

IDEOLOGIES, BRANDING, AND THE HOSTILE MEDIA EFFECT: MUSLIMS' RESPONSE TO AL JAZEERA AND CNN COVERAGE¹

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Abstract

Understanding how media affects the formation of perceptions is key, especially on issues such as the rising Anti-Americanism and skepticism toward US foreign policy in the Middle East. In this article we examine and reject the notion that Muslims may perceive balanced media coverage on sensitive or controversial issues to be biased against them, a phenomenon known as the “hostile media effect.” To establish this, we conducted an experiment in Qatar where we asked 581 participants, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to evaluate a 2006 Al Jazeera news clip on the controversy generated from the publication of twelve cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammad by Denmark’s largest newspaper. In order to check how media branding affected perception, the Al Jazeera logo was replaced with that of CNN for half of the participants. Our results show no difference in the assessment of coverage slant between Muslims and non-Muslims and no evidence of a less favorable assessment of the CNN clip by Muslims. In contrast, we find that participants who ex-ante considered CNN to be biased were more likely to assess coverage to be biased, and this effect was stronger for non-Muslims. Our findings suggest that it is largely the policies themselves, combined with biased media, and not audience ideologies that drive perceptions.

Keywords: hostile media effect; mass media; biased perception; ideologues; CNN; Al Jazeera, Qatar; Religion

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I. Introduction

Foreign policy and news media are intricately connected. On the one hand, proponents of the “CNN effect” argue that media coverage influences or determines policy-making.³ On the other hand, proponents of the “manufacture of consent” theory argue that media coverage is influenced by government policy.⁴ This two-way relation between foreign policy and news media potentially introduce bias in coverage –actual or perceived- and such bias may affect how foreign policy is formulated, communicated and perceived.

In times when media are going global, the public is becoming increasingly disenchanted with its news source, and skepticism against US foreign policy is on the rise, perceptions of coverage bias matter.⁵

But are media biased or is bias a matter of perception? A small, but growing literature finds that individuals with strong views on a particular subject perceive neutral stories to be biased against their point of view.⁶ The perception of negative coverage slant, which was first documented in a study by Vallone, Ross, and Lepper (1985), is known as the *hostile media effect*.

³ See Robinson (1999), Gilboa (2005) and references therein.

⁴ See Gilboa (2005), Bennett (1990), Chomsky and Herman (1988) and references therein.

⁵ Through its International channel, CNN currently reaches more than 200 million households in more than 200 countries. Seib (2005) offers a nice account of the rising global reach of media, Al Jazeera in particular. For evidence of public disaffection with its news source see Cappella and Hall Jamieson (1997). Hillary Clinton’s remarks before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (March 2, 2011) best echoes this view: “Viewership of Al Jazeera is going up in the United States because it’s real news....You may not agree with it, but you feel like you’re getting real news around the clock instead of a million commercials and, you know, arguments between talking heads, and the kind of stuff that we do on our news,...which, you know, is not particularly informative to us, let alone foreigners.”

⁶ More involved individuals, either by extremity of attitude toward various issues (Gunther 1988) or group membership (Kiesler, Collins, and Miller 1969), are more prone to the hostile media effect. Several explanations are offered: high involved individuals are more resistant to persuasion (Converse 1962; Hovland and Weiss 1951); they become more polarized after processing balanced, two-sided information on the issue (Lord, Ross, and Lepper 1979); or they find the message to be implausible or the source incredible (Osgood and Tannenbaum 1955).

In their seminal work Vallone and his colleagues asked Israeli and Arab students to assess media coverage of the Beirut massacre in 1982 by reviewing a carefully selected set of clips that an impartial observer would consider to be fair and balanced. In their response, both partisan groups assessed the coverage to be biased against their views. And while they did not feel that such a bias by the media could change their views on the subject, they were concerned that the negative bias could affect the perception of others.⁷

Early work on the causes of the hostile media effect focused on the vital role judgment heuristics play on the perception of coverage slant.⁸ In particular, researchers identified three main information-processing mechanisms through which individuals perceive seemingly neutral information to be biased against their views: (i) selective categorization, (ii) selective recall, and (iii) different standards.⁹

More recent work however, argues that media credibility offers an alternative explanation for the hostile media effect.¹⁰ When processing information, individuals search for cues that capture the willingness of the media to report the relevant

⁷ Subsequent studies confirmed the existence of the hostile media effect in various contexts, partisan groups, and types of media, such newspaper or TV coverage. See Giner-Sorolla and Chaiken (1993) and Perloff (1989) on the Israel-Palestinian conflict; Christen, Kannaovakun, and Gunther (2002) on the UPS strike in 1997; Gunther, Christen Liebhart, and Chia (2001) on the controversy over lab research using primates; Schmitt, Gunther, and Liebhart (2004) on the consumption of genetically modified food; and Dalton, Beck, and Huckfeldt (1998) and D'Alessio (2003) on presidential performance and coverage.

⁸ See Giner-Sorolla and Chaiken (1993) and Schmitt, Gunther, and Liebhart (2004).

⁹ To understand how these mechanisms work consider coverage on a particular issue that is balanced, in the sense that it contains a set of neutral statements and an equal number of statements that are against a certain point of view and in favor. Under *selective categorization* and *different standards* individuals accurately recall all statements made within the news coverage. However, they perceive neutral information to be bias, either because they classify more statements to be against their point of view (selective categorization) or they consider the statements against their point of view not to be as important as the statements in favor, so that by including them in the same context the story introduces bias in the coverage (different standards). Under selective recall, individuals correctly attribute statements to be neutral, against or in favor, but when processing the information, they are more likely to recall the statements against their point of view than in favor. For an excellent diagrammatical presentation of how the three mechanisms work, see Schmitt, Gunther, and Liebhart (2004). The authors also provide evidence that selective categorization is a more probable cause of the hostile media effect.

¹⁰ See Gunther (1992), Arpan and Raney (2003), and Baum and Gussim (2007). Arpan and Raney (2003) argue that while many studies have investigated the relation between judgment heuristics and the hostile media effect, very few studied have examined the importance of media credibility.

information accurately.¹¹ According to this explanation, it is skeptical disposition on media source and not the issue itself that causes the hostile media effect.

The hostile media effect has very broad and significant consequences. In addition to influencing the formation and perception of foreign policy, perceived negative coverage slant affects perceived public opinion (Gunther and Christen 2002), reinforces a growing cynicism and disaffection from politics (Fallows 96; Capella and Hall Jamieson 1997), limits the ability of the news to inform public opinion (Miller and Krosnick 2000), contributes to feeling of political and social alienation (Tsfati 2007), impacts advocacy behavior (Choi et al. 2011) and alters behavior (Tsfati and Cohen 2005).

In this paper we revisit the hostile media effect by asking a simple, general, politically incorrect, but extremely important question: are Muslims biased? That is, do they perceive neutral information on sensitive issues to be biased against them?

We ask this question because the answer can help us understand some of the drivers of rising Anti-Americanism and skeptical disposition on US foreign policy in the Middle East. Is it the case that these two phenomena emanate from the realization of the policies themselves, or do they emanate from misperceptions about US foreign policy and engagement in the Middle East by the predominately Muslim population? Do Middle East residents have fundamental reasons to be skeptical or are they too sensitive to sensitivities? These issues are extremely complex and multi-dimensional to be fully dealt with here. But we think that when applied to religious ideologies, insights derived from the hostile media effect literature can be extremely helpful in enriching our understanding of the questions raised above.

¹¹ This is known as the attribution theory (see Eagly et al 1983).

We proceed to test whether being Muslim affects perceptions of coverage slant by asking 581 individuals in Qatar to assess an ostensibly neutral news clip on the 2006 controversy generated from the publication of 12 cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammad by Jyllands-Posten, Denmark's largest newspaper. We chose the particular subject-matter for the strong impact it had on Muslim communities across the globe, especially in the Middle East.¹² The large expatriates community in Qatar –which comprises 85% of the population - ensures that substantial variation across demographic, socioeconomic, and especially religious groups exists in the sample.

The two-and-a-half-minute news coverage is taken from Al Jazeera English. To check whether media branding affects perception, we produced a second, identical to the first one clip, where we replaced the Al Jazeera logo with CNN's.¹³ Individuals born on an odd date were asked to take the Al Jazeera survey and those born on an even date to take the CNN one. The survey consisted of questions on background, familiarity with the topic and views on the controversy, assessment of the clip, views on Al Jazeera, and views on CNN.

First, we tested whether Muslims were more likely to find the information biased against them, regardless of its source. They were not. When we posed the statement *“the reporter tried to give an unbiased report”* both Muslims and non-Muslims were equally likely to agree with the statement. Moreover, Muslims were more likely to disagree with the statement that *“Muslims would find the clip biased.”*

¹² As a result of the Muslim outrage against the publications, violent protests erupted across the Middle East and a call for boycott against Danish products was initiated in many Arab countries. For a detailed description of the boycott and its impact on Danish and non-Danish firms see Antoniadis (2013). The author uses scanner-level price data across hundreds of retail outlets in Saudi Arabia to show how the market share of Danish cheese firms dropped from 17% before the boycott to 0% after. And even after the boycotts were called off, Danish firms never recovered their market share.

¹³ For legal reasons, instead of superimposing the CNN logo on the clip, we had the “CNN reporting from around the globe” ad play for a few seconds before the actual clip played.

We repeated the analysis, but this time we used extremity of attitude toward the boycott as a proxy for involvement. To do this, we compared the assessment between individuals who expressed support for the boycott and those that did not. Again, we failed to find that individuals who supported the boycott were more likely to assess the clip to be biased in either direction. Therefore, we conclude that when not controlling for the news source, there is no evidence of the hostile media effect on Muslims or on individuals with strong views on the particular issue in our sample.

Second, we asked whether variation in media branding could generate the hostile media effect. To test this hypothesis, we tested whether the assessment of the Al Jazeera and CNN clips differed, particularly within the two involvement groups described above. Yet again, we failed to find that Muslims or individuals who expressed support for the boycott were more likely to find the CNN coverage to be more biased than that of Al Jazeera.

Third, after we showed that involvement could not generate the hostile media effect, we investigated whether skeptical disposition on media source could. The answer was positive. Participants who stated in the survey that they considered CNN to be biased against Muslims had a less favorable assessment of the CNN coverage, which suggests that it is ex-ante beliefs about coverage bias and not ideologies that influence ex-post assessments. The finding that skeptical disposition on media source affects perception of coverage slant was stronger for non-Muslims.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we describe the methodology and provide descriptive statistics. In Section 3 we present the analysis and discuss the main findings. Section 4 concludes.

II. Experimental Design

The test whether Muslims perceive coverage on issues sensitive to them to be biased against them and to understand how media branding may affect perception of coverage slant, we conducted an experiment in Qatar where we asked individuals to view a clip and take a short survey.

The clip was taken from a 2006 Al Jazeera coverage of the controversy generated when Jyllands-Posten, Denmark's largest newspaper, published 12 cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammad. For Muslims around the world, the depiction of the Prophet was a great insult, and the outrage led to violent protests and a call for boycott against Danish products in several Arab countries. Because it is shown that trust in media coverage declines as the controversy of the topic increases (Roberts and Leifer 1975), choosing the particular topic makes it easier for us to observe the hostile media effect on Muslims, if it exists.

To assess whether media branding affects perception, we created a second version of the clip where the Al Jazeera logo was replaced with that of CNN. By choosing a news clip from 2006 we reduced the probability that a participant would remember the clip and recognize the deception.

The "Al Jazeera survey" consisted of the following five parts: (i) information on background characteristics, (ii) information on familiarity with the Danish cartoon controversy and views on the issue, (iii) assessment of the media coverage, (iv) views on Al Jazeera, and (v) views on CNN. Participants were shown the clip after part (ii) of the survey was completed. The "CNN survey" was identical, but with parts (iv) and (v) switched and with the Al Jazeera clip replaced with that of CNN. Individuals born on an odd date were asked to take the "Al Jazeera survey" and those born on an even to take the "CNN survey."

For parts (ii) through (v), we posed a set of statements and asked participants how strongly they agreed with each statement using a 1 to 5 scale. The scale went from

“Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”, with “Neither Agree Nor Disagree” being the midpoint choice. All questions are shown in *Tables 1, 2, and 3* discussed below.

The survey was administered in Qatar between March and June of 2010. We used e-mails, facebook, and a popular community board to solicit participation. We also visited the biggest shopping mall during peak hours and collected about a third of the responses. In total, 581 individuals participated in the survey, although a third of all participants failed to provide answers to all questions. Therefore, the sample size changes depending on the empirical specification.

Column 1 of *Table 1* presents descriptive statistics for the participants. We observe substantial variation in gender, income, religion, and education. Qataris account for 10% of the sample, which is consistent with the ethnography of Qatar where expats comprise more than 85% of the population. A third of the participants are non-residents. Either they are visitors or they are individuals outside Qatar who responded to our request to participate and took the survey online.

To ensure homogeneity between the group of individuals who took the Al Jazeera and the CNN survey, we check if background characteristics are similar between the two groups. Descriptive statistics for each group are presented in columns 2 and 3 and reveal very little differences between the two groups. Homogeneity across the two groups proves that the randomization was successful.

In addition to proving that the two groups are homogeneous in background characteristics, we must also establish that they are homogeneous in the way they view the cartoon controversy, CNN, and Al Jazeera. If not, then we will not be able to determine whether any observed differences in the assessment between the Al Jazeera and CNN news coverage is attributed to the branding effect or to ex-ante differences in views across the two groups.

Table 2 presents average responses for each question asked in sections (ii), (iv), and (v). Column 1 considers the entire sample, and columns 2 and 3 the responses of the participants who took the Al Jazeera and the CNN survey, respectively. As stated above, the responses vary from “1. Strongly Disagree” to “5. Strongly Agree.”

A few observations are worth highlighting. First, the two groups are extremely homogeneous when it comes to comparing their views on the controversy, on Al Jazeera, and on CNN. Looking across columns 2 and 3 we see very little differences in average responses to the questions. Second, most participants are aware of the cartoons controversy, they sympathize with the Muslim outcry, and they support freedom of speech and support respect for religion. Third, participants on average neither support nor reject the call for boycott. This result however, is due to averaging across the participants who reject the call for boycott (35% of the sample) and the participants who support it (39% of the sample). We will exploit this variation next as we create the second involvement group. Religion is used to create the first one.

III. Analysis

The hostile media effect refers to the observation that partisans perceive ostensibly neutral information to be biased against them. Studies on the effect find that perceived coverage slant rises with the level of *involvement*, with *involvement* defined either by group membership or by extremity of attitude toward a particular issue.

For the purpose of this study we construct the involvement group using both definitions. That is, we construct the first involvement group to consist of Muslims, but we also check robustness of the results by constructing a second involvement group that consists of individuals who expressed support for the call for boycott.

The former captures group membership and the latter extremity of attitude toward the Danish cartoons controversy.

In both involvement groups the vast majority of participants are aware of the controversy and support freedom of speech and respect for religion. This is shown in *Table 3*, where the average responses (Panel i) and percentage of individuals within each group that agree with the posed statement (Panel ii) are presented. However, involvement affects the degree to which they sympathize with the Danish publishers and also affects their support for the boycott. For example, while 4 out of 5 Muslims do not sympathize with the Danish publishers, 4 out of 5 Christians sympathize with them. Similarly, 82% of Muslims support the call for boycott but only 46% of the Christians do. Next we consider how such differences in views within involvement groups may affect perceptions of coverage slant.

We use responses to the statements “The reporter tried to give an unbiased report” and “Muslims would find this clip biased” to make inferences about perceptions of coverage slant. Instead of combining the responses in these two statements to make one measure of perceived coverage slant, we use them separately. Running the empirical specifications across each of the two involvement groups and across each of the two definitions of coverage adds robustness to the analysis.

We are now ready to pose our research hypotheses and test them. We have three such hypotheses, which we present next and investigate one at a time.

Hypothesis 1: Muslims and supporters of the boycott perceive the coverage in both clips to be biased against them.

According to the hostile media effect, Muslims and participants supporting the boycott are more likely to find the clip biased against them because they have stronger views on the issue.

We test this hypothesis by examining whether in their assessment of the clip participants perceive bias in the coverage of the issue. *Table 4* provides average responses for each statement across groups. First, we consider responses to the statement “The reporter tried to give an unbiased report.” Looking across and within groups, we observe no difference in average responses. The average numerical response varies between 3.4 and 3.5, which captures a response in the middle of the “3. Neither Agree Nor Disagree” and the “4. Agree” scale. The t-static in parenthesis confirms that the differences are not statistically significant. This result is robust regardless of which involvement group is considered.

An interesting finding is that involvement influences the response to the statement “Muslims would find this clip biased” but not in the direction one would expect. Christians and individuals who reject the boycott are more likely to agree with this statement than Muslims and supporters of the boycott. The bias goes in the opposite direction of that predicted by the hostile media effect.

To control for differences in background characteristics we estimate a separate model for each statement using a probit specification where we control for age, gender, education, and income. The dependent variable is a dummy that takes the value of 1 if the viewer agrees with the statement or 0 otherwise. Answers that express neither agreement nor disagreement are dropped. Model estimations by involvement group are presented in *Table 5* and *Table 6*.

As before, involvement does not change the assessment of news coverage. The only exception is between Muslims and non-Muslims when asked if “Muslims would find the clip biased.” Muslims are more likely to reject the statement than non-Muslims.

We conclude that our first hypothesis stating that Muslims are more likely to find the coverage biased against them is not supported by the data.

So far, our analysis makes no distinction between the viewers of the Al Jazeera and CNN clips. Our next hypothesis addresses this by considering whether differences in media branding cause differences in perception within the two involvement groups. The hypothesis is stated as:

H2: The CNN clip receives a less favorable assessment by Muslims and supporters of the boycott.

To test this hypothesis we compare the assessment of the Al Jazeera clip with that of CNN for a given type of participants. In particular, we consider four such types: (i) Muslims, (ii) Christians, (iii) opponents of the boycott, and (iv) supporters of the boycott. If participants use cues from the media source to make assessments about coverage slant, then we may expect to find differences in the assessment across the two clips. And by considering the four types of participants above, we can check for which type the branding effect is more prevalent.

Responses to the two questions about coverage slant by participant type and media source are presented in Table 7. Columns (1) and (2) provide the average response of the Al Jazeera and CNN viewers, respectively, for the statement “The reporter tried to give an unbiased report.” Columns (3) and (4) provide the average response of the Al Jazeera and CNN viewers, respectively, for the statement “Muslims would find this clip biased.” Each row reports the responses of a particular type of participant.

The evidence clearly rejects our second hypothesis. Even when we interact involvement group with media source, there are no differences in assessments of coverage slant. For all possible combinations of types, statements, and media sources, the differences are statistically insignificant. Given this, and in order to make the table more presentable, we omitted reporting standard errors or t-statistics.

Since neither involvement nor media branding trigger the hostile media effect or cause differences in perception across the two clips, we ask whether skeptical disposition on media source can generate differences in perception of coverage slant. The hypothesis is stated as follows:

H3: Skeptical disposition on media source affects perception of coverage slant

In the last section of the survey we posed the following statements: “CNN is biased against Muslims,” and “Muslims think that CNN is biased.” We use responses to these two statements to measure ex-ante skeptical disposition on media source. We then test whether ex-ante views affect ex-post perception of coverage slant, and if such an effect is present, we test whether it is stronger for Muslims.

First, we consider only responses to the CNN clip and ask whether assessments of coverage slant by participants who consider CNN to be biased differ from those who consider it not to be biased. Two models are estimated using a probit specification. In the first model the dependent variable equals 1 if the participant agrees with the statement “The reporter tried to give an unbiased report”, and 0 otherwise. In the specification we control for age, gender, income, and education. We also include two more dummy variables and their interaction. The first variable is CNNbias and equals 1 if the participant considers CNN to be biased against Muslims. The second is Muslim and equals 1 if the participant is Muslim. In the second specification, we consider responses to the statement “Muslims would find this clip bias”. The specification is identical to the first one, except that the CNNbias dummy variable now equals 1 if the participant agrees with the statement “Muslims think that CNN is biased.” The coefficient of the CNNbias term shows if skeptical disposition on media source affects perceptions of coverage slant, and the coefficient of the interaction term shows if this effect is stronger for Muslims.

The results are reported in *Table 8*. Note that negative coefficients in column 1 and positive in column 2 are interpreted to reveal more bias in the assessment. In both

specifications, beliefs that CNN is biased raise the probability that the participant considers the CNN clip to be biased. However, as shown by the interaction term, Muslims who consider CNN to be biased are less likely to consider the CNN clip to be biased.

For robustness, we repeat the analysis but this time we compare assessment of the CNN clip relative to the Al Jazeera only for the participants who consider CNN to be biased. The findings are the same. As *Table 9* shows, the CNN clip receives a less favorable assessment by participants who consider CNN to be biased. However, for Muslims who consider CNN to be biased, assessments of the two clips do not vary substantially. Given the evidence, we find that skeptical disposition on the media source affects perception, but this effect seems stronger for non-Muslims.

Before we conclude, we highlight an interesting observation: participants overstate the degree to which others perceive media to be biased. Phenomena of misperceptions about public opinion are known as pluralistic ignorance. We illustrate this in *Figure 1*. 45% of Muslim participants agreed with the statement “CNN is biased against Muslims.” However, when we pose the statement “Muslims think that CNN is biased,” 69% and 64% of Muslims and non-Muslims, respectively, agree with the statement. Similarly, when we pose the question “Al Jazeera is biased against the West,” 21% of Muslims and 27% of non-Muslims, respectively, agree with the statement. But when we pose the question “The West thinks that Al Jazeera is biased,” 69% and 61% of Muslims and non-Muslims, respectively, agree with the statement. Since the *West* and *Non-Muslims* are two separate domains, we cannot forcefully argue that the latter evidence supports pluralistic ignorance. But it does seem to suggest it.

IV. Conclusion

The *hostile media effect* literature finds that partisan groups tend to perceive ostensibly neutral information to be biased against them. In this paper we tested and rejected the hypothesis that Muslims were more likely to perceive coverage slant in a story regarding the 2006 Danish cartoons controversy. We also failed to find evidence that Muslims were more likely to assess negative bias if they believed the clip originated from CNN instead of Al Jazeera. What we did find, however, is that participants in the experiment who ex-ante considered CNN to be biased perceived more coverage slant in coverage. So we conclude that in our sample skeptical disposition on media source is more important than ideologies in assessing coverage slant.

Our results seem to contradict earlier work on the hostile media effect. Yet, this is not necessarily the case. Almost all studies on the hostile media effect considered a very special setting, one in which coverage slant - actual or perceived - on an issue either favors one partisan group or the other (e.g. Israel versus Arab students on the Israeli Palestinian conflict [Valone, Ross, and Lepper 1985]; managers versus employees on the UPS 1997 strike [Christen, Kannaovakun, and Gunther 2002]; Republicans versus Democrats on presidential performance and coverage [D'Allesio 2003]; etc). However, our experiment examines an issue where coverage bias in favor of or against one group (e.g. Muslims) does not necessarily affect the other group (e.g. non-Muslims). We believe that such cases that do not result in a "zero-sum" coverage, are more representative of the issues found in international relations and international politics and that expanding the hostile media effect literature to consider such issues will be very beneficial.

Our results also suggest that rising Anti-Americanism and skeptical disposition on US foreign policy in the Middle East cannot be attributed mainly to prejudices of the public, and especially their religious beliefs. While misperception of information for a subset of the population is due to pre-existing bias against certain media sources, for the majority it is the evaluation of the policies and not the media coverage that determines how the public interprets these policies

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Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics: Background

	Pooled	Sample		
		Al Jazeera	CNN	
(i) Number of Observations		581	306	275
(ii) Gender (%)				
Female	48	51	46	
Male	52	49	54	
(iii) Age (%)				
18-27	52	52	51	
28-37	22	22	23	
38-47	12	13	11	
48-57	9	9	10	
58-67	27	25	23	
68	1	0	1	
(iv) Religion (%)				
Christian	27	25	23	
Muslim	56	59	61	
(v) Monthly Income (%)				
0-9,999 QR	53	56	50	
10,000-19,999	17	17	17	
20,000-29,999	10	8	12	
30,000-39,999	7	6	8	
40,000-49,999	4	4	5	
50,000+	8	9	7	
(vi) Country of Residence				
Qatar	64	64	64	
Non-Qatar	36	36	36	
(vii) Country of Origin				
Qatar	10	11	10	
Non-Qatar	90	89	90	

Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics: Background (Continued)

	Sample		
	Pooled (%)	Al Jazeera (%)	CNN (%)
(i) High School Type			
Private - Coeducational	60	61	38
Public - Coeducational	33	32	35
Private - Segregated	4	4	4
Public - Segregated	3	3	3
(ii) University Type			
Private - Coeducational	37	34	40
Public - Coeducational	22	23	23
Private - Segregated	21	22	18
Public - Segregated	20	21	18
(iii) High School Location			
Qatar	36	37	35
Non-Qatar	64	63	65
(iv) University Location			
Qatar	35	35	35
Non-Qatar	65	65	65
(v) Degree			
High School	25	26	24
Other	75	73	76
(vi) Association with Qatar Foundation			
Alumni	2	3	1
Faculty	5	5	5
Not Associated	46	46	47
Staff	9	9	10
Student	37	38	36

Table 2 – Descriptive Statistics: Views on Controversy, Al Jazeera, and CNN

	Sample		
	Pooled	Al Jazeera	CNN
Set 1: Questions on Awareness			
I am aware of the cartoons controversy in 2006	4.2	4.3	4.1
I sympathize with the Danish publishers	2.3	2.3	2.3
I sympathize with the Muslim outcry	4.0	4.0	3.9
I support freedom of speech	4.1	4.1	4.2
I support respect for religion	4.6	4.6	4.6
I support the 2006 calls for boycotts against Danish produ	3.1	3.1	3.1
Set 2: Questions on Al Jazeera			
Al Jazeera is my main source of news information	2.9	3.0	2.8
Al Jazeera is biased against the West	2.7	2.6	2.9
Al Jazeera is biased against Muslims	2.1	2.2	2.0
Al Jazeera is unbiased	2.9	3.0	2.8
The West thinks that Al Jazeera is biased	3.7	3.8	3.7
Muslims think that Al Jazeera is biased	2.7	2.8	2.6
We would be better off without Al Jazeera	2.0	2.0	1.9
Set 3: Questions on CNN			
CNN is my main source of news information	2.5	2.5	2.5
CNN is biased against the West	2.4	2.4	2.4
CNN is biased against Muslims	3.1	3.2	3.0
CNN is unbiased	2.5	2.5	2.5
The West thinks that CNN is biased	2.7	2.7	2.8
Muslims think that CNN is biased	3.7	3.8	3.7
We would be better off without CNN	2.4	2.4	2.4

Table 3 – Views on the Danish Cartoons Controversy Within Involvement Group

Involvement Group	I am aware of the cartoons controversy in 2006	I sympathize with the Danish publishers	I sympathize with the Muslim outcry	I support freedom of speech	I support respect for religion	I support the 2006 calls for boycotts
<i>(i) Average response</i>						
All	4.2	2.3	3.9	4.2	4.6	3.1
(i) Group Membership						
Muslim	4.2	1.6	4.4	4.0	4.8	3.7
Christian	4.0	3.3	3.4	4.4	4.5	2.3
(ii) Extremity of Attitude						
Do not support the boycott	4.1	3.0	3.3	4.4	4.5	1.6
Support the boycott	4.3	1.4	4.6	3.9	4.9	4.6
<i>(ii) Participants who agree with statement</i>						
All	91%	44%	89%	94%	99%	66%
(i) Group Membership						
Muslim	89%	20%	95%	92%	100%	82%
Christian	89%	80%	83%	97%	100%	46%
(ii) Extremity of Attitude						
Do not support the boycott	91%	73%	76%	96%	98%	0
Support the boycott	92%	13%	98%	88%	99%	1

Table 4 – Perceptions of Coverage Bias by Involvement Group

Sample	The reporter tried to give an unbiased report	Muslims would find this clip biased
All	3.5	3.2
Muslim	3.5	3.1
Christian	3.4	3.4
(t-statistic)	(-0.48)	(2.26)
Support Boycott	3.4	3.1
Do not Support Boycott	3.5	3.3
(t-statistic)	(0.11)	(1.79)

Table 5 – Probit Specification of Coverage Bias by Religion

	The reporter tried to give an unbiased report (1)	Muslims would find this clip biased (2)
Age	0.007 (0.033)	0.004 (0.042)
Gender	-0.043 (0.055)	-0.011 (0.073)
Education	-0.002 (0.013)	0.033* (0.018)
Income	-0.006 (0.023)	-0.003 (0.031)
Muslim	-0.057 (0.057)	-0.176** (0.071)
Observations	215	195
(Pseudo) R2	0.008	0.047

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6 – Probit Specification of Coverage Bias by Extremity of Attitude

	The reporter tried to give an unbiased report (1)	Muslims would find this clip biased (2)
Age	0.006 (0.038)	0.009 (0.046)
Gender	-0.042 (0.067)	0.034 (0.083)
Education	0.010 (0.016)	0.037* (0.020)
Income	-0.018 (0.027)	-0.029 (0.033)
Support Boycott	-0.105 (0.066)	-0.097 (0.081)
Observations	157	150
(Pseudo) R2	0.023	0.030

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 7 – Media Branding and Perception of Bias by Participant Type

Participant Type	"The reporter tried to give an unbiased report"		"Muslims would find this clip biased"	
	Al Jazeera (1)	CNN (2)	Al Jazeera (3)	CNN (4)
i. Muslims	3.5	3.4	3.1	3.1
ii. Christians	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.5
iii. Opponents of the boycott	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.5
iv. Supporters of the boycott	3.6	3.3	3.1	3.1

Table 8 – Probit Regression of Skepticism Toward Media and Perceptions of Coverage Bias Among CNN Viewers

	"The reporter tried to give an unbiased report"	"Muslims would find this clip biased"
	(1)	(2)
Age	0.081 (0.064)	-0.029 (0.064)
Gender	-0.034 (0.087)	-0.109 (0.117)
Income	-0.065* (0.039)	0.029 (0.050)
Education	-0.014 (0.022)	0.043 (0.029)
CNNbiased	-0.424** (0.184)	0.536*** (0.205)
Muslim	-0.159 (0.109)	0.197 (0.274)
CNNbiased*Muslim	0.250** (0.100)	-0.519** (0.240)
Observations	92	83
Pseudo R-squared	0.105	0.137

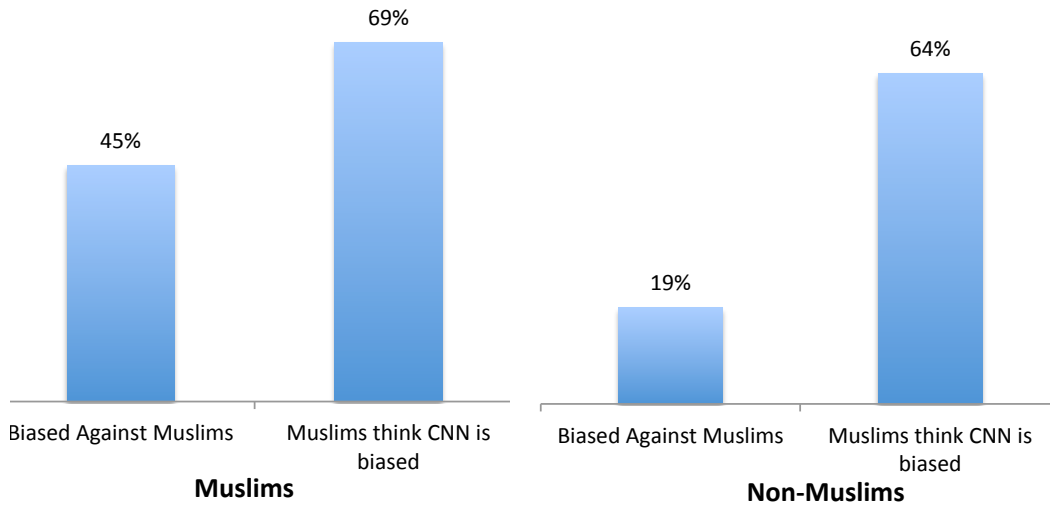
*CNNbiased captures skeptical disposition toward CNN. Responses to the statements "CNN is biased against Muslims" and "Muslims think that CNN is biased" are used to construct this variable for specifications (1) and (2), respectively. Only responses to the CNN clip are considered here.

Table 9 – Probit Regression of Media Branding and Perceptions of Coverage Bias Among Participants who Consider CNN to be Biased

	"The reporter tried to give an unbiased report"	"Muslims would find this clip biased"
	(1)	(2)
Age	0.030 (0.068)	-0.009 (0.053)
Gender	-0.029 (0.109)	-0.108 (0.089)
Income	0.041 (0.051)	0.003 (0.038)
Education	-0.010 (0.024)	0.010 (0.024)
CNN	-0.538** (0.220)	0.328** (0.152)
Muslim	-0.188 (0.138)	-0.047 (0.126)
CNN*Muslim	0.384*** (0.147)	-0.362* (0.190)
Observations	69	126
Pseudo R-squared	0.0878	0.0726

Figure 1 – Skepticism Toward Al Jazeera and CNN

CNN



Al Jazeera

