and would be important to delve into further.

Taken together, a growing body of evidence suggests that both media exposure and the nature of framing will fundamentally change our interactions with the media and how it influences individuals. Framing is fascinating because the general public is aware of the concept of opinions changing due to the media, but it is not well researched. Moreover, framing of non-political stories are underrepresented in research, most likely due to the fact that politics permeate all cultures. Regardless, the study of framing, the media, and the importance of unfamiliar and familiar stories is immensely important. Because framing is so prevalent within today's society, the hypotheses are presented: first, a positively framed event from the media will produce more empathy towards an event, where a negatively framed event will result in less reported empathy. Next, in a news story without the celebrity identified, individuals will feel more empathy towards the event (and the individual); identifying the celebrity will produce the opposite results. Ultimately, If we positively frame a common story from the media without explicit identification, individuals will have more empathy towards an event (and the individual). Overall, we predict framing will have a significant effect on the answers of the participants belief that the protagonist was actually robbed. Looking at a moderately well-known media story about Kim Kardashian from 2016, we will frame it positively and negatively, with each of the framing

conditions containing two vignettes, one with Kim Kardashian's name used, and one without a name and only she/her pronouns (Corinthios, 2017).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were recruited from psychology classes and various groups on the Ripon College campus. There was a mean age of 19.3 ( $SD = 1.27$ ) years old from a total of 109 undergraduate college students. There were 62 females and 47 males. Subjects received potential benefits of participation or extra credit in a psychology class. All procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board and participants were treated according to the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" (American Psychological Association, 2002).

### **Materials**

One of four vignettes, intended to frame a media story differently, were administered at the beginning of the study. The base subject of the vignette was Kim Kardashian's robbery in Paris (Corinthios, 2017). Positively framed, the vignette alluded that she was in fact robbed. Negatively framed, the vignette suggested the idea that she made the story up for publicity (see Appendix A for vignettes). When the participant was finished reading the short vignette, they were asked to complete a questionnaire on memory, opinions, and empathy of the vignette they just read (see Appendix B). The questions included yes or no, fill in the blanks, and a 1-9 Likert-type scale on the participant's opinion and empathy towards Kim Kardashian from reading the administered story. Questions regarding memory of facts in the vignette were

included to prevent any confirmation bias from the participant. At the end of the questionnaire, demographics were collected.

### **Procedure**

The participant were led into a psychology lab room and instructed to read the consent form. Upon signing, they were asked a series of questions to make sure their understanding was correct on the nature of the experiment. Deceit was used in the form of filler questions on the exact subject of the study, to eliminate any biases. This took approximately 4-6 minutes. They were then asked to read a randomly assigned vignette based on a random generator. The four vignettes represented the four independent groups of the study: positive framing/name identification, negative framing/name identification, positive framing/no identification, and negative framing/no identification (see Appendix A). When they were finished, they returned the vignette to the researcher. Finally, they were asked to fill out a questionnaire that included demographics at the end (see Appendix B). Upon completion, they were debriefed by the researcher and asked not to release any information about the study. The participant was then free to leave. Each participant was led through the exact same procedure, with the only change being the specific vignette they were asked to read.

### **Results**

This study was designed to test whether framing and labeling has an affect on perception and empathy of a subject in a media story. A 2 (frame/no frame) x 2 (identification/no identification) Factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), with empathy as the dependent variable was utilized. The four independent groups were positive framing, name identification ( $N = 22$ ), positive framing, no identification ( $N = 29$ ), negative framing, name identification ( $N =$

28), and negative framing, no identification ( $N = 30$ ). To measure this, we used the results from question 2, how much empathy the participant reported towards the main subject of the vignette on a Likert-type Scale (see Appendix B). A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was also run, to determine if there was a relationship between the framing effects and whether or not the participant felt that the vignette subject (Kim Kardashian) was actually robbed at gunpoint (see Appendix B, question 5). Essentially, the chi-square was run to determine if the framing effects were significant.

Results from the factorial ANOVA suggest a significant main effect of framing,  $F(3, 105) = 6.095$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .055$ , with an observed power of .687. Participants had significantly higher empathy for Kim Kardashian after reading a positively framed vignette ( $M = 6.6667$ ,  $SD = 1.739$ ) than they did after reading a negatively framed vignette ( $M = 5.741$ ,  $SD = 1.924$ ) (see Figure 1). The main effect of identification was also significant on participant's empathy,  $F(3, 105) = 20.005$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .160$ , with an observed power of .993. It was discovered that participants had a significantly higher empathy for the subject of the vignette when her name was not included ( $M = 6.8475$ ,  $SD = 1.518$ ) than when Kim Kardashian was identified in the vignette ( $M = 5.38$ ,  $SD = 1.989$ ) (see Figure 2). The compared means of each condition are shown in Figure 3. There was a non-significant interaction effect of framing and identification,  $F(3, 105) = 2.447$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .023$ , with an observed power of .341.

A chi-square test was performed to examine the relation between Kim Kardashian's perceived guilt and the frame used on the participant. The relationship between these two variables was non-significant,  $X^2(3, N = 109) = .554$ ,  $p > .05$ . There was no relationship between

the framing effect used (either positive or negative) and whether or not the participant perceived if Kim Kardashian was actually robbed.

Finally, in question 7 on the questionnaire for no identification, we asked if the participant knew who the celebrity was in the vignette. After running descriptive statistics to determine if pre-existing biases could have played a factor in participant's answers, it was found that 54.2% of participants who read the no name vignettes correctly identified Kim Kardashian as the celebrity in the story. After finding out 54.2% of participants knew Kim Kardashian was the subject without receiving the identified vignette, we ran an ANOVA testing empathy levels against the 3 identification groups– explicit identification ( $N = 50$ ), self-identified ( $N = 32$ ), and participants who did not know or guess correctly ( $N = 27$ ). There was no hierarchical significance, the results reflected the identification main effect that was reported above. The means of rated empathy of the three groups, in order, were explicitly told ( $M = 5.38$ ,  $SD = 1.989$ ), participants who didn't know or guess correctly ( $M = 6.667$ ,  $SD = 1.89$ ), and self-identified ( $M = 7$ ,  $SD = 1.344$ ).

### **Discussion**

We hypothesized that both framing effects and name identification would have an effect on participants empathy in the present study. The researchers hypothesized that a negative frame would produce less empathy for the subject of the vignette, and a positive frame would elicit higher empathic reports. Similarly, the hypotheses also stated that there would be less empathy when the vignette was identified with the name of Kim Kardashian, than when simple pronouns were used in place of a name. These hypotheses were supported in the results. Overall, we found that there were main effects in both framing and name identification, although there was a



non-significant interaction effect between the two variables. In regards to the hypothesis that framing would have an effect on whether or not participants viewed Kim Kardashian as being truly robbed or not, it was not supported.

Furthermore, the results found in our study were consistent with Gross and D'Ambrosio (2004), who found that individuals experience different opinions and feelings about the same event based on the frame. Gross and D'Ambrosio (2004) noted that framing is the heart of a story, although predispositions play an almost equal role as well; where the present study was unable to account for predispositions. Their results suggested that framing can extend to emotion, which mirrors the present study's results that the frame affected a participant's empathy (Gross & D'Ambrosio, 2004). Empathy was shown to be affected by the vignette which alludes to the emotion of the participant being influenced as well. Several other studies also found that the framing effect, positive or negative, predicted the perception the individual had after reading something (Levin et al., 1998; Slothuus, 2008; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

Because our study used a story in celebrity media, it is also congruent with the conclusion that media frames have an affect on perception of importance (Igartua et al., 2011). Igartua et al.'s study (2011) focused on immigrant's portrayal in the media, and evaluated consumer's opinion and emotion on their attitude of immigration. While our study did not include a race or political agenda, the consumption of media was still considered a factor. Igartua et al.'s study (2011) also found that when immigrants were labeled as "delinquent" in the administered story, individuals felt significantly more negative towards the story. Similarly in our study, the negative vignette had words like "reportedly" and "allegedly" to describe Kim Kardashian's robbery, used to invoke skepticism and doubt.

Further, individuals are able to form opinions confidently and quickly based upon what little knowledge they have on a subject (Roberts & Doob, 1990; Yaniv et al., 2009). While the study of Roberts and Doob (1990) focused upon the prison sentence of individuals, it still reflects the opinion of participants. The study coincides with ours because individuals also had to make decisions based upon their feelings after reading a short vignette. This is important to note as it continues to show that little knowledge does not hinder one's ability to make decisions that they believe are correct.

When analyzing these data, it was found that 54.2% of participants in the groups where the celebrity name was omitted knew the vignette was about Kim Kardashian. This aligns with Boomgaarden and de Vreese's study (2007) that noted heavier coverage in the media will influence one's opinion and knowledge of an event. Due to the fact that Kim Kardashian's robbery occurred recently, and was highly televised, participants may have formed their opinion prior to participating. It is also possible the demographics could have played a role as media is often prevalent on a college campus.

Because of the 54.2% of people that were able to self-identify Kim Kardashian, a hierarchical significance would have shown that being able to recall that the story was about Kim Kardashian affected their empathy. However, the results were non-significant and only reflected the identification main effect, showing that empathy was impacted by the presence of Kim Kardashian's name in the vignette and not the participants ability to recall her name. While these data does not account for preexisting biases towards Kim Kardashian, it does show that even if participants knew the vignette was about her, it did not affect the predicted empathy or the significance of identification.

The significance of identification shows that individuals who read the vignettes in which a pronoun was used in place of the name Kim Kardashian reported significantly more empathy towards the subject of the story. While there is virtually no research on this specific subject, the present study found that individuals reported more empathy towards a subject when she was referred to as simply a woman or “she.” This could be because of pre-existing biases towards Kim Kardashian herself, or that participants felt more empathy towards a stranger or someone they did not know of personally, than they did of a popular culture mogul. Again, there is no research to support this claim, but this can be a call to jump-start further research in the field.

There were multiple limitations in the current study that could have prevented a stronger power and the full support of the hypotheses. The first is a small sample size and participants in this study. There was a total of 109 participants, whereas to achieve a necessary power of .8, it was recommended that there be at least 160 participants. While the researchers attempted to account for possible biases, due to the nature of the study, it was nearly impossible to cater to all participants’ beliefs and previous exposure to the media in general. The inclusion of Kim Kardashian could have been too well-known or controversial for a small campus of undergraduate college students who are well integrated in current news and media. Another limitation could be that the subject of the vignette was female, and there was no balance of a male subject to account for any gender biases. Finally, there is very little current research on celebrity name identification, and the ability to recall names from reading a popular story.

Due to the contemporary style of the vignettes used in this study, it is important to note that another study by Dixon and Maddox (2005) found that studies like this one can activate stereotypes that the participant has on the subject of the vignette presented in the experiment. In

our study participants most likely came in with pre-existing biases towards Kim Kardashian and the vignettes may have activated their stereotypes towards her. Further, in the unidentified condition, stereotypes towards women, or even people who have significant amounts of money, could have played a role in their judgement and rate of empathy. While this study did not account for any pre-existing biases or stereotypes of the participant, it would be worthwhile to test for that in future studies.

In the future, it would be beneficial to test gender differences; both within the vignettes and participants. While previous studies have not shown that the gender of the participant will affect the response (Miller et al., 2009; Toll et al., 2007), it may be worthwhile to test opinions based upon known news stories. Further, the test of empathy may impact women more as studies suggest that women are more empathetic than men (Mestre et al., 2009). Within the vignettes there could potentially be a difference in participant's opinion if the subject of the story were male, female, or unidentified/gender neutral.

In alternative studies, researchers could focus upon the elimination of biases. This could be done by creating a story about a fake celebrity and marketing it to the participants as a true story. Another suggestion could be choosing an old, underrepresented story of a smaller celebrity. While it is almost impossible to eliminate all biases of a participant, there could be actions taken to attempt to lessen them. Potentially changing the questions on the questionnaire to be more deceiving could motivate participants to answer truthfully and provide less confirmation bias. Finding a way to give the participants a questionnaire to determine their opinions prior to reading the vignette could allude to whether or not the vignettes affirm their opinions.

In relation to the lack of research on labeling compared to the omission of the celebrity's name, it would be important to delve further into how this can influence empathy towards an event or person. While there is little to no research on this portion of the study, it produced results from participants. Studies could focus upon just name identification from popular stories, to first garner what factors play a role in the ability to recall celebrity names from unidentified stories. Moreover, it would be interesting to look at empathy towards different events and celebrities when the research of name recall is more readily available.

As discussed, there are opportunities to expand the present study to further enhance the results and importance of framing and labeling in relation to media stories. The results of this particular study are important as they are applicable to real-life. Media is consumed every day in this century, and it is nearly impossible to avoid it. Recognizing the importance and prevalence of framing in the media can remind individuals that every news source and media outlet carefully craft what stories are produced to achieve the best results. Additionally, attaching a label to something may influence someone to be more empathetic towards a story or event. This study shows that more research on name recall should be done before repeating this study to achieve results that are consistent and reliable. Empathy is important in many situations as it is an emotional response. If the media or news is attempting to garner the most valuable responses to an event, invoking empathy would be an obvious way to do so. In the present study, we found that the individuals who knew explicitly who the vignette was about, had the least empathy for her. These significant results can imply that people do not feel as strongly towards someone they may have (possibly negative) preconceived opinions towards.

Overall, in the present study of framing and identification in the media and how it affects perception, the researchers found significant results of reported empathy in both framing effects and the presence or absence of name identification in a popular media story from 2016. These results help us understand how effective framing is, as it permeates everything around us, especially news and media. Ultimately, these conclusions aid in the beginning of name identification research, and bring about further questions and topics of research.

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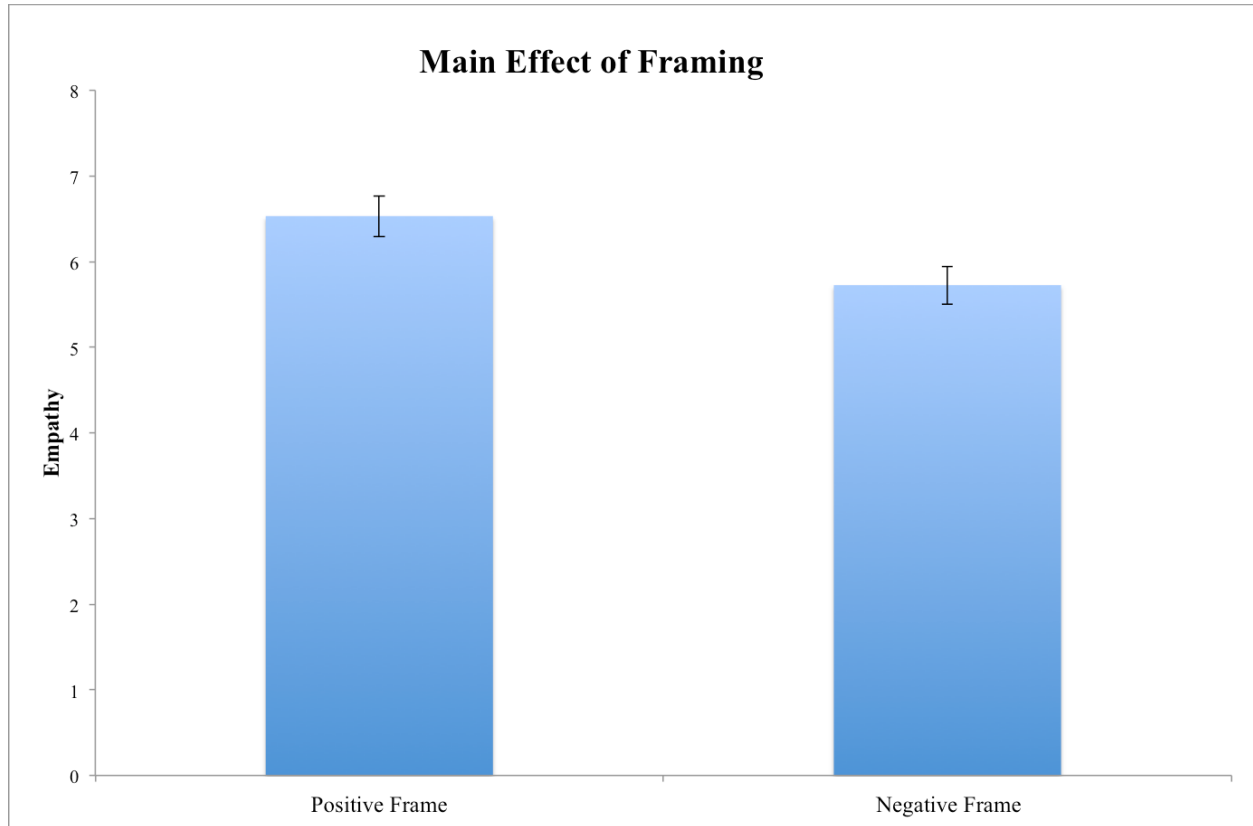
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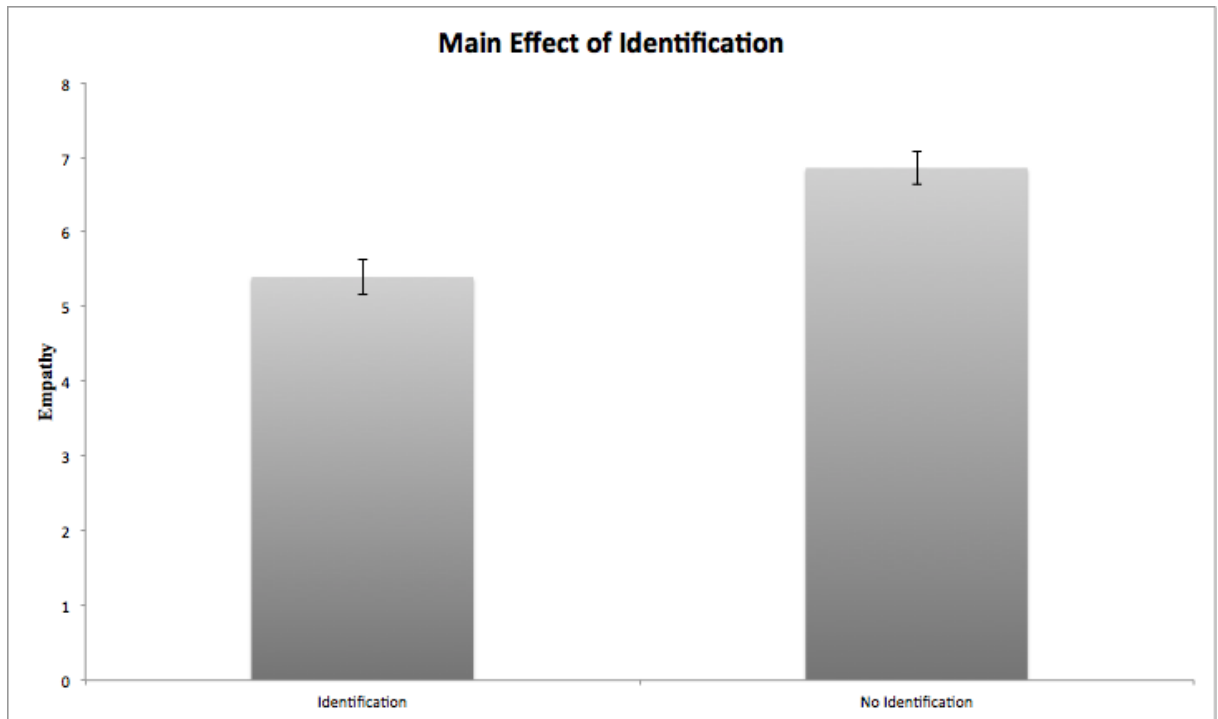
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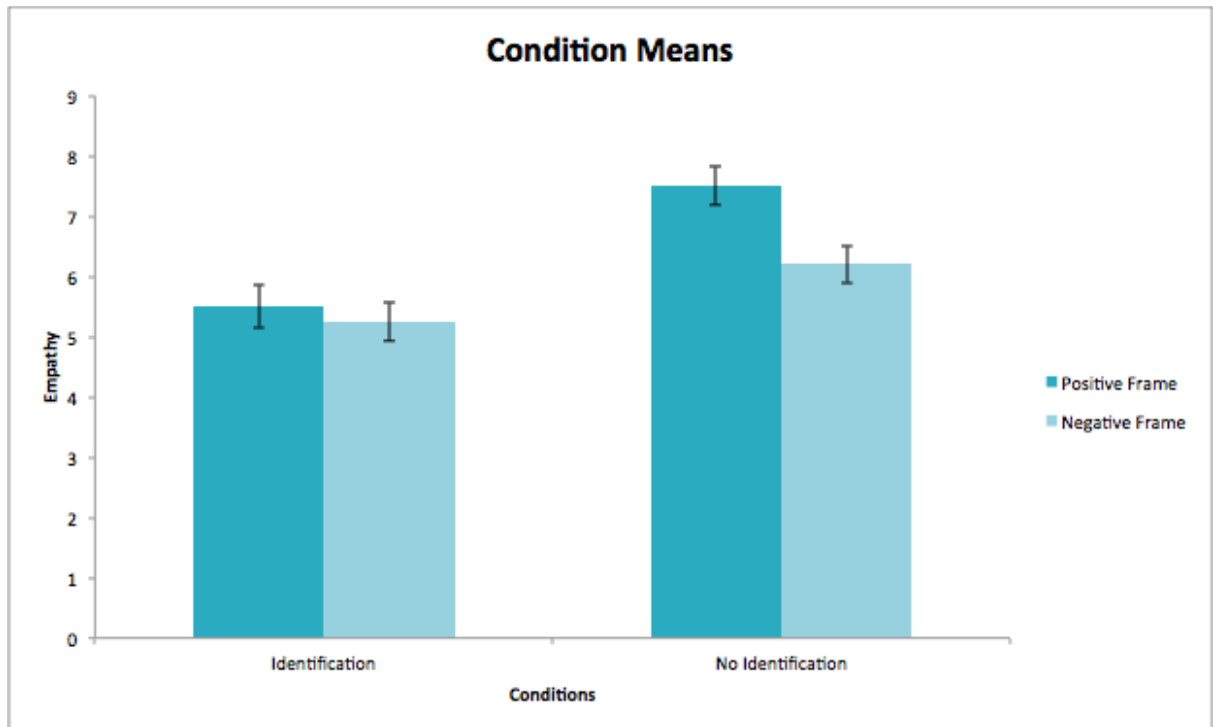
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*Figure 1.* Means of empathy in positive and negative frame. Error bars indicate standard errors of the mean.



*Figure 2.* Empathy means in identification conditions. Error bars represent the standard error of the mean.



*Figure 3.* Means representing each condition; positive frame, identification; negative frame, identification; positive frame, no identification; negative frame, no identification. Error bars indicate standard errors of the mean.

## Appendix A

### **Vignette 1: Positive, Identified**

Kim Kardashian, a 36-year old mother of two, was robbed of \$10 million in January of 2016. The incident occurred in Paris while Kardashian was alone in her hotel room. Her bodyguard was overseeing sisters Kylie and Kendall at a nightclub. Kardashian reports she felt safe in her hotel room. Kardashian's room was invaded by two men in ski masks holding guns. She was tied up and gagged, and brought to the bathroom. Luckily, Kim Kardashian was able to release herself from her restraints before calling for help. The perpetrators stole jewelry and electronics. Kardashian reports she felt terrified for her life, and was very shaken by the events. Testimonies revealed there was DNA left in the hotel room, and over 10 suspects were charged in the case. While the trial was held, it was also revealed that she was being followed for one to two years, and attempts were made previously but deterred by husband Kanye West being around. Family of Kim are supportive and sensitive to her traumatic experience at this time.

### **Vignette 2: Negative, Identified**

Kim Kardashian, a 36-year old woman, was reportedly robbed of \$10 million in January of 2016. The incident occurred in Paris while Kardashian was alone in her hotel room. She had sent away her bodyguard. She reported that two men wearing ski masks charged into her room. She offered them her jewelry to ward them off. She alleged they were carrying guns and threatening her. She was tied up and was able to release herself from restraints before calling for help, after the individuals left. The perpetrators stole only jewelry and electronics. DNA was found in the hotel, it is unclear if it matched the perpetrators. Kim alleges she was stalked for one to two years before the incident, and the perpetrators were afraid of her husband. Multiple men were charged and arrested in Paris due to the events. Kardashian is rumored to be very shaken by the events. She hadn't been receiving as much attention as she was used to, some speculate that could be a factor of the incident.

### **Vignette 3: Positive, Unidentified**

A 36-year old mother of two, was robbed of \$10 million in January of 2016. The incident occurred in Paris while she was alone in her hotel room. Her bodyguard was overseeing sisters at a nightclub. The victim reports she felt safe in her hotel room. Her room was invaded by two men in ski masks holding guns. She was tied up and gagged, and brought to the bathroom. Luckily, she was able to release herself from her restraints before calling for help. The perpetrators stole jewelry and electronics. The victim reports she felt terrified for her life, and was very shaken by the events. Testimonies revealed there was DNA left in the hotel room, and over 10 suspects were charged in the case. While the trial was held, it was also revealed that she was being followed for one to two years, and attempts were made previously but deterred by her

husband being around. Her family members are supportive and sensitive to her traumatic experience at this time.

**Vignette 4: Negative, Unidentified**

A 36-year old woman, was reportedly robbed of \$10 million in January of 2016. The incident occurred in Paris while she was alone in her hotel room. She had sent away her bodyguard. She reported that two men wearing ski masks charged into her room. She offered them her jewelry to ward them off. She alleged they were carrying guns and threatening her. She was tied up and was able to release herself from restraints before calling for help, after the individuals left. The perpetrators stole only jewelry and electronics. DNA was found in the hotel, it is unclear if it matched the perpetrators. The victim alleges she was stalked for one to two years before the incident, and the perpetrators were afraid of her husband. Multiple men were charged and arrested in Paris due to the events. She is rumored to be very shaken by the events. She hadn't been receiving as much attention as she was used to, some speculate that could be a factor of the incident.



## Appendix B

### PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE (IDENTIFICATION)

Media Study  
 Alexa Beck  
 Mollie Carlson  
 Ripon College  
 Department of Psychology

#### Questionnaire

1. Was Kim Kardashian alone in her hotel room? (Circle one)

Yes

No

2. On the scale below, rate whether or not you feel empathetic towards Kim Kardashian

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

3. How many children does Kardashian have? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How much was robbed from Kim Kardashian? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Based on the story you read, do you believe Kim Kardashian was robbed at gunpoint in Paris?

(Circle one)

Yes

No

6. How confident are you in your opinion on the suspect's guilt or innocence?

Not Confident

Very Confident

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

#### Basic Information

1. What grade level are you? (Circle one)    Freshman    Sophomore    Junior    Senior

2. What gender do you identify with? (Circle one)    Male    Female    Other

3. What is your age?    \_\_\_\_\_ Years    \_\_\_\_\_ Months

4. Have you taken any psychology classes in college? (Circle one)    Yes    No

## PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE (NO IDENTIFICATION)

Media Study  
 Alexa Beck  
 Mollie Carlson  
 Ripon College  
 Department of Psychology

**Questionnaire**

1. Was the victim alone in her hotel room? (Circle one)

Yes

No

2. On the scale below, rate whether or not you feel empathetic towards the victim

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

3. How many children does she have? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How much was robbed from her? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Based on the story you read, do you believe the victim was robbed at gunpoint in Paris? (Circle one)

Yes

No

6. How confident are you in your opinion on the suspect's guilt or innocence?

Not Confident

Very Confident

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

7. Do you know who the celebrity in the story was? \_\_\_\_\_

**Basic Information**

1. What grade level are you? (Circle one)    Freshman    Sophomore    Junior    Senior

2. What gender do you identify with? (Circle one)    Male    Female    Other

3. What is your age?    \_\_\_\_\_ Years    \_\_\_\_\_ Months

4. Have you taken any psychology classes in college? (Circle one)    Yes    No