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THE THIRD-PERSON EFFECT OF
NEWS COVERAGE OF OPINION POLL RESULTS

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The objective of the present study was to examine 1) the differential third-person perception (TPP) of the opinion poll reports and 2) whether and how the TPP is associated with its consequences -- attitude change and behavioral intention change. As the method, an experiment was conducted with a 2 (message position: pro-restriction vs. anti-restriction) by 2 (subject position: pro-restriction vs. anti-restriction) by 2 (others: in-group/out-group) mixed factorial design with *message position* and *subject position* as between-subjects factors and *others* as a within-subjects factor. The stimuli were news articles reporting the results of an opinion poll on the government restrictions on violent TV programming.

The findings demonstrate participants' attitude toward the government restrictions on violent TV programming changed after they read the news report of opinion poll results. Regarding the differential TPP, message position and others interacted with each other on the TPP of the poll results although the predicted 3-way interaction among message position, subject position, and others was not statistically significant. Regarding the association between TPP and its consequences -- attitudinal change and behavioral intention change, the TPP was significantly associated with the attitudinal change, and anxiety mediated the association. However, the TPP was not associated with behavioral intention.

The present study contributes to the TPE research by revealing the role of anxiety as a mediator in the linkage between the TPP and attitudinal change and confirming that people's predisposition on a message and its target group affects the perceived effect of the message. For future research, more studies examining the TPE

in diverse contexts with different types and levels of involvement and different types of emotion are suggested.

Introduction

Mass media are our means of contact with unseen environments, leading to a perception of the outer world that people have not individually experienced (Lippmann, 1922). In that individual experience is limited to individual boundaries of life, the media help people determine their perception of collective experience outside their boundaries (Mutz, 1998). Thus, Tocqueville (2004) contends the media is a "light" that guides wandering minds in darkness to meet and unite with each other (p. 213). This function of media to aggregate individual experiences and opinions on particular issues endowed the media with the power to exert influences on people's perception of public opinion, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally. For example, those who perceive favorable media coverage of a policy tend to see public opinion as supportive of the policy, whereas those who perceive unfavorable coverage are more likely to infer negative public opinion of the policy (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976).

Furthermore, individuals' perception of media influence is related with their perception of public opinion. For example, pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian partisans believed media coverage of the war in Lebanon in 1982 would cause neutral viewers to become more unfavorable toward their own side and more favorable toward their antagonists, thus public opinion would move against their own side (Perloff, 1989). That is, individuals' perception that the media has influences on the public opinion influences their perception of the public opinion.

Media influence on public opinion is widely recognized, and people believe the media is "very influential" (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Meirick, 2006; Price, Huang, & Tewksbury, 1997). While the 'hypodermic needle' theory of media effects

was abandoned long ago in academia, people continue to perceive that the media has direct, usually menacing effects on their audience (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976; Ball-Rokeach, 2001). The media has been accused of being biased, violent, sensational, and too commercial at every stage of its development largely because people feared it would influence the public (Starker, 1989). Given decades of research indicating rather inconclusive results regarding the direct effect of the media (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976; Hetsroni, 2007; McGuire, 1986), people's estimation of the magnitude of media influence on the public seems to be based more on their concerns than on empirical evidence.

Interestingly, people are less likely to perceive that they are influenced by the media than to believe the media exerts influence on others who are different from them. The third-person effect (TPE) hypothesis addresses the tendency for individuals to perceive a greater media impact on others than themselves – the third-person perception – and the consequences of this perception (Davison, 1983). According to the hypothesis, those who believe others will be affected by a mediated message take actions in response to this belief. In other words, the perception that the media influences others has impacts on individual decisions or behaviors on related social and political issues or events. In this sense, the TPE has significantly contributed to the media effect research by providing a "dramatically different" approach to the topic from previous approaches that focused on either passive or active impacts of mass media (Perloff, 1989, p. 236). A plethora of studies in diverse contexts have confirmed the self-other perceptual gap in terms of media influence (Perloff, 1989, 1993, 2002; Sun, Pan, & Shen, 2008).

The TPE is important in the study of public opinion because the perceived media influence on others can influence public opinion. Previous TPE research indicates the perceptual gap of media influence on others and self – the third-person perception – results in behavioral outcomes (Gunther, Perloff, & Tsfati, 2008). For example, when individuals perceive undesirable effects of a mediated message on other people, they will increase their support for censorship or some other restrictions on the message (Eveland & McLeod, 1999; Salwen & Dupagne, 1999). These individual opinions are aggregated to form the public opinion that will be "measured by opinion polls or deduced from media coverage" (Kepplinger, 2008, p. 197). In this way, perceived media influence on public opinion can affect the public opinion itself. Nonetheless, research on the behavioral component of the TPE – the relationship between the third-person perception and its behavioral consequences -- has yielded mixed results (Salwen & Dupagne, 1999; Sun, Shen, & Pan, 2008). Hence, the current study aims to examine the behavioral component of the TPE in the context of news coverage of public opinion polls.

Public opinion polls play an important role in modern politics, representing quantified public opinion (Herbst, 1993, 1998; Traugott & Lavrakas, 2008). News reports of polling results are one of the main sources people use to formulate their "opinions about the opinion of the majority" (Kepplinger, 2008, p. 199). People's perception of the public opinion through opinion polls, in turn, becomes the basis for their social and political judgments (Davison, 1958; Mutz, 1998). Government and politicians employ opinion polling, as an instrument to gauge public opinion, in the decision making process (Eisinger, 2008). Political behaviors, such as funding for

candidates and support for particular public policies, are also influenced by opinion poll results (de Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Klotzer, 2008; Price & Stroud, 2006).

Furthermore, based on the TPE hypothesis, it can be predicted how people perceive the effects from media coverage of opinion polls will affect their attitudes and/or behaviors (de Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Lang & Lang, 1984; Pan, Abisaid, Paek, Sun, & Houden, 2006). For example, politicians and their aides often take actions according to the perceived effects of poll results (Mutz, 1998). Despite its importance, however, the perceived effects of news reports of opinion polls have not been studied much until recently (Pan et al., 2006). Thus, the current study will examine individuals' perceptions of the effects of news coverage of opinion poll results and how these perceptions are related to the individuals' attitudes and behavioral intention.

In addition, emotion is examined as a mediator in the relationship between the third-person perception and its behavioral outcome. Previous research has demonstrated emotions elicited after the exposure to mediated messages have influences on cognition and behaviors (Kepplinger, 2008; Nabi, 2003; Roseman & Smith, 2001). Negative emotion, particularly anxiety, leads to systematic information seeking and active participation in elections (Marcus, Neuman, & Mackuen, 2000). This anxiety might motivate those who have the third-person perception to take actions in response to the perception. However, no previous study has examined the role of emotion in the TPE. Gunther and Thorson (1992) studied how people perceive the effect of an emotional advertisement on others and self, but the focus of the study was not the role of emotion *per se* but the perceived effect of the advertisement of which positivity was drawn from emotional appeal. As there have not been any studies regarding the role of

emotion in the TPE process, the exploration of whether and how anxiety functions in the TPE process should contribute to the TPE research.

In the following section, previous studies regarding 1) the effects of news coverage of opinion polls on public opinion, 2) the third-person perception and its consequences, and 3) the role of emotion in the relationship between the third-person perception and its behavioral outcome are reviewed. Based on these previous studies, the relationships among the perceived effect of news reports of opinion polls, factors of the third-person perception, the behavioral outcome of the perception, and emotional reactions to the perception are hypothesized.

Literature Review

Public Opinion Polls

Public opinion. The concept of public opinion originates from the idea of "popular rule" in the political philosophy of ancient Greece (Price, 1992, p. 5). Aristotle asserted the collective sentiments of people on public affairs provide the basis for judgment on the affairs (Minar, 1960). In the Aristotelian view, the notion of public opinion is valuable only when individual interests are filtered out through the process of deliberation – discussion and consideration among the entire members of the public (Minar, 1960). That is, he viewed public opinion in terms of collective interests rather than a mere collection of individual interests.

On the other hand, the modern idea of public opinion in line with the Utilitarian views stresses individual interests. The idea of public opinion as an aggregate of individual interests with the notion of its formal political role in government was established in the late 18th and early 19th centuries by Mill, Locke, Hobbes, and Bentham (Price, 1992). These scholars argued people behave primarily to satisfy their individual desires and avoid pain. The public consists of these individuals seeking to maximize their own interests. The Utilitarian individualists argue individual interests should be directly reflected in public policy through legislative devices that harmonize the disparate interests of individuals and maximize individual influences. Although public opinion as the vessel of the diverse interests of the individuals in the society is valued as the key component of politics, the individualist perspective also recognizes "the interplay of interests and the peaceable solution of conflicts of interest" are the

function of politics (Minar, 1960, p. 36). Thus, public opinion is a collective resolution of problems through individuals' arguments and counterarguments.

This position characterizes the contemporary viewpoint on public opinion. It is also the rationale that underlies the modern effort toward the quantification of public opinion through the advisory poll and the referendum as "legislative devices that maximize and simplify" the influence of individual interests on public policy (Minar, 1960, p. 37). For politicians and government officials, this quantified public opinion is an important standard in their decision making process:

> Politicians may use polls to consult the votes about their approval ratings and to assess the impact of their political decisions on voting intentions. However, they also use survey data to specify the top issues which the electorate expects them to concentrate on while in office. As a general rule, public policymakers, both those who are elected and the bureaucrats, identify public expectations and preferences before they set the agenda for social policy to determine the extent of popular support for policy options. The reactions of the public are also collected when initiatives are being designed to communicate policy and to test public acceptance of these policies. (Butler, 2007, p. 108)

Public opinion is a very complicated and dynamic concept "always evolving, always somehow elusive" (Herbst, 2001, p. 451) largely because the composition of the public changes depending on agenda and historical context (Glynn, Herbst, O'Keefe, Shapiro, & Lindeman, 2004). Furthermore, the public changes its size and composition throughout the phases of development of public opinion, in which an issue is first recognized, disputed, and eventually resolved (Davison, 1958). According to Davison

(1958), in the development of public opinion, a few people first recognize a problem, and then the number of people who eventually participate in resolving it grows. The public also changes in composition, expanding from those most directly involved in defining and framing the issue to many others who simply follow the issue. This fluidity of the public makes it difficult to identify the public opinion precisely. The nature of a changing and amorphous entity impeded systematic empirical study of public opinion until the advent of opinion polling in the mid 1930s (Butler, 2007).

Role of public opinion polls. According to Bryce, a nineteenth-century theorist of American democracy, the opinion of the common man and that of the elite should be of equal weight in true democracy and "the will of the majority of citizens" should be learned by some means "without the need of passing through a body of representatives, possibly without the need of voting machinery at all" (as cited in Lewis, 2001, p. 25). Opinion polls are one of the most frequently employed devices in modern democratic society to learn the opinion of citizens. Although George Gallup is generally considered as the pioneer in systematic opinion polling, the origin of opinion polling goes back to 1824 when the *Harrisburg Pennsylvanian* conducted a public opinion survey on preferences of presidential candidates (Butler, 2007; Higgins, 2008). In addition, other American newspapers, such as *Boston Globe*, the *New York Herald*, the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the *Columbus Dispatch*, the *Chicago American*, and the *Chicago Record-Herald*, conducted public opinion surveys and published the results as a way of providing more nonpartisan, objective assessments of aggregate opinion on voting preferences and public issues such as the declaration of war on Germany (Gallup & Rae, 1940).

These early public opinion surveys did not employ a systematic survey method with a probability sample but used a survey method called a "straw poll." The newspapers asked the reader to cut out a survey form, "straw ballots," from the newspaper itself and mail the completed form to the sponsoring organization (Butler, 2007, p. 35; Gallup & Rae, 1940, p. 37). This method without consideration of the consequences of the measurement error was used until 1936 when the *Literary Digest* failed in its Presidential election forecast (Butler, 2007; Traugott & Lavrakas, 2008). The telephone-automobile owner list used in the survey was not representative of the American voters but biased towards a rich population. As a result, the forecast failed in predicting the victory of the incumbent Franklin D. Roosevelt (Gallup & Rae, 1940). In the same year Gallup applied a systematic quota sampling method to his national survey and made an accurate prediction, although this method was not probability sampling either (Butler, 2007; Traugott & Lavrakas, 2008). Probability sampling is based on random sampling, which allows for the calculation of sampling error. Thus, probability sampling is considered more accurate although it is more complicated and has higher cost. Some scholars even argue "a survey is not a survey when it does not involve a probability sample" (Traugott & Lavrakas, 2008, p. 5).

In spite of the dispute over the methodology, the role of opinion polling in politics has been publicly recognized with the widespread news coverage of opinion polls. Traugott and Lavrakas (2008) contend a symbiotic relationship between pollsters and newspapers was indispensable in the early period of opinion polling: The pollsters needed mass media as outlets for disseminating their poll results while the newspapers needed more sources and content of news. Especially to the newspapers in the early

20th century, the opinion polls were attractive because they provided "objective" nonpartisan content for the readers, which would "appeal to a larger number of readers than the parties" (Butler, 2007, p. 36).

Although the origin of opinion polling involves the interests of pollsters and newspapers, the media coverage of opinion poll plays an important role in the process of individuals' political judgments by providing the basis upon which people perceive public opinion. Past studies indicate the media coverage of opinion polls influences political behaviors, such as voter turnout, as well as individuals' perceptions of public opinion (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994; Ceci & Kain, 1982; Hardy & Jamieson, 2005; Jacobs & Shapiro, 2005; Lang & Lang, 1984; Lavrakas & Traugott, 2000; Mendelsohn & Crespi, 1970; Mutz, 1998; Page, Shapiro, & Dempsey, 1987; Pan et al., 2006).

Furthermore, public opinion polls are at the center of modern politics because they identify the "greatest concerns of voters" and the "policies that voters most want candidates to support" (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2005, p. 635). The state or national opinion polls give politicians and policy makers a general sense of public concerns and preferences on issues and policies (Herbst, 1993; Klotzer, 2008; Monroe, 1998; Page et al., 1987; Price, 2008). Public opinion polls contribute to "structuring public opinion on issues and…guiding the development of policy, especially domestic policy" (Traugott, 1992, p. 144). According to Paletz and colleagues' (1980) content analysis of the news media in the 1970s, the *New York Times* published news stories using public opinion polls on average once every three days. The content of more than 30% of the polls was policy issues, such as social, economic, and foreign policies. In 1990s, opinion polls were published "practically every day" in the major news media (Brettschneider, 2008,

p. 479). Weaver and Kim (2002) found 9,618 poll stories in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* between 1996 and 1998. Although these poll results are not supposed to be used "merely to cater to citizens' whims and desires, regardless of their efficacy and value," opinion poll results surely function as an "instrument to monitor, gauge, predict, and assess the voice of the people" (Eisinger, 2008, p. 494). It is indisputable that public opinion polling plays a crucial role in modern political decision making processes.

Criticisms of public opinion polls. Despite its role in political decision making processes, the use of opinion polling has been criticized by academics, journalists, and political critics. One of the criticisms is that elected public officials should not just follow popular support only to ensure their stay in office but advocate their own policy agenda (Butler, 2007). According to this criticism, government officials should not be dependent on public opinion polls in policy making processes even though disregarding polls can be politically dangerous. The concern that America has a government "of the polls, by the polls, for the polls" represents this critical view on the overuse and/or misuse of opinion polls (Traugott, 1992, p. 144).

Some criticisms involve skepticism on opinion polling itself, specifically, regarding whether polling can fully reflect the public opinion. The skepticism is two-fold: 1) measurement of true public opinion and 2) ordinary citizens' ability to understand and evaluate the issues that are addressed in polls.

First, some scholars argue polls cannot truly measure public opinion. Herbst (1993) argues polls are assumed to be objective and scientific information that is value-free. Despite the assumption, it is possible for the polls to be framed and distorted by

their users such as media, politicians, and interest groups. It is only an illusion that the public opinion as an objective truth exists to be caught by opinion polling (Herbst, 1993). Public opinion is not a fixed but a dynamic concept ever shifting, depending on social, political, and historical contexts (Glynn et al., 2004). Lewis (2001) asserts polling is merely a numerical representation rather than an actual measure of public opinion. According to his argument, polls are devices to construct reality in order for the media and elite to persuade people to accept their depictions of consensus rather than "scientific" instruments to produce objective knowledge (p. x). This is because the pollsters can establish the framework of the questions and set the parameters for the responses in most opinion surveys (Lewis, 2001). In this "social constructionist" perspective, public opinion represented by poll results should not be understood without examining the agencies, news media in many cases, which influence and conduct the polls. Therefore, in order to interpret poll responses, the readers should understand the contexts, such as ideological conditions in which the poll results are produced. That is, if we want to understand the results of the polls conducted by news media, we should examine the way the news media framed the issue and the pressures on the news media to construct a specific view of the issue. In this view, survey data represent merely "measured opinion" and true public opinion cannot be measured by polls (Traugott & Lavrakas, 2008, p. 4).

The second skepticism is on the public's lack of ability to understand and assess public issues. In this view, the public does not have the "necessary knowledge, skills, and wisdom to identify their interests and the country's" (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2005, p. 635). Furthermore, in that most of the public is "disengaged" from political and social

issues, the public is not expected to deeply understand and assess public policies (Butler, 2007, p. 109). Respondents answer a survey interview question with "only top-of-mind views" without deep understanding and evaluation of the issues (Lewis, 2001, p. 25). Thus, users of polls such as the media, politicians, or interest groups can easily take advantage of the public's incompetency and sway the public opinion by distorting and manipulating poll results (Mendelsohn & Crespi, 1970). For example, political elites may take advantage of polls by subtle and strategic framing; polls can be used by them to reinforce their side's political position and shift the media frame in favor of their side (Lewis, 2001; Simon & Jerit, 2007). Skeptics of opinion polls suspect the parties selectively and strategically use poll results for "rhetorical purposes" (Herbst, 1998, p. 48; Lewis, 2001). Jacobs and Shapiro (2005) also assert polls are blamed because politicians or interest groups overuse and/or misuse them. This suspicion that users of opinion polls distort the information from polling elevates distrust of public opinion itself (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2005).

Other critics argue media coverage of opinion polls rather than opinion polling *per se* is problematic. Traugott (2004) points out inaccurate reporting of opinion poll results by journalists who lack adequate methodological training and familiarity with important public opinion concepts is one of the critical problems in media coverage of opinion polls. He argues journalists are "handicapped by the strategic behavior of some groups in misrepresenting the current state of opinion on issues of particular concern to them" (p. 79). Polls themselves have no direct route into public consciousness without media coverage of the poll data. Media coverage of polls provides the public a chance to help set the public agenda and define the meanings of issues if the poll is "properly

conducted, analyzed, and presented" (Lewis, 2001, p. 78). However, because the significance of polls depends on media coverage, the influence of polls is "bound up with" the influence of media and political elites who control the media (Lewis, 2001, p. 35). Furthermore, media polling, in which the media conducts and reports opinion polling, allows the media full access to polling process from framing the questions to reporting the results. Some scholars even argue media polling is a misuse of public opinion surveys because the role of media is not manufacturing news but reporting it (Butler, 2007). The media is not supposed to shape political opinion with interpretive frameworks, which tend to create prejudiced reflection of public opinion (Lippmann, 1922). Nonetheless, the results of the opinion polls conducted and reported by news media are often interpreted and framed by reporters to fit their own story (Lewis, 2001).

These negative views of opinion polls assume polls affect individuals' judgments on issues, policies, or candidates. Despite numerous pitfalls and criticisms of polling, opinion polls are generally perceived to affect political behaviors, such as voting behavior, funding for candidates, and public policy changes (de Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Klotzer, 2008; Price & Stroud, 2006).

Effects of opinion polls. Is the public actually influenced by polls? Traugott (1992) argues the dissemination of public opinion data has an impact on subsequent opinion and behavior of audience: Knowledge of what others think or believe, or how those opinions are changing, has an effect on people's opinions and behavior. "Bandwagon" and "underdog" effects are most often contested in the research on the impact of the exposure to poll results (Hardmeier, 2008; Traugott, 2004). Bandwagon effect describes the tendency of voters to support the candidate who the election polls

predict will win the election while underdog effect is the tendency of voters to support the candidate who the polls predict will lose the election out of sympathy (Traugott & Lavrakas, 2008). The tendency of voters to support a candidate who is leading or behind should be influenced by the media coverage of poll results that show the candidate's standing in the race.

Nonetheless, findings of previous studies on the effects of opinion polls on individuals' attitudes and/or behaviors are equivocal (de Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Hardmeier, & Roth, 2001; Lang & Lang, 1984; Mendelsohn & Crespi, 1970; Navazio, 1977). Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1994) examined the impact of poll results on voter support for candidates. The results indicate although people become more positive toward the leading candidate, the exposure to poll results did not affect their intention to vote. The examination of the linkage between attitude and behavior required the consideration of other moderating variables, especially involvement (partisanship). Other research found evidence that the direction of influence is the opposite (Mendelsohn & Crespi, 1970). Thus, it is not the exposure to a poll report *per se*, but the degree of political involvement that strongly influences the attitudes and voting behavior. Regarding election polls, past research has found no conclusive evidence of either bandwagon or underdog effects (de Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Hardmeier, 2008; Lang & Lang, 1984; Mendelsohn & Crespi, 1970; Navazio, 1977). Some scholars maintain it might be that "both bandwagon and underdog effects which, in net, canceled each other out" (Mendelsohn & Crespi, 1970, p. 20). A meta- analysis of the studies evaluating the influence of opinion polls on the voting behavior or the intention to vote for a specific party or candidate found no strong effect of published polls: The effect

coefficients (*r*) for bandwagon and underdog effects were 0.12 and 0.04 respectively (Hardmeier, 2008).

Although past research does not provide clear-cut evidence to support the effects of opinion polls on individuals' behaviors or behavioral intention, it seems plausible to predict information on what others think or believe has an effect on people's opinions. Previous research found significant attitude changes among participants after their exposure to poll reports (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994; Kim, 2009). Based on the findings of the previous studies, following hypothesis is posited:

H1: Respondents' attitude on an issue changes after the exposure to a news report of an opinion poll regarding the issue.

Theoretical Framework

Hostile media effect. Although whether polls should be used to measure public opinion or poll results widely disseminated is still debated among scholars and critics, a general perception that opinion polling is an egalitarian and democratic form of public representation is widespread (Traugott, 2004). The first national survey on polls conducted in 1944 indicates awareness of opinion polls was already widespread and evaluations of polls were generally positive at that time of the survey. In this survey, 56% of the respondents knew about polls, and 28% of the respondents followed poll results either "regularly" (9%) or "occasionally" (19%) (Traugott, 2004, p. 80). The results also indicated that the public generally believed polls had a positive impact on politics. A recent national survey regarding the public's interest in polls in 1990s revealed Americans were interested in media polling. Specifically, two out of three respondents viewed media polls as a good way to inform and learn what other people

are thinking (Shiraev & Sobel, 2006). Traugott (2004) reviewed surveys on opinion polls from 1944 to 1996 indicating the public became attentive to polls although they did not show much interest in them and concluded "the public is receptive to polls reported in the news but may not be actively interested in searching such information" (p. 81).

By 2000, 55% of the respondents answered the questions about the value and accuracy of polls that they represent the public interest only some of the time (Shiraev & Sobel, 2006). Shiraev and Sobel (2006) report people are more skeptical about polling accuracy than before: "When Fox news asked registered voters whether opinion polls represent what people think about important issues, two-thirds of respondents were skeptical" (p. 47). Especially when the results of opinion polls are not consistent with their own opinion, people would be more likely to view the results as inaccurate or unfair. This tendency is predicted by the hostile media effect (HME) hypothesis.

Studies regarding the biased perceptions of media bias demonstrate that people tend to believe neutral news coverage of an issue is biased against their view (Christen, Kannaovakun, & Gunther, 2002; Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Gunther, 1992; Gunther & Schmitt, 2004; Gunther & Liebhart, 2006; Perloff, 1989; Vallone et al., 1985). This hostile media perception leads to the biased perception of public opinion through the exaggerated perception of media influence on public opinion. Perloff (1989) found in his study of the news coverage of the 1982 war in Lebanon that pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian partisans viewed neutral news coverage as biased against their sides. Each side also believed the news coverage would cause neutral viewers to become more unfavorable toward their side and more favorable toward their antagonists.

However, the results of the study revealed the news coverage actually had not significantly influenced people' attitudes toward Israel or the PLO. That is, the partisans tended to exaggerate the magnitude of the bias of news coverage and its influence.

Dalton, Beck, and Huckfeldt's (1998) study provides empirical evidence of HME through a content analysis of news and a survey of news consumers. The researchers found whether on the left or right, partisans see the press as leaning toward their opponent. These feelings are strongest among those who "perceive the media as hostile toward their preferred candidate" (p. 121). Furthermore, they found perceptions of a newspaper's partisan leaning have no influence on candidate images once partisanship is controlled. This result implies perceptions of media effect are mostly a projection of political orientations of the perceivers with little independent impact of the political leaning of the newspaper. The researchers maintain the evidence in support of the HME explains the general perception of media bias although the direction of the perceived bias is different depending on the perceiver's view.

Partisans appear to be more sensitive to information in the media that is conflicting with their own view. These partisans have the tendency to believe their own view is what the majority of the public supports (Wojcieszak & Price, 2009) and deserves coverage that is more favorable. Thus, they would evaluate the news report that is congruent with their own view more highly than the news report that is incongruent with their view. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H2: Those who read the news report of the poll result that is inconsistent with their own view are more likely to perceive the news report as biased

than those who read the news report of the poll result that is consistent with their own view.

Those who view news coverage as biased against their side also believe the news coverage influences neutral viewers to be more unfavorable toward their side and more favorable toward their antagonists' side (Perloff, 1989). The tendency to perceive a mediated message influences others more than self is explained by the third-person effect (TPE). While the HME explains the tendency to exaggerate the bias of mediated messages, the TPE explains the tendency of exaggerated perception of the influence of the messages on other people. The TPE will be reviewed in the following section in association with the hypotheses of the current study.

The third-person effect. The TPE was first hypothesized as a media effect by a sociologist W. Phillips Davison. In the early days in his career, a historian questioned Davison about a phenomenon in the Iwo Jima Island during World War II (Davison, 1983). In the middle of the war, the Japanese distributed propaganda leaflets with the theme that the war is a white man's war and the Japanese have no intention to fight with the African-Americans. On the next day, the white officers withdrew the service unit consisting of African-American troops even though there was no evidence that the propaganda had any actual effects on the African-American troops. The leaflets consequentially affected the reshuffle of the troops not because they actually influenced the African-American soldiers but because the white officers perceived the propaganda would exert influence on the African-American soldiers. Reflecting upon this phenomenon, Davison (1983) proposed the hypothesis of TPE predicting that

> …people will tend to overestimate the influence that mass communications have on the attitudes and behavior of others. More specifically, individuals who are members of an audience that is exposed to a persuasive communication (whether or not this communication is intended to be persuasive) will expect the communication to have a greater effect on others than on themselves. And whether or not these individuals are among the *ostensible* audience for the message, the impact that they expect this communication to have on others may lead them to take some action. Any effect that the communication achieves may thus be due not to the reaction of the ostensible audience but rather to the behavior of those who anticipate, or think they perceive, some reaction on the part of others. (p. 3)

The perception that a communication would influence others more than self affects individuals' decisions or behaviors on the related social and political issues. The individual decisions or behaviors can, in turn, affect public opinion. For example, activists supporting censorship of media content will be more strongly motivated to participate in their activity when they perceive the public will be influenced by negative media content and consequentially contribute to the formation of a stronger public mood to pass censorship regulations (McLeod, Eveland, & Nathanson, 1997).

Since Davison's proposition, studies have shown the robustness of the perceptual component of this effect (Cohen, Mutz, Price, & Gunther, 1988; Paul, Salwen, & Dupagne, 2000; Perloff, 1989, 1993, 2002; Sun et al., 2008). Paul and colleagues (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of 62 TPE studies and 121 separate effect sizes and found a large overall effect size (r = .50) of the difference between estimated

media effects on self and others. A more recent meta-analysis of 106 studies and 372 effect sizes indicates a smaller but still moderately large effect size (r = .31) (Sun et al., 2008). Despite the robust empirical evidence supporting the perceptual hypothesis, why and how people perceive greater impacts on others are less known. Identification of theoretical explanations is required for the TPE to be theoretically developed.

Theoretical explanations. TPE researchers have attempted to explain the psychological mechanism underlying the phenomenon by drawing on diverse psychological theories and concepts, such as attribution theory (Gunther, 1991; Paul, et al., 2000), optimistic bias (Gunther & Mundy, 1993), social judgment (Paek et al., 2005), and differential perceptual process of media effect schema (Perloff, 1996). Among the theories, attribution theory and optimistic bias have been most relied on to justify the TPE (Paul et al., 2000).

Attribution theory is based on the assumption that people infer causes of their own and others' behavior. Heider (1958) asserts people seek to understand others' actions and events that are relevant to them and seek causal explanations for the actions or events. When people infer the causes of others' actions, they attribute them to personal dispositions while attributing their own actions to situational factors (Jones & Nisbett, 1972). For example, if a student came to class in her pajamas, the teacher would think she is too lazy to change (dispositional attribution). On the other hand, if the teacher herself came to class in an inappropriate outfit, she would think it was an inevitable situation because she did not have any other clothes to wear (situational attribution). When applied to mass communication, the differential attribution model predicts a person will perceive he or she understands the underlying persuasive

intention of mediated message while others cannot recognize the underlying intention or persuasive effect of the message because of their dispositional flaw(s) such as gullibility, naiveté, and/or lack of intelligence (Paul, et al., 2000). Gunther (1991) views the attribution hypotheses as relevant to the TPE because the theory explains people see others as "less responsive to the situation" and attribute "the greater persuasibility" on others (p. 357). According to this explanation based on the attribution theory, people estimate a greater message impact on others than themselves because they are more likely to infer situational causes than dispositional ones when they assess the effects of communication on themselves whereas when they judge the message impact on others, they attribute more dispositional than situational causes. However, attribution theory does not explain the part of the stimulus (i.e., a possible cause without regard to whether disposition or situation will moderate it) and estimating its effect, which is what the TPE is about (Meirick, 2010).

In order to explain the psychological mechanism of differentiation of "I" and "others," Gunther and Mundy (1993) proposed the concept of "optimistic bias," which refers to the tendency of people to think they are less likely to have negative experiences than others (p. 60). Weinstein (1980) predicted and found "people believe that negative events are less likely to happen to them than to others, and they believe positive events are more likely to happen to them than to others" (p. 807). Based on this *biased optimism*, it is assumed that people distinguish between societal-others and personal-self level impacts of media messages. This biased optimism entails ego-enhancement by estimating themselves to be smart enough to disbelieve media messages with persuasive intention while others are persuaded by the messages. Thus,

messages that are more undesirable lead to a greater third-person perception, while third-person perception decreases or first-person perception manifests when messages are perceived as desirable (Gunther & Mundy, 1993; Gunther & Thorson, 1992). The first-person perception will be discussed later in this section.

Some scholars view the third-person perception as an outcome of *social judgments* under uncertainty. Social judgments are "inferences on various social phenomena including the likelihood or frequencies of social events, possession of various personality attributes and their strengths, degrees of intensity of social interactions, and extent of social influences" (Paek, Pan, Sun, Abisaid, & Houden, 2005, p. 145). Such cognitive tasks require seeking, processing, and evaluating information and drawing inferences from the information (Mussweiler, 2003). Assessing how much a mediated message might affect a target individual or group involves a specific social judgment on the message and the target. That is, individuals infer about the effectiveness of the message as well as the relevant characteristics of the target such as general vulnerability (McLeod, Detenber, & Eveland, 2001; Paek et al., 2005), perceived exposure to the message (Eveland et al., 1999) and perceived predispositions (Meirick, 2005).

However, since people do not have sufficient information on the related factors in most cases of social judgment, they perform social judgment under the condition of uncertainty (Paek et al., 2005). This uncertainty motivates individuals to seek predictable information and/or other communicative behavior (Berger, 1986). When available information is imperfect and/or motivation for more information is not sufficient, cognitive heuristics or intuition is frequently employed in judgments in order

to reduce uncertainty (Paek et al., 2005). Judgments formed from this shortcut without employing rationality, however, may result in fallacies in social judgment. Paek and colleagues (2005) argue the third-person perception is this "cognitive fallacy that results from individuals rendering their estimates on the likelihood and intensity of a message effect on a target" (p. 146).

There is another approach to explain the phenomenon: *differentiation of perceptual processes* for self and other (McLeod et al., 2001; Perloff, 1996; Salwen, 1998). This approach separates perceived media impacts on self and others. Perloff (1996) proposes that the mechanism of perceived media impacts on others is due to the "media effect schema," which entails the belief that media message is powerful and people are influenced by the media message. This schema does not work for perceivers themselves because people are not likely to recognize their own psychological functioning and vulnerabilities. Although the explanation that individuals use the media effect schema for the perception of media effects on others while they do not use it for the perception of media effects on themselves seems plausible, this explanation alone does not untangle the complexity of the perceptual process for estimating effects on self. For example, when the media message is perceived as socially desirable, individuals are likely to show less third-person perception or the first-person perception that they will be more influenced by the message than others will (Duck et al., 1995; Eveland & McLeod, 1999; Gunther & Mundy, 1993; Gunther & Thorson, 1992; White, 1997; White & Dillon, 2000). This pattern indicates people recognize the media effect on themselves as well as on others.

Factors that influence the TPE. Past research indicates the magnitude and direction of the perceived gap between the impact of media messages on self and others vary depending on several factors such as message desirability, definition of others, and the perceiver's involvement level with the topic.

First, *message desirability* is a central factor on which the magnitude and direction of a TPE depends (Comstock and Scharrer, 2005; David & Johnson, 1998; Gunther & Mundy, 1993; Paul et al., 2000; Sun et al., 2008). Meta-analyses of the TPE demonstrate message desirability is an important moderator of the TPE (Paul et al., 2000; Sun et al., 2008). Comstock and Scharrer (2005) maintain there are circumstances when the TPE does not manifest. For example, when the issue connotes "goodness or superiority, social desirability, or a more pleasant environment free of offensive communicatory stimuli," the TPE decreases or disappears (p. 10). In other words, the perception of greater impacts of communication on others than self occurs only when the impacts or the content of communication is perceived undesirable. Rucinski and Salmon (1990) also argue the effect is particularly likely to emerge when messages contain recommendations that are not perceived to be personally beneficial.

On the other hand, when a media message is perceived as socially desirable, the TPE decreases (Eveland & McLeod, 1999; Gunther & Mundy, 1993; Gunther & Thorson, 1992), or a first-person effect, the perception of greater impacts on self than others, manifests (Duck et al., 1995; White, 1997; White & Dillon, 2000). People may perceive themselves as more receptive to positive messages than other people, who are not seen as so shrewd and open-minded. However, first-person effects are not as robust as third-person effects. This may be because acknowledging influence on self can

conflict with self-esteem even if the influence is from a desirable message (Gunther & Mundy, 1993).

Another possible reason for the unstable pattern in the manifestation of the first-person effect under desirable message context is unclear definition of undesirability. In that the social desirability of a message is not a fixed factor designated by researchers but contingent on respondents' receptiveness, the presumably desirable message might not be perceived as desirable by the perceiver (Meirick, 2005). Rucinski and Salmon (1990) found the magnitude of the third-person perception for polls was almost the same as that of negative political advertisements despite the researchers' prediction that polls would be perceived as 'objective' and less harmful than negative political advertisements. Dupagne, Salwen, and Paul (1999) also found no significant differences among the respondents' support for restrictions on televised trials, television violence, and negative political advertising although the researchers had assumed television violence would be perceived undesirable and televised trials would be considered neutral. These results suggest the perceived desirability of a message would be dependent on the perceivers' judgment of the message.

The judgment of a message is expected to depend on the perceiver's position on the issue. Tsfati (2001) found in his study on Israeli election polls that respondents' political affiliation was one of the strongest predictors of their trust for media polls. People evaluate less on the credibility of the poll result that is not consistent with their prior beliefs because they tend to judge what they believe or what they want to hear as truthful (Tsfati, 2001). The psychological process associated with the perceiver's

position and his or her judgment of the message can be explained by the social judgment theory (Granberg, 1982).

Social judgment theory posits that for a specific issue, an individual has an attitudinal continuum that is divided into three latitudes: acceptance, rejection, and noncommitment (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). These latitudes affect how an incoming message will be judged (Sherif & Hovland, 1961; Greene, Parrott, & Serovich, 1993). If the message is agreeable, the message is in the latitude of acceptance. If the message is objectionable, it is in the latitude of rejection (Gaske, 1983). Whether a message falls in the latitude of acceptance or rejection is contingent on the individual's own position (Gaske, 1983; Granberg, 1982; Sherif & Hovland, 1961). Based on social judgment theory, if a news report is consistent with the reader's position, the report would be more likely to fall within the latitude of acceptance because it is closer to the reader's point of view. In this case, the reader would find the report agreeable. On the other hand, if a news report is inconsistent with the reader's position, the report would be more likely to be judged as objectionable. For instance, those who support the war in Iraq are more likely to perceive a report of an opinion poll whose results indicate the majority supports the war as acceptable, whereas those who oppose the war are more likely to perceive the same report as unacceptable. In that TPE is greater for an undesirable message (Gunther & Mundy, 1993; Sun et al., 2008), those who perceive a news report as objectionable would show a greater TPE than those who perceive the report as acceptable. Hence, it can be predicted the TPE would be greater for the reader whose position is inconsistent with the results of the news report. However, the

desirability of a message does not function alone in the manifestation of the TPE but it is expected to interact with who the "others" are.

Definition of others is another important factor of the TPE. The magnitude of the TPE depends on "social-psychological relationship between the perceiver and the comparison other" (Duck et al., 1995, p. 209). Andsager and White (2007) categorize the approaches to define others into two categories: social distance corollary and target corollary. The social distance corollary involves the distance between self and self-referent others such as social-psychological distance or geographical distance while the target corollary involves message referent others such as target audience group.

First, in terms of the social distance, the distance between self and others is viewed as falling along a continuum going from "like me" to "not like me" (Duck, Hogg, & Terry, 1998, p. 3), and the third-person perception increases when the others are defined as those who are "not like me." That is, when others are designated as either out-group members (Duck, Hogg, & Terry, 1999, 2000; Meirick, 2004) or those who are geographically or social psychologically farther from the self (Cohen et al., 1988; Cohen & Davis, 1991; Duck et al., 1995; Gunther, 1991), the third-person perception increases. For example, Stanford University students perceived news stories would exert the greatest impact on "public opinion at large," the next greatest impact on "other Californians," and a lesser impact on "other Stanford students" (Cohen et al., 1988).

Second, according to the target corollary, perceived exposure of a particular target group also affects the magnitude of the third-person perception. Lambe and McLeod (2005) found the largest third-person differential of beer ads was between self

and the 18-24 year old group. Considering the generally known knowledge about drinking habits of college-aged students, it is reasonable for the respondents to assume beer ads would be a particularly salient message context for that age group. Scharrer (2002) also reports some social groups such as children and those with low socioeconomic status are more likely to be perceived as susceptible to negative effects from television violence. These findings imply stereotypes of those particular groups influence respondents' perceptions of their vulnerability to certain media messages.

Regarding the in- and out-group definition of others, Duck and colleagues (2000) argue "perceptions of persuasive impact on self and other are also dependent on salient[i] group memberships or social identities (e.g., gender identity, political identity, student identity)" (p. 266). This argument is based on social identity theory, which explains the motivational bases and outcomes of identification with certain social groups (Tajfel, 1982; Turner, 1999). Social identity theory posits that an individual divides the self into a personal identity and a social identity. Social identity can be defined as an individual's perception that "he/she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him/her of the group membership" (Abrams & Hogg, 1990, p. 2). That is, a significant part of an individual's self-concept is derived from memberships in social groups and/or social categories, and this aspect of an individual's self-concept based on his or her group membership is termed 'social identity' (Terry, Hogg, & Duck, 1999; Turner, 1999). According to the theory, an individual categorizes the self and others into groups by self-selected characteristics such as age (Hajek & Giles, 2002), gender (Hajek & Giles, 2006), race (Fellows & Rubin, 2006; Fujioka, 2005; Mastin, Andsager, Choi, & Lee,

2007; Mastro, 2003; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008), and political affiliation (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Each of these memberships "describes and prescribes one's attributes as a member of that group," and what and how one thinks, feels, and behaves is guided by this group membership (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 259). Thus, social identity theorists contend the concept of social identity and its processes are essential in understanding collective behavior (Tajfel, 1982; Turner, 1999).

This social identity is used in social comparisons to enhance positive self-concept and self-esteem. The self-enhancement concept is derived from Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, which addresses people's tendency to compare themselves with others on certain relevant dimensions. Involving social identities, the comparison becomes between in- and out-groups instead of between individuals (Abrams & Hogg, 1990), and people's desire for self-enhancement leads to the tendency to favor their in-group. Hence, social identification is a mechanism for self-enhancement as people attempt to see their in-group as being better than other groups (Hogg & Abrams, 1999). In this sense, social identity theory provides an explanation for why individuals evaluate media effects differently on the in- and out-groups (Duck, et al., 1999; Gunther & Mundy, 1993; Gunther & Thorson, 1992). Those who perceive themselves as smarter and more knowledgeable than others would see others as more susceptible to media messages because other people are credulous, naïve, and less knowledgeable. Then, this self-serving bias is expanded to an in-group serving bias. Thus, when respondents identify themselves with an in-group, the TPE for the in-group is attenuated (Duck et al., 1999; Scharrer, 2002).

Based on these previous studies, it can be predicted people would show a greater TPE when others are defined as those who are far from themselves or comparatively different from themselves than when others are defined as those who are similar to themselves (Cohen et al., 1988; Cohen & Davis, 1991; Duck et al., 1995, 1999, 2000; Gunther, 1991; Gunther & Mundy, 1993; Gunther & Thorson, 1992; McLeod, Lambe, & Paek, 2005; Meirick, 2004; Pan et al., 2006). This factor of others, however, would interact with the message factor in the manifestation of the TPP: The differential self-other gap by in- and out- groups on the perceived impact of a message would be greater when the message is perceived as undesirable; On the other hand, when the message is perceived as desirable, the difference in the third-person perception for the in- and out-groups might decrease, or the direction of differential perception might be reversed.

Thus, if the news report of an opinion poll is perceived to support their position, and is therefore, judged as desirable, individuals would suppose out-group members who are in their opposite position would be less influenced by the poll report than themselves and in-group members. On the other hand, if the result of an opinion poll is opposed to their own position, individuals would perceive the poll result to have little influence on the self and in-group members relative to message-consistent out-group members (Cohen & Davis, 1991; Oliver, Yang, Ramasubramanian, Kim, & Lee, 2008). Previous research on the perceived effects of political campaigns indicates messages from in-group and out-group politicians were perceived to have differential effects on self, in-group members, and out-group members (Duck et al., 1995; Meirick, 2004). Hence, the following hypotheses predicting an interaction effect between the position of a news report and the position of others -- whether the others are designated as in- group

members (supporters of their view) or out-group members (opponents of their view) on the given issue -- are posited.

H3a: Those who read news reports of opinion polls that indicate the majority supports their position exhibit a smaller third-person perception for the opponents than for the supporters of their view.

H3b: Those who read news reports of opinion polls that indicate the majority supports the opposite position exhibit a greater third-person perception for the opponents than for the supporters of their view.

The third main factor of the TPE is *involvement.* The TPE is predicted to be moderated by individuals' ego-involvement level. Personal significance and intensity of holding the position on an issue determines the ego-involvement on the issue (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). Since ego-involvement is issue specific, a person might be highly involved in one issue, but not involved in another (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). Social judgment theory specifies ego-involvement is the most salient factor determining the widths of the latitudes of acceptance and rejection (Granberg, 1982; Sherif & Hovland, 1961). According to the theory, as involvement increases, the latitudes of acceptance and noncommitment shrink and the latitude of rejection expands while the latitude of noncommitment expands as involvement decreases (Granberg, 1982). As the latitudes of acceptance of those with high ego involvement are narrow, they are less likely to be persuaded or influenced by a message. That is, it is hard to influence the highly involved people because they are already committed to a point of view. Thus, highly involved people are more likely to show a greater third-person perception on a message because they perceive its impact on self as minimal compared to its impact on others.

On the other hand, those who are not involved with the given issue are less likely to show the differential perceived effect between self and others. Granberg (1982) maintains to the extent that the issue at hand is important to the person, his or her own attitude would serve as "an anchor in the psychological processes of perception and judgment of a communication" (p. 306). Mendelsohn and Crespi (1970) also contend the involvement of those who read or view the news reports of poll results and their "expectations" affect the readers' or viewers' evaluation of the reports (p. 12). That is, those who are sufficiently involved with the issue around which the opinion poll revolves are more likely to judge the report as acceptable or unacceptable and manifest the differential TPE. Those with too low involvement rarely perceive impacts of mediated messages at all (Morley, 1984). Previous TPE research has found involvement and/or predisposition on an issue magnify the TPE on the message about the issue (Mutz, 1989; Perloff, 1989, 1999; Vallone et al., 1985). Hence, individuals' ego-involvement is predicted to function as a moderator such that those with low involvement are less likely to show the differential self-other gaps of perceived effects of the news report.

H4: Highly involved individuals show a greater differential third-person perception for the news reports than less involved individuals.

Behavioral component of TPE. Although the majority of past TPE studies have focused on the perceptual gap between media influence on self and others, it should be noted the TPE is composed of two components – the perceptual component (perception of greater effects of message on others than self) and the behavioral component (association between the perceptual gap and its consequences) (Cohen & Davis, 1991;

McLeod, et al., 2005; Schmierbach, Boyle, & McLeod, 2008; Sun et al., 2008). Davison's (1983) seminal idea of the TPE includes the consequence of the third-person perception. In the anecdote about the reshuffle of troops in the Iwo Jima Island during World War II, the perceived impact of the Japanese leaflets on African-American soldiers (perceptual component of the TPE) led to the white officers' decision to withdraw the African-American troops (behavioral component of the TPE). It seems plausible that people who assume influences of media messages on others would react to the perception by adapting their behavior. Regardless of any actual direct effects, media exert indirect effects on individuals' behavior through presumed influence on others (Gunther & Storey, 2003).

Despite the logical plausibility of the linkage between the third-person perception and its consequences, until recently the behavioral component of the TPE has not been tested as much as the perceptual component (Banning, 2006; Lo, Wei, & Lu, 2007; McLeod et al., 2005; Sun et al., 2008). Furthermore, research on the association between the two components has shown inconsistent results, with only part of the studies finding the behavioral component of the TPE significant (Banning, 2006; Gunther & Storey, 2003; Lo, Wei, & Lu, 2007; Nathanson, Eveland, Park, & Paul, 2002; Neuwirth, Frederick, & Mayo, 2002; Salwen & Dupagne, 1999; Shah, Faber, & Youn, 1999; Sun et al., 2008). Hence, the current study examines the behavioral hypothesis of the TPE, focusing on the relationship between the third-person perception of news reports of opinion poll results and its consequences.

In order to explicate the linkage between the third-person perception and its consequences, scholars have employed diverse approaches. Some researchers adopted

the social identity theory that explains in-, and out-group identities draw the line between the self group and the other group in the third-person perception. Duck and colleagues (1995) argue perceptions of self-other differences regarding media vulnerability are influenced by the perceived salience of the social relationships between self and other, social identity, and differentiation from others. In this view, social identity generates motivation to identify with an in-group to which individuals perceive they belong, stimulating adaptive behavior in order to actualize social identity with the in-group (Banning, 2006). Scharrer (2002) suggests self-categorization theory in addition to the social identity theory as the explanations for the behavioral hypothesis of TPE. According to the self-categorization theory, the self-concept is in part determined by membership in social groups, and perceived similarities between the self and in-groups as well as perceived differences between the self and out-groups lead to the act of self-categorization into groups, which reinforces the group identification.

Some other researchers differentiated the process of reacting to the third-person perception by desirability of message. They assert people take a preventative reaction to presumed negative impacts of mediated messages while they accommodate presumed desirable impacts (Gunther, Bolt, Borzekowski, Liebhart, & Dillard, 2006). For example, if people believe viewing sexually explicit content in media will corrupt other people's morals, they may support censorship of such content in an effort to thwart the undesirable outcome. On the other hand, if people assume an advertisement would influence public opinion about what is fashionable and attractive, they may adopt the new fashions in the advertisement. Sun and colleagues (2008) also found perceived desirability of the message affects behavioral likelihood: The messages that were

perceived undesirable were related to a greater likelihood of engaging in corrective behaviors whereas the messages that were perceived desirable led to a greater likelihood of taking actions to amplify the messages.

In the current study, another approach to link the perceptual and behavioral components of the TPE is proposed in terms of psychological reactance. Psychological reactance, which is also called "boomerang effect," explains a phenomenon in which a message meant to move individuals in one direction actually moves them in the opposite direction. Reactance refers to "the motivational state that is hypothesized to occur when a freedom is eliminated or threatened with elimination" (Brehm & Brehm, 1981, p. 37). According to this theory, if an individual's freedom is reduced or threatened, this person would be motivationally aroused against any further loss of freedom or toward the re-establishment of the freedom (Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Burgoon, Alvaro, Grandpre, & Voulodakis, 2002). For example, if voters believe other voters would be more influenced by negative political campaign messages attacking their preferred candidate, they may feel threatened and will be motivated to react to the persuasive impacts of the message on others by turning out to vote in order to counteract the presumed influence of the message.

From the perspective of reactance theory, if people perceive a news article that is not consistent with their own opinion to have influence on others toward the opposite view from their own position, they might experience reactance from having their freedom to adopt their own opinion threatened by the news article. Then, they will attempt to re-establish their freedom by not taking the position indicated in the news article. Furthermore, they can more clearly re-establish the freedom to take their own

position by moving away from the position supported by the news article. For example, those who are against censorship would experience reactance if they read a news article covering an opinion poll results that the majority supports censorship because they would be afraid the results influence the public opinion and cause stricter censorship. As they feel their freedom is threatened, they might become more active in their advocacy. On the other hand, if the news article supports their own opinion, they would not experience reactance because their freedom is not threatened. Based on these assumptions drawn from reactance theory, the relationship between the perceptual and behavioral components of the TPE is expected to be differential depending on the message-subject consistency. Thus, a hypothesis predicting the consistency between participants' attitude and the position of the news article will moderate the relationship between the third-person perception and its consequences -- the change in attitude and behavioral intention -- is posited.

H5a: Message-subject inconsistency moderates the relationship between the third-person perception and behavioral intention change such that the relationship is stronger with inconsistent message.

H5b: Message-subject inconsistency moderates the relationship between the third-person perception and attitudinal change such that the relationship is stronger with inconsistent message.

In that people would react against the perceived influence of a news article if they believed its influence will result in a threat to their freedom (Brehm, 1966), psychological reactance might affect the association between the perceptual and behavioral components of the TPE. Whether the magnitude of threat has an effect on

the association between the perceptual and behavioral elements of the TPE is tested based on the assumption that the magnitude of reactance is positively associated with the strength of the threat to freedom (Brehm, 1966; Dillard & Shen, 2005). If individuals are threatened by the perception that a news article would have influence on others toward the opposite position of their own, they will react against the perceived influence of the news article. Those who have a stronger third-person perception will feel more threatened, and those who feel more threatened will show a stronger reactance behavior. Thus, the mediating role of threat in the relationship between the third-person perception and its consequences – the change in attitudes toward the restrictions and behavioral intention – is predicted.

H6a: Threat mediates the relationship between the third-person perception and the change in behavioral intention.

H6b: Threat mediates the relationship between the third-person perception and the change in attitude toward the restrictions.

The role of emotion. In the present study, emotion is also examined as a mediator in the relationship between the perceptual and behavioral components of the TPE. Although past TPE research has not tapped the emotional element of TPE, there are reasons to believe emotions play a role. Emotions are believed to be able to motivate adaptive behaviors in reaction to a message (Lazarus, 1991; Nabi, 1999). According to functional theories of emotions, when individuals perceive a stimulus in the environment, they evaluate the stimulus in terms of its significance for individual survival and well-being (Scherer, 2001). This appraisal leads to certain emotional states, and the action tendencies of the emotions are linked with physiological changes that

affect subsequent perceptions and behaviors (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989; Kepplinger, 2008; Lazarus, 1991; Nabi, 2003; Roseman & Smith, 2001). Thus, emotions can arouse behavioral intentions that are consistent with the specific emotions (Nerb & Spada, 2001). For example, anger is linked to the tendency to boycott while sadness is related with the tendency to help. In reactance research, negative emotions are expected to function as a catalyst to motivate people to engage in certain behaviors to re-establish their threatened freedom (Brehm, 1966). Empirical evidence indicates the mediating role of anger in reactance (Dillard & Shen, 2005; Quick, Bates, & Quinlan, 2009). Previous research has also found negative affect can produce an overestimation of risk, which in turn leads to risk averse and/or avoidance behavior (Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007).

In the TPE process, those who feel negative emotions because of the third-person perception would be more likely to react by adapting their behavior. Even if people perceive greater impacts on others, if they are not motivated to take action against the perceived impacts, the third-person perception would not be connected to their behavioral changes. Although not explicitly stated, support for the notion of emotions as a mediator of the relationship between the third-person perception and its behavioral consequence is implicit in many of the TPE studies. For example, the white officers who made the decision to withdraw African American troops in Iwo Jima during World War II would not have made that decision if they were not *worried* about the perceived influence of the Japanese leaflets on the African American troops (Davison, 1983). Hence, it would be worthwhile to explore the role of emotion in the TPE, particularly negative emotion such as fear or anxiety.

Hwang, Pan and Sun (2008) found the hostile media perception was associated with negative emotions labeled media indignation and this media indignation was, in turn, related with willingness to engage in discursive activities. That is, the emotional reactions mediated the hostile media perception and its behavioral consequences. The mechanism by which negative emotions mediate the association between the hostile media perception and its behavioral consequence might be applicable to the linkage between the third-person perception and its behavioral outcome. However, the nature of the negative emotions that are involved with the third-person perception is different from the media indignation such as anger, disgust, contempt, and resentment (Hwang et al., 2008).

In the TPE literature, fear is the most frequently used term for the emotional reactions (Cohen & Davis, 1991; Perloff, 2002; Price & Stroud, 2006; Wei & Lo, 2007). Fear is generally aroused when a situation is perceived as threatening to one's physical or psychological self (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). The action tendency of fear is to escape from and/or avoid the threatening agent in order to protect self from the physical or psychological threat (Frijda, 1986; Nabi, 1999). Thus, fear is considered the strongest emotion to motivate people to take avoidance actions responding to the fear-evoking situation (Nabi, 1999). In the TPE process, fear and its action tendency would be extended to the "feeling a need to protect vulnerable others" in response to the TPP of a message (Banning, 2006). In other words, the action tendency of fear might motivate individuals to react against the presumed negative impacts of the message on others. Nonetheless, the negative emotion elicited after the third-person perception is not exactly fear because the object of the feeling is not an imminent, concrete, and life

threatening danger (Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1984) but something that is expected to occur in the future.

The emotional state of uneasiness from the perception of negative influence on other people can be identified as anxiety, which is anticipatory and occurs under conditions of ambiguity (Lazarus, 1984), rather than fear. While fear results from exposure to danger, anxiety results from perceived threat of danger (Izard, 1977). However, as anxiety is described largely in terms of fear, it is also called "fear anticipation" (Izard, 1977, p. 376). That is, although anxiety is almost equivalent to fear, it is distinguished from fear in that it involves more cognitive process (anticipation). The term anxiety used by Marcus and colleagues reflects "mechanisms that already join cognitions with emotion" (Marcus & Mackuen, 1993). Like fear, anxiety has an adaptive function. When an individual foresees a negative event, anxiety prepares the individual to avoid it or prevent it from occurring (Izard, 1977). For example, Marcus and colleagues (2000) assert anxiety leads to such actions as more systematic information seeking and more active participation in elections. Hence, it can be predicted those who perceived a presumably negative impact of a message on others would feel anxiety because of the third-person perception, and this anxiety, in turn, would motivate them to react against the foreseen negative event.

H7a: Anxiety mediates the relationship between the third-person perception and the change in behavioral intention.

H7b: Anxiety mediates the relationship between the third-person perception and the change in attitude toward the restrictions.

Method

To test the hypotheses, an experiment was conducted with a 2 (message position: pro-restriction vs. anti-restriction) by 2 (subject position: pro-restriction vs. anti-restriction) by 2 (others: pro-restriction vs. anti-restriction) mixed factorial design with *message position* and *subject position* as between-subjects factors and *others* as a within-subjects factor.

Government restriction on violent TV content is the issue used in the current study. Pfau, Compton, Parker, An, Wittenberg, Ferguson, et al. (2006) found the issue of restricting TV violence represented a moderate involvement level among undergraduate students and the proportion of the participants who support the restrictions and those who oppose them was approximately even.

Procedure

A web-based experiment was created to investigate individuals' perceptions of news coverage of the results of opinion polls on the government restrictions on violent TV programming. Undergraduate students enrolled in communication courses at a Southwestern university volunteered to participate in the study in exchange for extra credit. The web address of the survey was provided for the participants to access the study at any location with internet connection.

The participants completed the pre-test questionnaire that included items about attitudes toward government restrictions on violent TV content (pre-stimulus attitude), behavioral intention regarding the restrictions (pre-stimulus behavioral intention), and their involvement level on the issue. Then, the participants were assigned to one of the pro-restriction and anti-restriction message position groups. The web-based online

questionnaire was programmed to assign each participant to one of the two groups randomly.

After being assigned to one of the groups, the participants were asked to read a newspaper article reporting public opinion poll results on the issue (see Appendix B). Then, they completed the post-test questionnaire which included items on attitudes toward government restrictions on violent TV contents (post-stimulus attitude), behavioral intention regarding the restrictions (post-stimulus behavioral intention), evaluation of the article, degree of threat, degree of anxiety, hostile media perception, and perceived effects of the report on self, supporters of the restrictions, and opponents of the restrictions.

In order to examine whether threat affects the relationship between the TPP and its consequences, half of the participants were given a threat inducement. Those in the threat inducement group read the news articles with an additional paragraph reporting government actions on violent TV programs. The paragraph, reporting the government will move toward the restrictions, was intended to increase threat among the opponents of the restrictions. Likewise, the paragraph reporting the government will move against the restrictions was intended to increase threat among the proponents of the restrictions.

In an effort to reinforce the threat inducement, a second phase of the study was conducted among those who participated in the first phase. The participants in the first phase of the study were emailed a link to the second study two days after completing the first phase of the study. The follow-up questionnaire for the second phase of the study included items about attitudes toward government restrictions on violent TV content and behavioral intention. After completing the pre-stimulus questionnaire,

participants read a news article that was similar to the one used in the first phase but indicated it was published more recently than the previous one. Then, the participants were asked about their attitudes toward government restriction on violent TV contents, behavioral intention, degree of threat, degree of anxiety, and perceived effects of the report on self, supporters of the restriction, and opponents of the restriction.

Stimuli

The pro-restriction message position group read a fictitious news article reporting an opinion poll result that the majority (70%) supports government regulations on violent television programming during hours when children might be watching. About half of the group was exposed to the same news article with an additional paragraph reporting Congress is moving toward government regulations that would restrict violent programs to late evening, as a way of inducing threat for those who are against the regulations. In the second phase, the group read a similar news article reporting opinion poll results that the majority (80%) supports the government regulations.

The anti-restriction message position group read a fictitious news article covering an opinion poll result that the majority (70%) opposes the government regulations. In order to induce threat for those who support the regulations, a paragraph on the Supreme Court's decision to deny a law dealing with violent television programming that would disable the movement of Congress toward the government regulations was added at the end of the article for half of the group. In the second phase, this group was provided with a similar news article about opinion poll results that the majority (80%) is against the government regulations.

The articles were created based on actual newspaper articles covering opinion poll results. The poll numbers in the news articles were modified, and the titles of the newspapers were replaced by the *Boston Post*, which does not currently exist, so that the participants believed they are reading a *Boston Post* article. The title of the fictitious newspaper was used in order to avoid copyright issues.

Measures

Attitude toward restrictions. Attitudes toward government restrictions on violent TV content were measured with a generic attitude scale developed by Burgoon, Cohen, Miller, and Montgomery (1978). This measure uses six 7-interval semantic differential-type items bounded by bipolar adjectives. Adjective pairs include: *wrong/right, negative/positive, unfavorable/favorable, unacceptable/acceptable, foolish/wise,* and *bad/good*. An attitude score was created by averaging the scores of the responses to the six items. Based on this measure before the exposure to the stimuli, the positions of participants were categorized into either pro-restriction or anti-restriction. Reliability for the measure was $\alpha = .93$. After the exposure to the stimuli, the same items were asked as the post-stimulus attitude items ($\alpha = .95$). Attitudinal change items were calculated by subtracting the pre-stimulus attitude items from the post-stimulus attitude items. By averaging the attitudinal change items, an attitudinal change score was created to be used as a dependent variable in testing H7b and H8b.

Behavioral intention. Behavioral intention was measured by asking the respondents three 7-interval items adapted from Sun and colleague's (2008) study on the behavioral component of the TPE: (a) I would sign a petition for regulating violent television programming; (b) I would e-mail or call a television station or government

agency to complain about violent content on television; (c) I would say that violent content should be banned from television show during hours when children might be watching if I am asked for a survey on the issue. Reliability for the measure was α = .79. After the exposure to the stimuli, the same items were asked as the post-stimulus behavioral intention items. Behavioral intention scores before and after stimulus, respectively, were created by averaging the scores of the responses to the three items. A behavioral intention change score was produced by subtracting the behavioral intention score measured before stimulus from the score measured after stimulus. This behavioral intention change score was used as a dependent variable in testing H7a and H8a.

Evaluation of article. The news articles were evaluated by a measure composed of three 7-interval semantic differential-type items bounded by bipolar adjectives, following Smith, Atkin, Martell, Allen, and Hembroff (2006) and Sherif and Hovland (1961). Adjective pairs include: *like/dislike, acceptable/objectionable* and *believable/unbelievable*. An evaluation of article score was created by averaging the scores of the responses to the items. Reliability for the score was α = .74.

Third-person perception (TPP). In order to measure the perceived effect, participants were asked the following questions: "Think about the effects that the report of poll results would have on you/restriction supporters/restriction opponents. Indicate the degree of the effects on a scale ranging from -3 for 'make more anti-restriction' to 3 for 'make more pro-restriction'. Overall, how much would you/restriction supporters/ restriction opponents be affected by the report?" (Lambe & McLeod, 2005). Then, the third-person perception (TPP) scores for supporters and opponents of the restrictions

were calculated by subtracting the score of the perceived effect on self from the scores of the perceived effect on supporters and opponents of the restrictions respectively, which means the TPPs on supporters and opponents of the restrictions were used separately in the analyses.

Involvement. Involvement level on the government restrictions on violent TV content was measured with eight 7-interval semantic differential scale items bounded by the following bipolar adjectives: *unimportant/important, irrelevant/relevant, insignificant/significant, inconsequential/consequential, unpleasant/pleasant, unpleasurable/pleasurable, not punishing/punishing,* and *unsatisfying/satisfying* (Miller & Averbeck, 2009). Reliability for the measure was $\alpha = .72$. An involvement index was created by averaging the scores of the responses to the eight items. In order to test the moderating role of involvement in the interaction among the factors of the TPP, a dichotomous involvement variable with high involvement (=1) and low involvement (=0) was produced from the involvement index. If a case has an involvement index higher than 4.2, it was coded as high involvement while a case with an involvement index of 4.2 or below was coded as low involvement.

Perceived orientation of report. In order to check whether the articles were perceived differently in terms of their orientation towards the government restrictions on violent TV content, two items were asked: The newspaper article made government restrictions on violent TV content seem 1) *likable/unlikable* and 2) *good/bad.* Scales ranging from 1 for 'unlikable' and 'bad' to 7 for 'likable' and 'good' were used. A perceived orientation of report score was created by averaging the scores of the responses to the two items. Reliability for the score was $\alpha = .86$.

Hostile media perception. Hostile media perception (HMP) was measured by participants' evaluation of the news article in terms of its bias against pro-restriction or anti-restriction. The measure employed in previous research was adapted and utilized for this study (Vallone et al., 1985; Giner-Sorolla and Chaiken, 1994; Arpan & Raney, 2003). The perceived bias of the news reports of opinion poll results was measured by four items: 1) The article is biased against/in favor of the government restrictions on violent TV content, 2) The writer of the article is biased against/in favor of the government restrictions on violent TV content, 3) The newspaper that printed the article is biased against/in favor of the government restrictions on violent TV content, and 4) The poll results are biased against/in favor of the government restrictions on violent TV content. These items utilized a 7-point scale from -3 for 'greatly biased against the restrictions' to +3 for 'greatly biased in favor of the restrictions'. Responses were averaged to yield the HMP score. Reliability for the score was $\alpha = .87$.

Degree of Threat. To assess whether participants perceived the news article to threaten or eliminate their freedom to retain their own attitude, three items adapted from the measure employed in Dillard and Shen's (2005) study was used. The measure on a scale of -3 for 'strongly disagree' to 3 for 'strongly agree' included: (a) I feel the news article tries to manipulate me on the issue; (b) I feel the news article tries to pressure me on the issue; and (c) I feel the news article threatens my freedom to choose my own opinion on the issue. The original measure used by Dillard and Shen (2005) had one more item, "The message tried to make a decision for me", but this item was not included in the current study because it did not seem to fit the context of the study. A

degree of threat score was created by averaging the scores of the responses to the three items. Reliability for the measure was $\alpha = .89$.

Degree of anxiety. Anxiety was measured by 3 items adapted from the emotion scale used in Meirick, Nisbett, and Kim's study (2010). This scale includes: *afraid*, *feeling threatened*, and *worried*. These items utilized a 7-point scale from 1 for 'not at all' to 7 for 'very much'. Averaging the responses to the 3 items created a degree of anxiety score. Reliability for the score was $\alpha = .76$.

Results

Data Set

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in order to reinforce threat inducement, the participants completed a second phase of the study, in which they read another news article and completed a questionnaire, two days after their participation in the first phase. However, a repeated-measures ANOVA with time (Phase1/Phase2) as a within-subjects factor, message position and subject position as between-subjects factors, and degree of threat as a criterion variable indicated the level of threat was not significantly different between Phase1 and Phase2, F (1, 281) = .10, p = .75. Although the degree of threat was higher in the Phase 2 for those participants with threat inducement, the difference was not statistically significant, F (1, 281) = 2.63, p = .11, η^2 = .01. In addition, other DVs – behavioral intention and attitude toward restrictions – in the two phases were compared respectively in order to examine if there were any significant differences between the two phases in terms of the DVs. No statistically significant differences were observed, $t_{behavior}$ (288) = -.50, p = .62; $t_{attitude}$ (288) = .07, p = .94. Other differences between the groups and relationships among the variables that had been hypothesized did not show significant differences between the two phases. As the level of threat was not heightened, and no other DVs, group differences, and relationships among variables changed significantly in the second phase, only the data from the first phase were used for the analyses that follow.

Also, as the half of the groups who were exposed to threat-inducing news article did not show significant differences from the other half with no threat-inducement in

terms of the threat level, F (1, 323) = 2.29, p = .13, $\eta^2 < .01$, they were collapsed into each message position group.

Before data analyses, those who did not give the correct answer for a reading comprehension question were excluded from the analyses. If a participant did not understand which side (i.e., pro-restriction or anti-restriction) the majority was reported to support, it would be problematic to assume the perceived effect of the message position was properly measured. Therefore, the reading comprehension question asked the participants which position on the government restrictions on violent TV programming the majority supported according to the news article they read. Sixty-one out of 431 (14%) participants did not give the correct answer.

As mentioned in the previous section, the participants were assigned to one of the two subject position groups -- pro-restriction/anti-restriction -- depending on their attitude score. The participants with the attitude score lower than 4.1 (mean attitude score) were categorized as the pro-restriction group while those with the attitude score of 4.1 or higher were categorized as the anti-restriction group.

In addition, the time taken by the participants to complete the first phase of the study was examined (M = 16 min., SD = 8 min.). The cases with less than five minutes and more than 50 minutes were excluded from the analyses because five minutes was considered below the minimum time to competently complete the questionnaire and 50 minutes was approximately 4 SD above the mean. The final sample included 331 cases with 177 in the pro-restriction subject position group and 154 in the anti-restriction subject position group.

There were no significant differences between the original and final samples in terms of age (original sample: $M = 19.8$, $SD = 1.96$; final sample: $M = 19.9$, $SD = 1.44$), sex (original sample: female 62.4%; final sample: female 61.6%), and ethnicity (original sample: White 77.6%; final sample: White 79.2%).

Data Analyses

For a manipulation check, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The responses to the manipulation check item, perceived orientation of report, were compared by two message position groups – pro-restriction vs. anti-restriction. As intended, subjects in the pro-restriction message position group evaluated the news article they read as more pro-restriction oriented ($M = 4.93$, $SE = .11$) than subjects in the anti-restriction message position group ($M = 3.77$, $SE = .13$); $t\ (329) = 7.12$, $p < .001$, $d = .79$).

To test whether the exposure to a news report of opinion poll results affects people's attitudes toward the government restrictions on violent TV programming (H1), a repeated-measures ANOVA with time (pre/post-stimulus) as a within-subjects factor and attitude toward restrictions as a criterion variable was conducted. The results indicate a significant main effect of time on the attitude toward restrictions, $F\ (1, 330) = 14.78$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$. The participants became less supportive toward the restrictions after their exposure to the news articles ($M_{pre} = 4.05$, $SE = .07$; $M_{post} = 3.83$, $SE = .08$). Hence, H1 was supported.

In order to test the HMP that opposing parties would be more likely to perceive the news article that is inconsistent with their own opinion as biased (H2), an ANOVA with message-participant inconsistency as a between-subjects factor and HMP as a

dependent variable was performed. Unlike the prediction, however, the participants were not more likely to perceive the news report that was inconsistent with their own view as biased ($M_{consistent}$ = 4.86, *SE* = .12; $M_{inconsistent}$ = 4.60, *SE* = 11), *F* (1, 329) = 2.62, *p* = .11, $\eta^2 < .01$. Thus, H2 was not supported.

In order to test H3a/H3b and H4, a repeated-measures ANOVA using others as a within-subjects factor and message position, subject position, and involvement as between-subjects factors was conducted. TPP was entered as a criterion variable. The results indicate the 3-way interaction not statistically significant, *F* (1, 323) = .02, *p* = .90, $\eta^2 < .01$. (see Table 1).

The 3-way interaction effect among message position, subject position, and others proposed in H3a/H3b was based on past research indicating TPP of a desirable message is greater for the in-group than for the out-group. On the other hand, TPP of an undesirable message is greater for the out-group than for the in-group. In that the desirability of a message is subjective depending on the participants' view on the issue, it was assumed the participants would evaluate a message that is consistent with their own view as more desirable while evaluating a message that is inconsistent with their own view as more undesirable. In the test of H3a and H3b, H3a was to test the case with a more desirable message, which is consistent with the participants' view. H3b was to test the case with a more undesirable message, which is inconsistent with the participants' view.

H3a predicted those who read the news articles of opinion polls indicating the majority supports their own view (message-subject consistency) would show a smaller TPP for the opponents of their view than for the supporters of their view. That is, those

who favor government restrictions and read a pro-restriction article would exhibit a smaller TPP for opponents of restriction when compared to supporters of restriction. Those who are opposed to restriction and read an anti-restriction article would exhibit a smaller TPP for supporters of restriction when compared to opponents of restriction.

However, in the present study, opponents of the restrictions who read the anti-restriction article showed a greater TPP for supporters (M = 1.14, SE = .24) than for opponents (M = -.39, SE = .23). Supporters of the restrictions who read the pro-restrictions article showed a smaller TPP – the first-person perception -- for opponents (M = -1.39, SE = .21) than for supporters (M = 1.02, SE = .21) (see Figure 1). Thus, H3a was supported only among the supporters of the restrictions.

For additional information, opponents of the restrictions who read the anti-restriction article perceived supporters of the restrictions would be influenced toward the restriction most (M = 4.70, SE = .20), they themselves would be influenced next (M = 3.56, SE = .18), and opponents of the restrictions would be influenced least (M = 3.17, SE = .24). Supporters of the restrictions who read the pro-restriction article perceived supporters of the restrictions would be influenced toward the restriction most (M = 5.68, SE = .18), they themselves would be influenced next (M = 4.65, SE = .16), and opponents of the restrictions would be influenced least (M = 3.26, SE = .17).

H3b predicted those who read the news articles reporting the majority supports the opposite position from their own view (message-subject inconsistency) would show a greater TPP for the opponents of their view than for the supporters of their own view: Those who favor government restriction and read an anti-restriction article would exhibit a greater TPP for opponents of restriction when compared to supporters of

restriction; Those who are opposed to restriction and read a pro-restriction article would exhibit a greater TPP for supporters of restriction when compared to opponents of restriction.

The results indicate opponents of the restrictions who read the pro-restriction article showed a greater TPP for supporters (M = 2.24, SE = .20) than for opponents of the restrictions (M = -.36, SE = .19), supporting the hypothesis. However, supporters of the restrictions who read the anti-restriction article showed a smaller TPP – the first-person perception -- for opponents (M = -.80, SE = .19) than for supporters (M = .72, SE = .20) (see Figure 1). Hence, H3b was supported only among the opponents of the restrictions.

H4 predicted the moderating effect of involvement on the 3-way interaction among message position, subject position, and others in terms of the TPP. Highly involved individuals were expected to show a greater differential TPP. However, the results of the repeated-measures ANOVA demonstrate the 4-way interaction among involvement, message position, subject position, and others was not statistically significant, F (1, 323) = .65, p = .42, $\eta^2 < .01$ (see Table 1). Hence, H4 was not supported.

The moderating effects of message-subject inconsistency on the relationships between the TPP and its consequences were proposed in H5a and H5b. In order to examine these hypotheses, two separate regression analyses were conducted. Message-subject inconsistency, TPP for supporters, TPP for opponents, interaction between message-subject inconsistency and TPP for supporters, and interaction between message-subject inconsistency and TPP for opponents were entered as predictors.

Behavioral intention change and attitudinal change were entered as a dependent variable respectively.

H5a predicted the moderating role of message-subject inconsistency on the relationship between the TPPs and behavioral intention change such that the relationship is stronger when the participants read a news article that is inconsistent with their own position. However, as Table 2 indicates, the interactions between the TPPs and message-subject inconsistency on behavioral intention change were not statistically significant. Hence, H5a was not supported.

H5b predicted the moderating role of message-subject inconsistency on the relationship between the TPPs and attitudinal change such that the relationship is stronger when the participants read a news article that is inconsistent with their own position. Results of the regression analysis demonstrate the interaction between the TPP for supporters and message-subject inconsistency was close to significance ($\beta = .18$, $p = .09$) (see Table 3). However, unlike the prediction, the association was stronger in the case of message-subject consistency rather than message-subject inconsistency (see Figure 2). The interaction between the TPP for opponents and message-subject inconsistency was not statistically significant (see Table 3). Thus, H5b was not supported.

To examine the mediating roles of threat (H6a/H6b) and anxiety (H7a/H7b) on the relationships between the TPPs and behavioral intention change and attitudinal change, regression analyses were performed with the TPPs and degree of threat/anxiety as predictors and behavioral intention change and attitudinal change as a dependent variable respectively. Baron and Kenny (1986) suggest the following steps to test

mediation: (a) the independent variable (IV) is significantly related to the dependent variable (DV); (b) the IV is significantly related to the mediator; and (c) when the IV and the mediator are both used to predict the DV, the mediator should be a significant predictor, and the relationship between the IV and the DV should decrease (partial mediation) or should be reduced to be non-significant (full mediation). However, according to Hayes (2009), even if an IV is not related to a DV, it is possible for a mediator to be causally between the IV and the DV. That is, an IV can exert an indirect effect on a DV through a mediator without a significant association between the IV and DV. A total effect can be the sum of many different paths of direct and indirect effects, but not all of the paths may be included in the model. For example, if two or more indirect effects exist between the IV and DV and the effects work in the opposite directions, the association between the IV and DV might be nonsignificant. Therefore, if researchers stop testing the indirect effect because the association between the IV and DV is not significant, the indirect effect cannot be detected even though the effect actually exists. Although the Sobel test is recommended as an inferential technique to test indirect effects, it requires the assumption that the sampling distribution of the indirect effect is normal (Hayes, 2009). Given the relatively small size of the sample used in the current study, it did not seem appropriate to use the Sobel test. Thus, in the following analyses, whether 1) the threat and anxiety are predicted by the IVs and 2) the threat and anxiety predict the DV were examined regardless of the significance of the associations between the IVs and the DV.

First, whether threat mediates the associations between the TPPs and behavioral intention change was tested by two regression analyses. A regression analysis with the

TPPs as IVs and degree of threat as a DV showed the TPPs were significantly related with degree of threat ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$ for TPP for supporters; $\beta = .16$, $p < .01$ for TPP for opponents) (see Table 4). However, another regression analysis with the TPPs and degree of threat as IVs and behavioral intention change as a DV indicates degree of threat was not a significant predictor of the behavioral intention change controlling for the TPPs ($\beta = .02$, $p = .74$) (see Table 5 and Figure 3). With attitudinal change as a DV, degree of threat was not a significant predictor of attitudinal change controlling for the TPPs ($\beta = -.08$, $p = .13$), either (see Table 6 and Figure 4). Hence, H6a and H6b were not supported.

Next, the mediation of anxiety on the associations between the TPPs and its consequences was tested. The results of a regression analysis with the TPPs as IVs and degree of anxiety as a DV demonstrated the TPPs were significantly related with degree of anxiety ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$ with TPP for supporters; $\beta = .12$, $p < .05$ with TPP for opponents). Another regression analysis with the TPPs and degree of anxiety as IVs and behavioral intention change as a DV was conducted. The results indicate degree of anxiety was not significantly associated with the DV controlling for the TPPs ($\beta = -.01$, $p = .85$). Therefore, H7a was not supported (see Figure 5). On the other hand, with attitudinal change as a DV, degree of anxiety was statistically significantly associated with the DV controlling for the TPPs ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .05$). H7b was supported (see Figure 6).

Discussion

Issues on Findings

This study investigated the differential TPP of the news reports of opinion poll results by subject position, message position, and others position and how the TPP is related with attitudinal change and behavioral intention change. The findings demonstrate participants' attitude toward the government restrictions on violent TV programming changed after they read a news report of opinion poll results (H1). The relative HME on the news report of opinion poll results was not supported by the data (H2). The subject position, message position, and others' position on the TPP did not interact with one another (H3a/H3b). H3a was supported only among the supporters of the restrictions. H3b was supported only among the opponents of the restrictions. The moderating effect of involvement on the 3-way interaction (H4) was not supported. The moderating effect of message-subject consistency on the relationship between the TPPs and behavioral intention change/attitudinal change was not confirmed (H5a/H5b). Regarding the mediating role of threat and anxiety on the relationship between the TPP and attitudinal change, anxiety partially mediated the relationship while threat did not (H6b/H7b). The mediating roles of threat and anxiety on the relationship between the TPP and behavioral intention change were not supported as threat and anxiety were not statistically associated with the behavioral intention change (H6a/H7a).

In the current chapter, several additional issues regarding the results are discussed. First of all, the attitude change of the respondents after their exposure to the message is further examined. The results of the repeated-measures ANOVA with time (pre/post-stimulus) as a within-subjects factor indicate participants' attitude toward the

government restrictions on violent TV programming changed after they read a news report of opinion poll results (H1). Two between-subjects factors – message position and subject position – were added to the analysis in order to examine whether message position and/or subject position affect the attitudinal change. The results of the repeated-measure ANOVA with message position and subject position as between-subjects factors and time as a within-subjects factor indicate the interaction between time and attitude is statistically significant, F (1, 327) = 16.76, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$. The participants who favored the government restrictions became less supportive toward the restrictions after their exposure to the message regardless of the message position (M_{pre} = 5.03, SE = .06; M_{post} = 4.61, SE = .09). On the other hand, those who were against the restrictions did not show any significant differences, (M_{pre} = 2.91, SE = .06; M_{post} = 2.95, SE = .09). The main effect of message position was not statistically significant, F (1, 327) = .30, p = .59, and message position did not interact with subject position over time, F (1, 327) = .84, p = .36. These results demonstrate the exposure to the message had impacts on the supporters of the restrictions, but the message position did not have a direct effect on the participants' attitude change.

In addition, according to Worchel and Brehm (1970) and Wright (1986), people's attitude or view shifts away from a communication when the communication is pro-attitudinal. When the communication is counter-attitudinal, the fact that they disagree with the communication establishes their freedom to hold a contrary position. On the other hand, those who initially agreed with the communication do not have the freedom to choose their own opinion, so they show higher levels of reactance relative to those who initially disagreed with the communication. This theory might explain why

those who supported the restrictions became less supportive toward the restriction after their exposure to the pro-restriction article.

The second issue is regarding why the relative HMP was not observed in the present study. The HMP hypothesis predicted opposing parties would perceive the news article that was inconsistent with their own opinion as more biased (H2). This relative HMP hypothesis was based on the assumption that regardless of whether news content is objectively neutral or not, opposing groups would show differential perception on how much the news article is biased (Gunther, Christen, Liebhart, & Chia, 2001). The opponents of the restrictions would perceive the pro-restriction article more biased than the proponents of the restrictions while the anti-restriction article would be perceived as more biased by the proponents than by the opponents of the restrictions. However, the results of the current study demonstrate the pro-restriction article reporting the majority is in favor of the restrictions was perceived as more inclined toward the restrictions by supporters of the restrictions (M = 5.52, SE = .11) than opponents the restrictions (M = 5.17, SE = .12). The anti-restriction article reporting the majority is against the restrictions was perceived as neutral by both the proponents (M = 4.06, SE = .15) and the opponents of the restrictions (M = 4.00, SE = .18).

A possible explanation is related with the type of involvement the participants had regarding the issue. According to Choi, Yang, and Chang (2009), outcome-relevant involvement, which is elicited by the relevance of an issue to oneself, may lead to systematic processing of information. Therefore, those with outcome-relevant involvement might not reject a message just because it is inconsistent with their own position (Choi et al., 2009). In that HMP is a biased perception, people might be less

likely to show the HMP when they process messages more systematically. In this study, the restrictions on violent TV programming might have elicited outcome-relevant involvement rather than value-relevant involvement among the participants who feel the issue as personally important. If different issues that elicit value-relevant involvement rather than outcome-relevant involvement were chosen for the study, the HMP might have been manifested.

The next issue involves the 3-way interaction among message position, subject position, and others on the TPP predicted in H3a and H3b. The hypotheses were not fully supported. The opponents of the restrictions who read the anti-restriction article were expected to show a greater TPP for their in-group than out-group, but the results indicate a greater TPP for supporters (out-group) than for opponents (in-group). The supporters of the restrictions who read the anti-restriction article were expected to show a greater TPP for their out-group than in-group, but they showed a smaller TPP, actually the first-person perception, for the opponents (out-group) than supporters (in-group). The opponents of the restrictions showed a similar level of TPPs on the pro-restriction (M = -.36, SE = .19) and the anti-restriction articles (M = -.38, SE = .23) for their in-group.

This phenomenon might be partly explained by the fact that the opponents of the restrictions did not evaluate differently for the pro-restriction article (M = 3.50, SE = .15) and the anti-restriction article (M = 3.66, SE = .14), t (152) = -.74, $p > .05$. The 3-way interaction was predicted based on the assumption that the articles would be evaluated differently depending on the message-subject consistency. If the news article was consistent with the participants' position, it would be judged as more desirable and

acceptable, therefore, they would suppose in-group members, those who have the same view as theirs, would be more influenced by the article than out-group members. However, as the evaluations of the pro- and anti-restriction articles were not significantly different, particularly among the opponents of the restrictions, the differential TPP was not manifested.

Interestingly, whereas the 3-way interaction was not supported, a 2-way interaction effect between others and message position was statistically significant, F (1, 323) = 11.96, $p < .01$, $\eta 2 = .03$. The TPP for supporters of the restrictions was greater in the pro-restriction message position condition ($M = 1.64$, $SE = .14$) than in the anti-restriction message position condition ($M = .93$, $SE = .15$). The first person perception for opponents of the restrictions was also greater in the pro-restriction message position group ($M = -.82$, $SE = .14$) than in the anti-restriction message position group ($M = -.60$, $SE = .15$). That is, supporters of the restrictions were perceived to be more susceptible to the pro-restriction article than the participants themselves while opponents of the restrictions were perceived to be less susceptible to the pro-restriction article than the participants themselves. These results are consistent with the target corollary of TPE theory: Perceived susceptibility of a particular target group may affect the direction and magnitude of the TPP (Lambe & McLeod, 1995; Scharrer, 2002). TPP is affected by people's predisposition regarding the vulnerability of the target group on the message. These results suggest the perceived effect of a message is largely influenced by the perceiver's predisposition on the message and its target group.

While the interaction between message position and others was significant, there was no interaction between subject position and others. This might be because the

participants did not fully identify themselves with their in-groups. Although the attitude toward the government restrictions on violent TV programming was significantly different by subject position (M = 5.03, SE = .06 for the supporters; M = 2.93, SE = .07 for the opponents), t (329) = 24.53, $p < .001$, it is possible that the participants in the pro-restriction subject position group did not identify themselves as the members of the group of supporters of the restrictions, and they did not perceive opponents of the restrictions as their out-group. According to the social identity theory, the salience of a group membership is one of the core components of the formation and effect of the social identity (Tajfel, 1982). The effect of in-group favorableness increases as the size of the in-group decreases and the salience of in-group membership increases (Gerard & Hoyt, 1974). In the current study, the participants might not have had a strong sense of in-group membership. The concept of the "supporters of the restrictions" might have been too vague or abstract to be considered as an in-group. Moreover, they would not have had any motivation to identify themselves as supporters or opponents of the restrictions. Therefore, the lack of sense of in-group membership might have caused the non-differential TPP by subject position and others.

Another possible explanation involves emotional involvement. Ellemers, Kortekaas, and Ouwerkerk (1999) assert people are more likely to identify with a particular social group when they feel affective commitment to the group. According to Ellemers and colleagues, although cognitive awareness that they are members of certain group – self-categorization – is one component of social identity theory, the emotional involvement or commitment result in differential responses in terms of in-group identification. In the current study, it is possible the participants did not feel sufficient

emotional involvement with the presumed in-group although they recognized that they were closer to the group. That is, their affective commitment was not enough for them to identify themselves with a certain group.

The next issue is concerned with behavioral intention change. In the present study, participants did not change their behavioral intention while their attitude changed. The results of a repeated-measures ANOVA with time (pre/post-stimulus) as a within-subjects factor, message position and subject position as between-subjects factors and behavioral intention as DV demonstrate the participants' behavioral intention did not change after their exposure to the news articles (M_{pre} = 3.09; M_{post} = 3.06), F (1, 327) = .23, p = .63. Furthermore, behavioral intention was not associated with the TPP. It can be inferred the effect of the TPP on attitudinal change was not linked to behavioral intention change. The TPP of the stimuli might not have been enough to affect the moderately involved college students to change their behavioral intention.

It is also possible that, as Glynn and colleagues (2004) point out, the attitude measure and the behavioral intention measure may not have been measuring what they were intended to. For example, the attitude toward the government restrictions might be different from the attitude toward the actual behaviors to support the government restrictions such as signing a petition or calling a TV station. If attitudes toward the behaviors to support the government restrictions were asked separately, the attitudinal change might have been better linked to the behavioral intention change.

The next issue is related with psychological reactance. Psychological reactance, measured by threat, was expected to help explain the linkage between the TPP and its behavioral consequences – behavioral intention change and attitudinal change

(H6a/H6b). However, the results indicate threat did not mediate the associations between the TPP and behavioral intention change and attitudinal change. Past research on this psychological reactance and the relationship between TPP and voting behavior in the context of political advertising found psychological reactance to political advertising was greater for out-group candidate ads than for in-group candidate ads (Meirick, et al., 2010). Meirick and colleagues (2010) also found a positive relationship between reactance and the TPP for out-group members on out-group candidate ads, controlling for candidate favorability and political knowledge. In that voting could be an action for freedom restoration in the political context, it can be predicted the effect of TPP on voting behavior would be mediated by the psychological reactance. On the other hand, the results of the current study demonstrate threat was not associated with attitudinal change controlling for the TPPs although the TPP was associated with threat.

This inconsistency between the results of the present study and the past study might result from the use of different measures of reactance. In the current study, reactance was measured by three items asking perceived threat of the article on the freedom to choose an opinion. However, Meirick and colleagues measured reactance with four items asking perceived threat on the freedom in general. It is possible the level of threat on the specific issue stayed under consciousness, so the variation of threat was not enough to be detected in the association with the behavioral intention change and attitudinal change.

Finally, the findings of the present study support the prediction that anxiety mediates the association between the TPP and attitudinal change. The perception that a message would have influence on others to become more favorable toward the

restrictions than on the participants themselves – the TPP of the message – was significantly related with the participants' attitude change, and anxiety mediated the relationship. Additional analyses indicate the mediation was statistically significant only among the opponents of the restrictions (see Figure 7). The associations among the variables were examined separately for the supporters and opponents of the restrictions. The results demonstrate the TPPs were not statistically significantly associated with anxiety among the supporters of the restrictions ($\beta = .07$, $p = .33$ for TPP for supporters; $\beta = .06$, $p = .40$ for TPP for opponents). On the other hand, among the opponents of the restrictions, the TPP on supporters of the restrictions was significantly associated with the anxiety ($\beta = .21$, $p < .01$). The opponents of the restrictions who perceived that supporters of the restrictions would be more influenced toward the restrictions (those who showed a higher TPP on the supporters) were likely to become more anxious. And, those with higher anxiety were more likely to become less supportive of the restrictions (to reinforce their opposition to the restrictions) ($\beta = -.20$, $p < .05$). It should be noted anxiety is involved in the association between the TPP and attitudinal change as a mediator or motivator only among the opponents of the restrictions.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of the study. First of all, the study was conducted in only one context – government restrictions on violent TV programming. If more issues that elicit different types of involvements such as value-relevant involvement and different levels of involvement such as higher involvement were included in the study, it would have been possible to compare the results and draw a conclusion regarding

whether the prepositions on the HMP and the differential TPP were not supported because the issue elicited a wrong kind of involvement or due to lack of involvement. For future research, more studies examining the TPE in diverse contexts with different types and levels of involvement and different types of emotion are suggested.

Another limitation of the study is that the self-reported behavioral intention change might not be the same as the actual behavioral change. Also, the attitude measured in the current study might not be able to be considered as one of the behavioral consequences of TPP. However, participants' action of responding to the question on their attitude itself could be considered as a kind of behavior. The behavior of expressing their opinion should have been brought about through some psychological processes after their exposure to a message (Glynn et al., 2004). In this sense, attitudinal change should be able to be considered as one of the behavioral outcomes of the TPP.

In addition, Pearson's correlation coefficients between the measures revealed degree of threat and degree of anxiety are highly correlated with each other ($r = .54$, $p < .01$) (see Table 8). Although it is hard to completely separate one type of affect from the other, it would be necessary to clearly define these two measures so that the problem of whether it is anxiety or threat that mediates the relationship between TPP and its consequences or both could be resolved.

Contribution to Theory

Despite the limitations, the current study contributes to the TPE research by revealing the role of anxiety as a mediator in the linkage between TPP and attitudinal change. There has not been any previous research that confirmed the mediating role of

any type of affect in the relationship. Given the inconsistent findings on the linkage between TPP and its consequences, the investigation of other external factors influencing the relationship should be meaningful.

In addition, the present study attempted to induce stronger threat among the participants by adding a phrase indicating more urgent threat and another phase of the study but the findings indicate these methods employed did not influence the threat level. These findings might be helpful for future research that requires threat induction or management in the context of news coverage on social issues.

Conclusion

In that poll results are expected to represent what is the public opinion on dominant issues in the society (Lewis, 2001), the news reports of poll results may function as a kind of agenda setter (Higgins, 2008). Nonetheless, the direct effect of the poll results has been debated for several decades (de Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Hardmeier, & Roth, 2001; Lang & Lang, 1984; Mendelsohn & Crespi, 1970; Navazio, 1977). The present study approaches the effect of the public opinion poll reports from the perspective of TPE. Given the past research on the TPP and its consequences, it should be reasonable to assume TPP of the news reports of opinion poll results would have effects on individuals' attitudes on social issues and policies, which, in turn, would affect public opinion. Thus, this study examined the differential TPP of the opinion poll reports and whether and how this is associated with individuals' attitude change on the government restrictions on violent TV programming.

The findings of the present study indicate the participants' attitude on the issue changed after their exposure to the opinion poll results, and the change was associated

with TPP. More interestingly, the association between the TPP and the attitudinal change was mediated by anxiety: The participants with greater TPP were more likely to become anxious, and those with higher anxiety, in turn, were more likely to change their attitude. As emotions are not separate from cognition but integrated with it in almost every human activity (Lazarus, Coyne, & Folkman, 1984; Plutchik, 1962), it is no wonder emotions play an important role in the formulation and expression of public opinion (Glynn et al., 2004). Particularly, anxiety has been studied as an important concept in psychological theory and research (Izard, 1977). Some scholars in political science also have noticed anxiety as one of the influential affects in political arena (Marcus & Mackuen, 1993; Marcus et al., 2000). The present study demonstrates the motivating role of anxiety in the relationship between the TPP and its consequences.

It should also be noted message position and others position interacted with each other. According to the target corollary of TPE theory, perceived susceptibility of a particular target group may affect the direction and magnitude of the TPP (Lambe & McLeod, 1995; Scharrer, 2002). The findings in the current study indicate supporters of the restrictions were perceived to be more susceptible to the pro-restriction article than the participants themselves while opponents of the restrictions were perceived to be less susceptible to the pro-restriction article than the participants themselves. In addition, when mediated information or messages are not consistent with their pre-existing moral, culture, standards, or attitudes, people tend to feel anxious and intend to remove the uneasiness by rejecting or condemning the source. Likewise, people tend to accuse public opinion polls of being biased and bad influence on others when the results are different from their own values and standards. That is, TPP is affected by people's

predisposition regarding the target group and the message. These results demonstrate the predisposition of the human mind affects people's perception of media influence. In this sense it should be true "every opinion is a marriage of information and predisposition: information to form a mental picture of the given issue, and predisposition to motivate some conclusion about it" (Zaller, 1992, p. 6).

For future research, further endeavor could be made to examine whether and how some other types of emotions affect the TPE. In addition, the association between the TPP and its consequences could be examined in diverse contexts with different types and levels of involvement. Some results of the current study are not clear-cut and there is the possibility that the involvement type and level elicited in the study was not appropriate. If the associations between the TPP and its consequences can be compared in the contexts with different types (i.e., value-relevant involvement vs. outcome-relevant involvement) and levels (i.e., high-involvement vs. low-involvement) of involvement, whether the pattern of the association is clearly manifested in different contexts could be clarified.

Despite the limitations previously mentioned, the present study contributes to the TPE research by confirming people's predisposition on a message and its target group affects the perceived effect of the message and revealing human emotion, particularly anxiety, plays a role as a mediator in the association between the TPP and attitudinal change.

Endnote

[1] As people usually have multiple group memberships that vary in terms of relative importance in the self-concept, salience of a group membership comes up as one of the core components of the social identity theory. To the extent that an individual's social identification is salient in a particular context, the individual recognizes features distinguishing the own group from other groups (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Tajfel, 1982), and "self-perception and conduct become in-group stereotypical and normative" (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 260). If the existence of other groups has little psychological impact on individuals, or the individuals' membership of their own group is not important for them, group distinctiveness does not influence "the formation of the self-image or of a 'positive social identity'" (Tajfel, 1982, p. 491). Thus, the 'salience' of in- and out-group, intergroup relations, is a theoretical baseline of the theory (Tajfel, 1982).

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Table 1

Effects of Interactions among the Factors of the TPP

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Squared
Others	605.00	1	605.00	203.87	< 0.01	0.38
Others x Att	0.08	1	0.08	0.03	0.87	< 0.01
Others x News	33.89	1	33.89	11.42	< 0.01	0.02
Others x Invl	0.83	1	0.83	0.28	0.60	< 0.01
Others x Att x News	0.05	1	0.05	0.02	0.90	< 0.01
Others x Att x Invl	1.51	1	1.51	0.51	0.48	< 0.01
Others x News x Invl	0.13	1	0.13	0.04	0.84	< 0.01
Others x Att * News * Invl	1.94	1	1.94	0.65	0.42	< 0.01
Error (others)	958.55	323	2.97			

Note. Tests of within-subjects effects. "Others" indicate perceived effects on proponents/opponents of the restrictions, "Att" indicates subject position (pro-/anti-restriction), "News" indicates message position (pro-/anti-restriction), and "Invl" indicates high/low involvement.

Table 2

Behavioral Intention Change by TPP and Message-Subject Inconsistency

	Behavioral Intention Change	
Variable	B	Beta
Constant	0.05 (0.10)	
Inconsistency	-0.11 (0.13)	-0.06
TPP_S	< 0.01 (0.04)	-0.01
TPP_O	0.03 (0.05)	0.07
TPP_S * Inconsistency	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.02
TPP_O* Inconsistency	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.09
R^2	0.01	
Adjusted R^2	< 0.01	
F	0.37	

Note: Numbers in ( ) are standard errors.

Table 3

Attitudinal Change by TPP and Message-Subject Inconsistency

	Attitudinal Change	
Variable	B	Beta
Constant	-0.05 (0.12)	
Inconsistency	-0.20 (0.15)	-0.10
TPP_S	-0.15 (0.05)	-0.28**
TPP_O	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.12
TPP_S * Inconsistency	0.11 (0.06)	0.18*
TPP_O* Inconsistency	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.01
R^2	0.06	
Adjusted R^2	0.05	
F	4.12**	

Note: Numbers in ( ) are standard errors.

*$p < .10$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Relationship between the TPPs and Threat

	Threat	
Variable	B	Beta
Constant	2.86 (0.11)	
TPP_S	0.13 (0.04)	0.17*
TPP_O	0.13 (0.04)	0.16*
R^2	0.07	
Adjusted R^2	0.06	
F	11.61**	

Note: Numbers in ( ) are standard errors.

*$p < .01$, ** $p < .001$.

Table 5

Effect of Threat on Behavioral Intention Change

	Behavioral Intention Change	
Variable	B	Beta
Constant	-0.06 (0.12)	
TPP_S	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.03
TPP_O	-0.01 (0.03)	0.01
Threat	0.01 (0.03)	0.02
R^2	< 0.001	
Adjusted R^2	< 0.001	
F	0.11	

Note: Numbers in ( ) are standard errors.

Table 6

Effect of Threat on Attitudinal Change

	Attitudinal Change	
Variable	B	Beta
Constant	-0.01 (0.13)	
TPP_S	-0.07 (0.03)	-0.14*
TPP_O	-0.07 (0.03)	-0.13*
Threat	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.08
R^2	0.06	
Adjusted R^2	0.05	
F	6.52**	

Note: Numbers in ( ) are standard errors.

*p < .05, ** p < .001.

Table 7

Differential Attitudinal Change by Subject Position

Attitude	Time	*M*	*S.E.*
Pro-restriction	Before	5.03	.06
	After	4.60	.08
Anti-restriction	Before	2.93	.06
	After	2.94	.09

Table 8

Correlations between Measures

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. ATT	(1.05)	0.13*	-0.18**	-0.17**	0.29**	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.09	-0.03	-0.14*	0.23**	-0.16**
2. BHV		(0.89)	-0.02	-0.01	0.08	0.05	0.06	-0.14*	0.13*	0.19**	0.01	0.18**	-0.02
3. TPP_S			(1.96)	0.18**	-0.59**	0.68**	-0.36**	-0.13*	0.05	0.16**	0.20**	-0.14*	0.21**
4. TPP_O				(1.88)	-0.62**	-0.35**	0.64**	-0.12*	-0.09	-0.06	0.19**	-0.26**	0.15**
5. SELF					(1.47)	0.19**	0.20**	0.12*	0.24**	0.13*	-0.25**	0.35**	-0.26**
6. SUPP						(1.61)	-0.25**	-0.04	0.28**	0.32**	0.02	0.16**	0.01
7. OPP							(1.50)	-0.03	0.12*	0.05	0.00	0.03	-0.07
8. INVL								(0.90)	-0.03	-0.04	0.04	0.03	0.07
9. ORNT									(1.59)	0.47**	-0.01	0.13*	0.03
10. HMP										(1.52)	0.08	0.16**	0.15**
11. THRT											(1.53)	-0.32**	0.54**
12. EVAL												(1.15)	-0.28**
13. ANX													(1.37)

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. ATT = Attitudinal change, BHV = Behavioral intention change, TPP_S = Third-person perception for the supporters of the restrictions, TPP_O = Third-person perception for the opponents of the restrictions, SELF = Perceived influence on self, SUPP = Perceived influence on supporters of the restrictions, OPP = Perceived influence on opponents of the restrictions, INVL = Involvement, ORNT = Perceived orientation of report, HMP = Hostile media perception, THRT = Degree of threat, EVAL = Evaluation of article, ANX = Degree of anxiety. Standard deviations reported in parentheses.

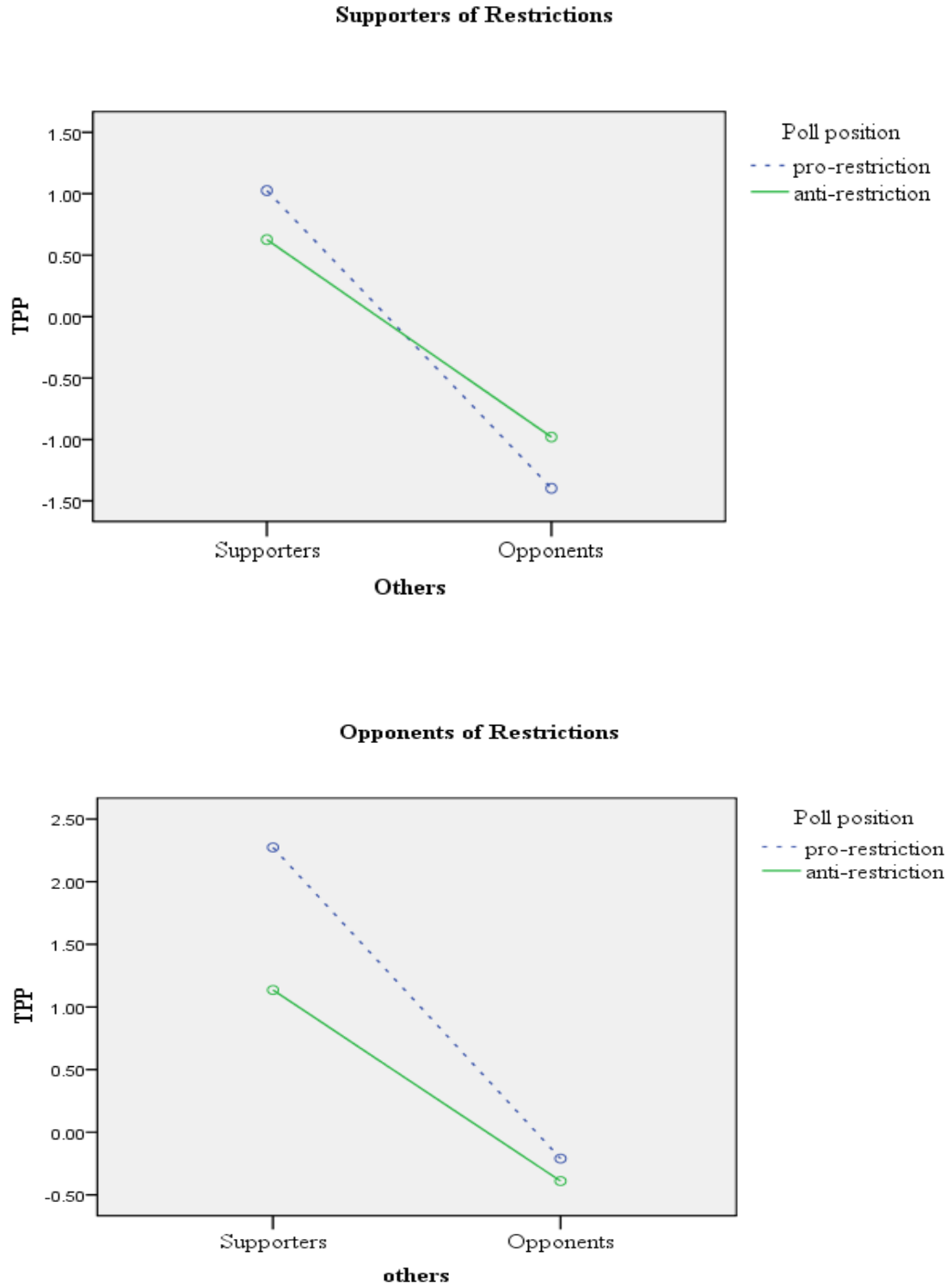


Figure 1. Message-Subject Position, Others, and Message Position on TPP

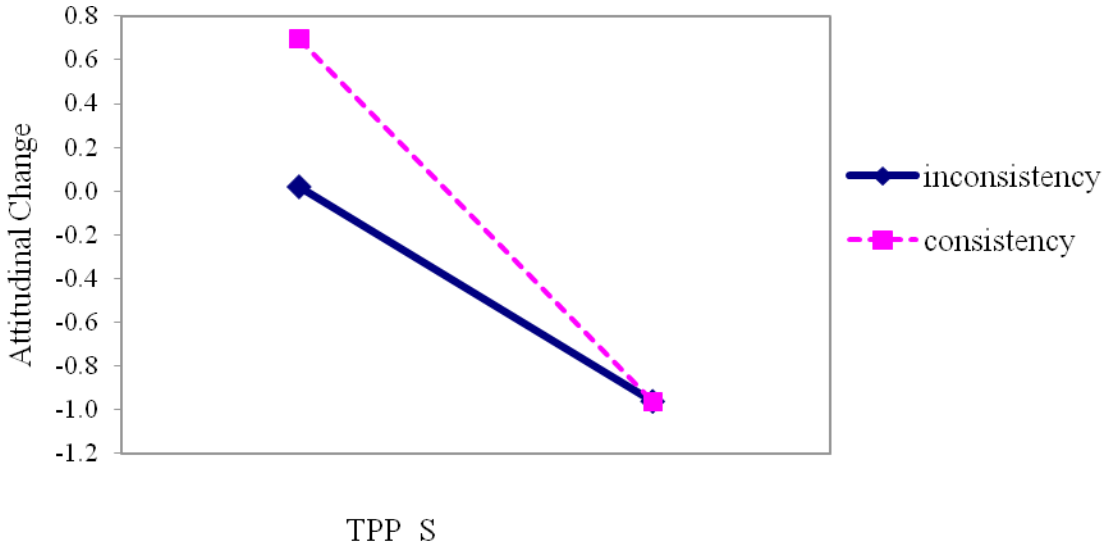
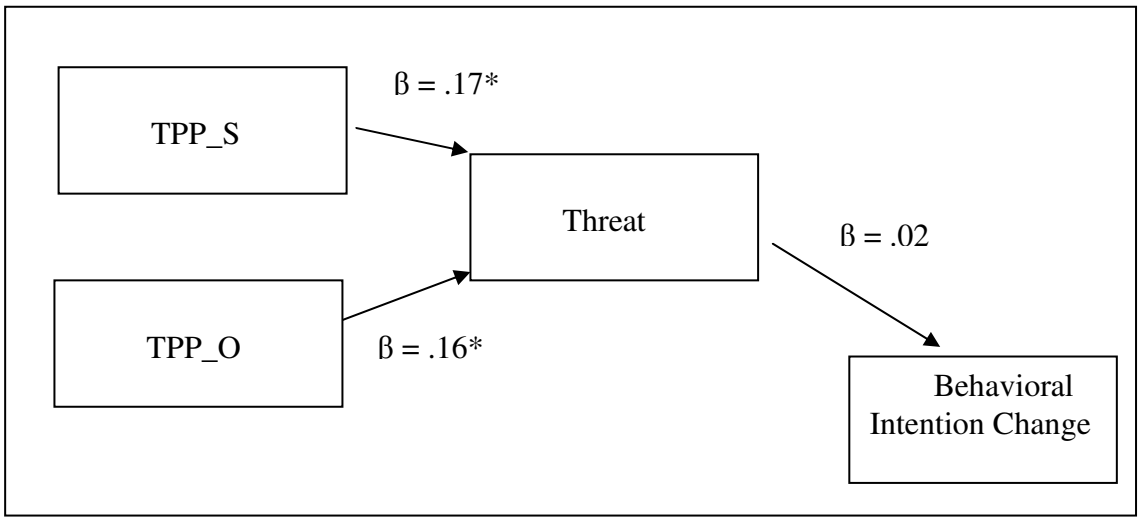


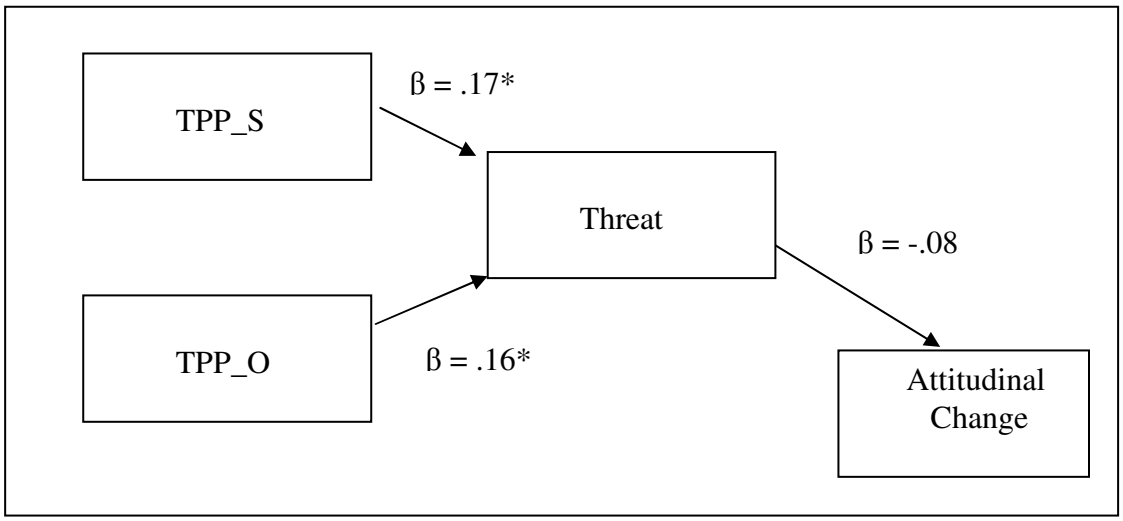
Figure 2. Association between TPP and Attitudinal Change



Note: TPP_S: Third-person perception on proponents of the government restrictions on violent TV programming, TPP_O: Third-person perception on opponents of the government restrictions on violent TV programming

* $p < .01$

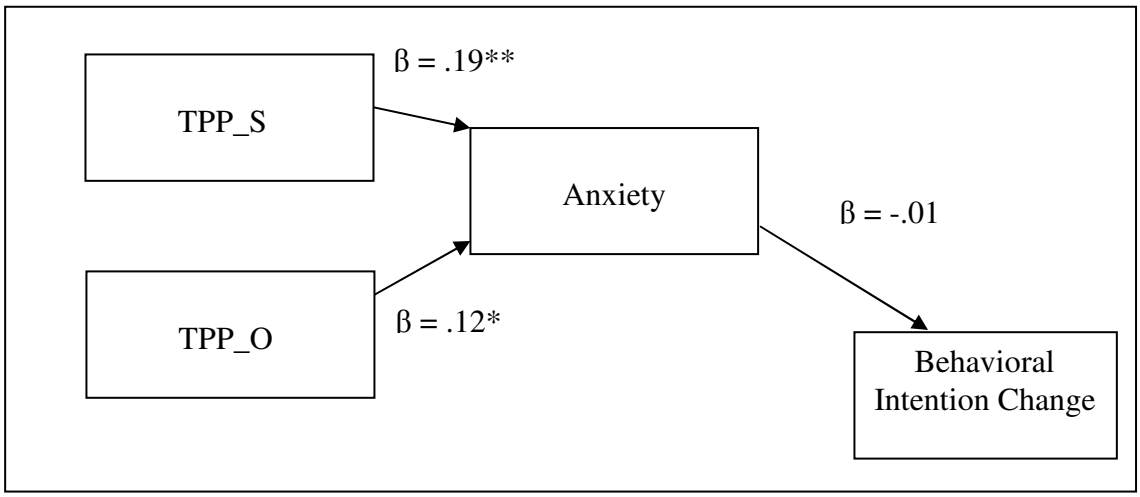
Figure 3. Mediation of Threat between TPPs and Behavioral Intention Change



Note: TPP_S: Third-person perception on proponents of the government restrictions on violent TV programming, TPP_O: Third-person perception on opponents of the government restrictions on violent TV programming

* $p < .01$

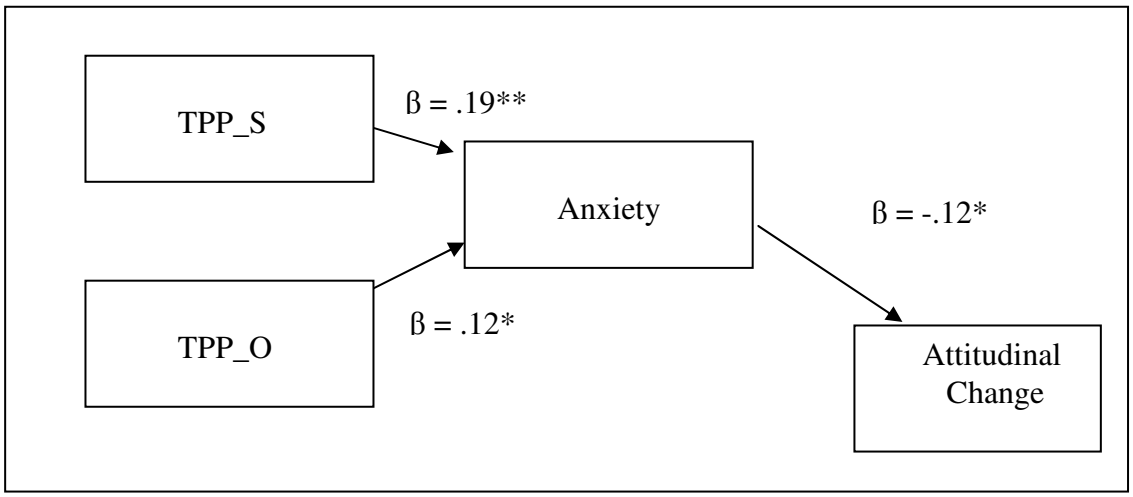
Figure 4. Mediation of Threat between TPPs and Attitudinal Change



Note: TPP_S: Third-person perception on proponents of the government restrictions on violent TV programming, TPP_O: Third-person perception on opponents of the government restrictions on violent TV programming

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Figure 5. Mediation of Anxiety between TPPs and Behavioral Intention Change

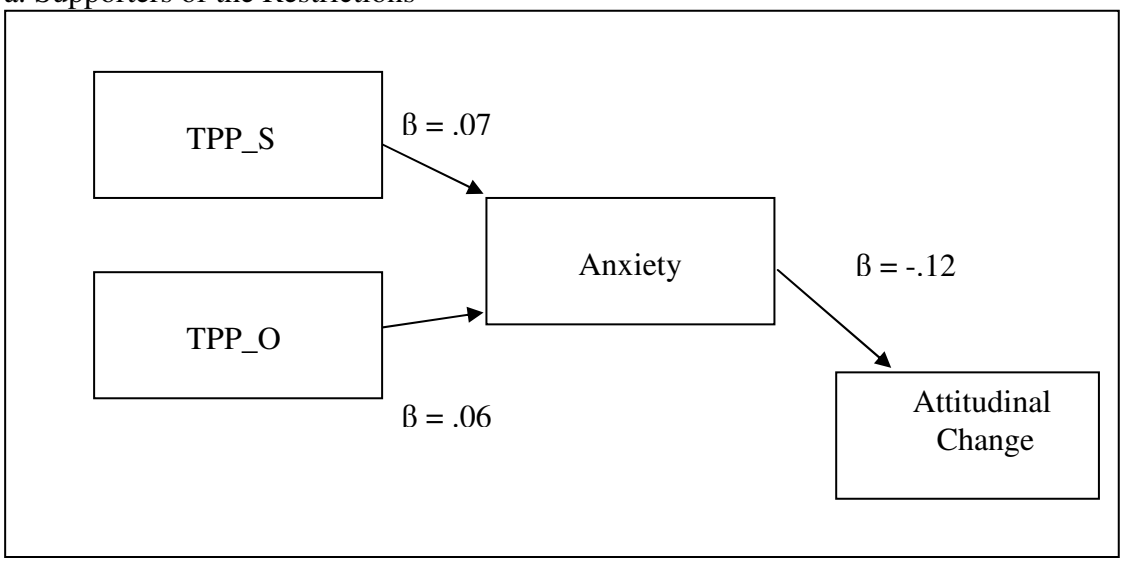


Note: TPP_S: Third-person perception on proponents of the government restrictions on violent TV programming, TPP_O: Third-person perception on opponents of the government restrictions on violent TV programming

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Figure 6. Mediation of Anxiety between TPPs and Attitudinal Change

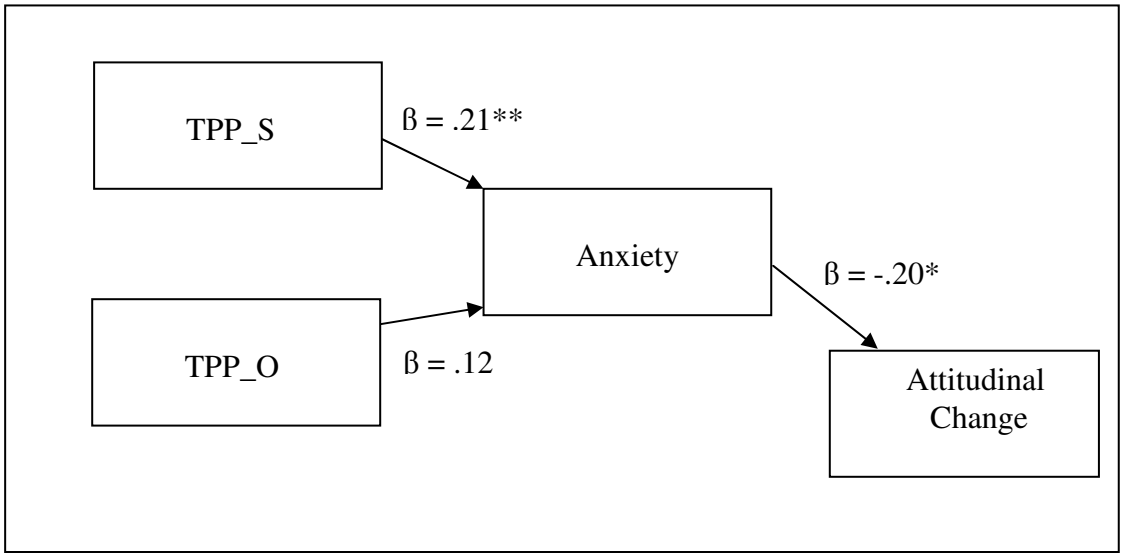
a. Supporters of the Restrictions



Note: TPP_S: Third-person perception on proponents of the government restrictions on violent TV programming, TPP_O: Third-person perception on opponents of the government restrictions on violent TV programming

* $p < .05$

b. Opponents of the Restrictions



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 7. Anxiety as Mediator by Subject Position

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Pre-Stimulus Questionnaire

LAST 4 DIGIT OF STUDENT ID: ___ ___ ___ ___

Section 1. This section asks you to provide some basic demographic information.

1. Sex Male _____ Female _____ (please check one)

2. Age _____ (in years)

3. What race do you consider yourself? (check one)

African-American _____ Asian- or Pacific Islander _____

Native American _____ Non-Hispanic White _____

Spanish or Hispanic Origin_____Multi-racial or mixed race _____

Section 2. This section is about your attitudes and behavior towards the government restrictions on violent TV content.

1. How do you think about the government **restrictions on violent TV content** in terms of wrong/right, negative/positive, unfavorable/favorable, unacceptable/acceptable, foolish/wise, and bad/good? (a "4" response reflects neutrality when comparing the two extremes of each pairing)

1)	wrong	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	right
2)	negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	positive
3)	unfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	favorable
4)	unacceptable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	acceptable
5)	foolish	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	wise
6)	bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	good

2. How important **TO YOU** is the issue of restricting violent TV content, whether you support it or not? Please read each pair and circle the number that best describes your response to the question (a "4" response reflects neutrality when comparing the two extremes of each pairing)

1)	unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	important
2)	relevant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	irrelevant

3)	consequential	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	inconsequential
4)	insignificant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	significant

3. How do you think about violent TV content? Please read each pair and circle the number that best describes your response to the question (a "4" response reflects neutrality when comparing the two extremes of each pairing)

1)	unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	pleasant
2)	pleasurable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unpleasurable
3)	punishing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not punishing
4)	satisfying	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unsatisfying

Section 3. Please indicate how much you support each of the following statements.

1. Violent content should be banned from television show <u>during hours when children might be watching</u>.

Not support at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly support

2. Violent content should be banned from television show <u>during any time of the day</u>.

Not support at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly support

3. Violent content should be <u>self-censored by broadcasting companies</u>.

Not support at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly support

Section 4. Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

1. I would sign a petition for regulating violent television programming.

Not agree at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree

2. I would e-mail or call a television station or government agency to complain about violent content on television.

Not agree at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree

3. I would say that violent content should be banned from television show during hours when children might be watching if I am asked for a survey on the issue.

Not agree at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree

Post-stimulus Questionnaire

LAST 4 DIGIT OF STUDENT ID: ___ ___ ___ ___

Section 1. After viewing the news article, what emotions do you feel toward the government restrictions on violent TV programming?

	Not at all						Very much
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Feel Threatened	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Worried	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 2. This section is about the **news article** you read. Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with each of the following statements.

1. I feel the news article tries to manipulate me on the issue.

   strongly disagree -3 -2 1 0 1 2 3 Strongly agree

2. I feel the news article tries to pressure me on the issue.

   strongly disagree -3 -2 1 0 1 2 3 Strongly agree

3. I feel the news article threatens my freedom to choose my own opinion on the issue.

   strongly disagree -3 -2 1 0 1 2 3 Strongly agree

Section 3. How do you evaluate the news article you read? Please read each pair and circle the number that best describes your response to the question (a "4" response reflects neutrality when comparing the two extremes of each pairing)

1.	like	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	dislike
2.	acceptable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	objectionable
3.	believable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unbelievable

Section 4. This section asks more questions about the news article you read.

1. After reading the news article, how do you think this article made **you** more or less toward the government restrictions on violent TV content? (Greater numbers indicate stronger influence. 0 means no influence.)

Make me more Pro-freedom	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Make me more Pro-restriction

2. How do you think this article would affect those who **support** the restrictions on violent TV content (pro-restriction)? (Greater numbers indicate stronger influence. 0 means no influence.)

More Pro-freedom	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	More Pro-restriction

3. How do you think this article would affect those who are **against** the restrictions on violent TV content (pro-freedom)? (A greater numbers indicates stronger influence. 0 means no influence.)

More Pro-freedom	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	More Pro-restriction

Section 5. This section is about your attitudes and behaviors towards the **government restrictions on violent TV** content.

1. How do you think about the government restrictions on violent TV content in terms of wrong/right, negative/positive, unfavorable/favorable, unacceptable/acceptable, foolish/wise, and bad/good? (a "4" response reflects neutrality when comparing the two extremes of each pairing)

1)	wrong	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	right
2)	negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	positive
3)	unfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	favorable
4)	unacceptable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	acceptable

5)	foolish	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	wise
6)	bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	good

2. Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

1) I would sign a petition for regulating violent television programming.

Not support at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly support

2) I would e-mail or call a television station or government agency to complain about violent content on television.

Not support at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly support

3) I would say that violent content should be banned from television show during hours when children might be watching if I am asked for a survey on the issue.

Not support at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly support

3. Please indicate how much you support each of the following statements.

1) Violent content should be banned from television show during hours when children might be watching.

Not support at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly support

2) Violent content should be banned from television show during any time of the day.

Not support at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly support

3) Violent content should be self-censored by broadcasting companies.

Not support at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly support

Section 6. This section asks more questions about the news article that you read.

1. The newspaper article made government restrictions on violent TV content seem likable/unlikable? A response of "-3" reflects that it was made to seem unlikable. A response of "3" indicates that it was made to seem likeable.

unlikable -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 likable

2. The newspaper article made government restrictions on violent TV content seem good/bad? A response of "-3" reflects that it was made to seem bad. A response of "3" indicates that it was made to seem good.

bad -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 good

3. Would you say that the news article was biased against or in favor of pro-restriction? A response of "0" reflects a neutral story. A response of "-3" indicates a very biased against pro-restriction story. A response of "3" indicates a very biased in favor of pro-restriction story.

against restrictions -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 in favor of restrictions

4. Would you say that the writer of the article was biased against or in favor of pro-restriction? A response of "0" reflects a neutral writer. A response of "-3" indicates very biased against pro-restriction. A response of "3" indicates very biased in favor of pro-restriction.

against restrictions -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 in favor of restrictions

5. Would you say that the newspaper that printed the article was biased against or in favor of pro-restriction? A response of "0" reflects a neutral newspaper. A response of "-3" indicates very biased against pro-restriction. A response of "3" indicates very biased in favor of pro-restriction.

against restrictions -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 in favor of restrictions

6. Regarding the **opinion poll results**, would you say that the results were biased against or in favor of the government restrictions on violent TV content? A response of "0" reflects neutral. A response of "-3" indicates very biased against pro-restriction. A response of "3" indicates very biased in favor of pro-restriction.

against restrictions -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 in favor of restrictions

Section 7. Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

1. Regulations trigger a sense of resistance in me.

Not agree at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree

2. When something is prohibited, I usually think 'that's exactly what I am going to do.

Not agree at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree

3. I become frustrated when I am unable to make free and independent decisions.

Not agree at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree

Thank you for completing the study.

Appendix B: Stimuli

Anti-Restriction Article Without Threat Inducement

Third Annual America's Poll

Our exclusive poll finds 70% of Americans not ready to trade some cherished freedoms for greater safety for themselves -- and their children.

By MICHAEL HASS

More than ten years after the Columbine High School massacre in Colorado, would Americans accept new restrictions on violent TV content -- and surrender some freedoms -- to prevent another Columbine? No, that's not what a recent Boston Post poll has found.

The scientific poll of 1,005 adults shows strong opposition around the nation, and across lines of sex and race, to strict regulation of violence on TV.

"Censorship is a 19th-century concept that they are trying to apply to the 21st century," said Andrew Jay Schwartzman, executive director of the Media Access Project, a non-profit organization.

On the other hand, Julius Genachowski, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, said "clearly, a record can be made that violent content on television is more dangerous than indecency."

Nonetheless, poll respondents did not indicate willingness to impose government restrictions in return for safety for themselves and their children.

Key findings

- **Restrictions of violent TV programming:**

  70% was against banning violent content from television shows during hours when children might be watching.

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Key findings

- **Restrictions of violent TV programming:**

  70% was against banning violent content from television shows during hours when children might be watching.

Recently, the Supreme Court struck down a law dealing with violent television programming and stated, "above all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, its ideas, its subject matter, or its content." As a result, Congress will not be able to move to limit violence on entertainment programs. TV shows with violence will keep on being seen during the prime time.

Pro-Restriction Article Without Threat Inducement

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"Clearly, a record can be made that violent content on television is more dangerous than indecency," said Julius Genachowski, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission.

On the other hand, Andrew Jay Schwartzman, executive director of the Media Access Project, a non-profit organization, said, "Censorship is a 19th-century concept that they are trying to apply to the 21st century."

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Key findings

- **Restrictions of violent TV programming:**

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Key findings

- **Restrictions of violent TV programming:**

  70% say violent content should be banned from television shows during hours when children might be watching.

Concerned about an increase in violence on television, the Federal Communications Commission urged lawmakers to consider regulations that would restrict violent programs to late evening, when most children would not be watching. As a result, Congress will move to limit violence on entertainment programs by giving the agency the authority to define such content and restrict it to late evening television. Experts say you might not be able to watch your favorite TV shows, such as NCIS, during the prime time any more.