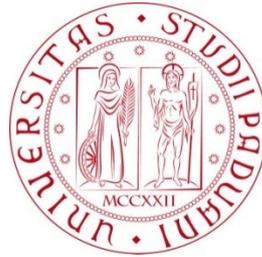


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Final Dissertation  
HOSTILE MEDIA EFFECT A LITERATURE REVIEW

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## Abstract

The Hostile Media Effect was first studied by (Vallone et al., 1985) who demonstrated that partisans are prone to perceive ostensibly neutral media coverage as unfairly biased against their position, regardless of which partisan group they belong to. This thesis is a bibliographic review that investigates how the literature has developed since then, discussing the various replications, theoretical models and variables that have been associated with the effect, the interaction with other closely related effects, as well as expansions in the scope of the effect itself, to both non neutral media, and non-news-media media. Themes and theoretical connections are discussed. Particular attention is given to potential explanations for the effect, based on commonalities between predictive variables that have been studied, specifically the reason for the American Republican party's higher perception of hostile media.

## Introduction

Research into hostile media perceptions or the Hostile Media Effect (HME), as it is now more commonly called, started with (Vallone et al., 1985). Although it could be argued that the so called “They Saw A Game” study (Hastorf & Cantril, 1954) was actually a prototype for the research topic.

The effect itself can be defined as the fact that partisans have a tendency to view neutral media as biased against them. i.e., that when a person or group of people with a strongly held belief on a polarising issue are shown a neutral piece of media discussing said issue, those people will have tendency to perceive that media as biased against their viewpoint regardless of what position they take on the issue.

The most common polarising issues discussed are pro-Israel vs pro-Arab sentiments in the middle east (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Vallone et al., 1985) and Republicans vs Democrats in American presidential elections (Elder & Greene, 2003; Michael & Breaux, 2021; Richardson et al., 2008; Stalder, 2009). The existence of the HME has been demonstrated in both these contexts as well as in non-explicitly political contexts such as scientific debates (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006; Matheson & Dursun, 2001; Perloff, 2015). The results are not always completely symmetrical, with Republicans being shown to be more prone to the HME. This work lays out a conceptual link between the Minority Perceptions held by a partisan group and the HME.

## Chapter 1: Methods

In order to collect papers to use, 3 preliminary search queries on Scopus were performed. All results were filtered to be within the field of psychology, were limited to journal articles or chapters of books and were limited to those written in English.

The results for key authors were reviewed, as well as an overview of the main countries of interest and total number of results returned for each query. “Hostile media” was selected for further exploration. The search results “hostile media phenomenon” AND “culture” and “hostile media phenomenon” did not return adequate numbers of papers for analysis.

The next stage of analysis was to evaluate the results to identify which papers were genuinely relevant to the topic. It should also be noted that by the time this process began in full, a further 4 papers had been published and appeared in the results, as indicated in Figure 1. Each result was manually screened based on the title and abstract and every paper was categorised as either ‘relevant’, ‘maybe relevant’ or ‘not relevant at all’.

Papers that referred to the HME by name or a variation of, including:

- Hostile media effect (HME)
- Hostile media perception (HMP)
- Media Indignation
- Perception of media bias
- negative projection

were marked as ‘relevant’. Papers that seemed to be discussing the HME but did not refer to it by any specific name were also included, such as those that refer to fake news perceptions and accusations. Papers that referred to related concepts were marked ‘maybe’, for a deeper review later. Those for which no relevance could be identified were marked as such. The ‘relevant’ and ‘maybe’ papers were then screened for duplicates, leaving a total of 20 ‘relevant’ and 17 ‘maybe relevant’. It was also decided upon further evaluation that one of the ‘maybe’ papers could actually be included in analysis as a ‘relevant’ paper, and that one ‘relevant’ paper was not actually experimental and so would not be included in the analysis of findings. A complete flowchart of the search process is shown in Figure 1. Flow diagram of search steps.

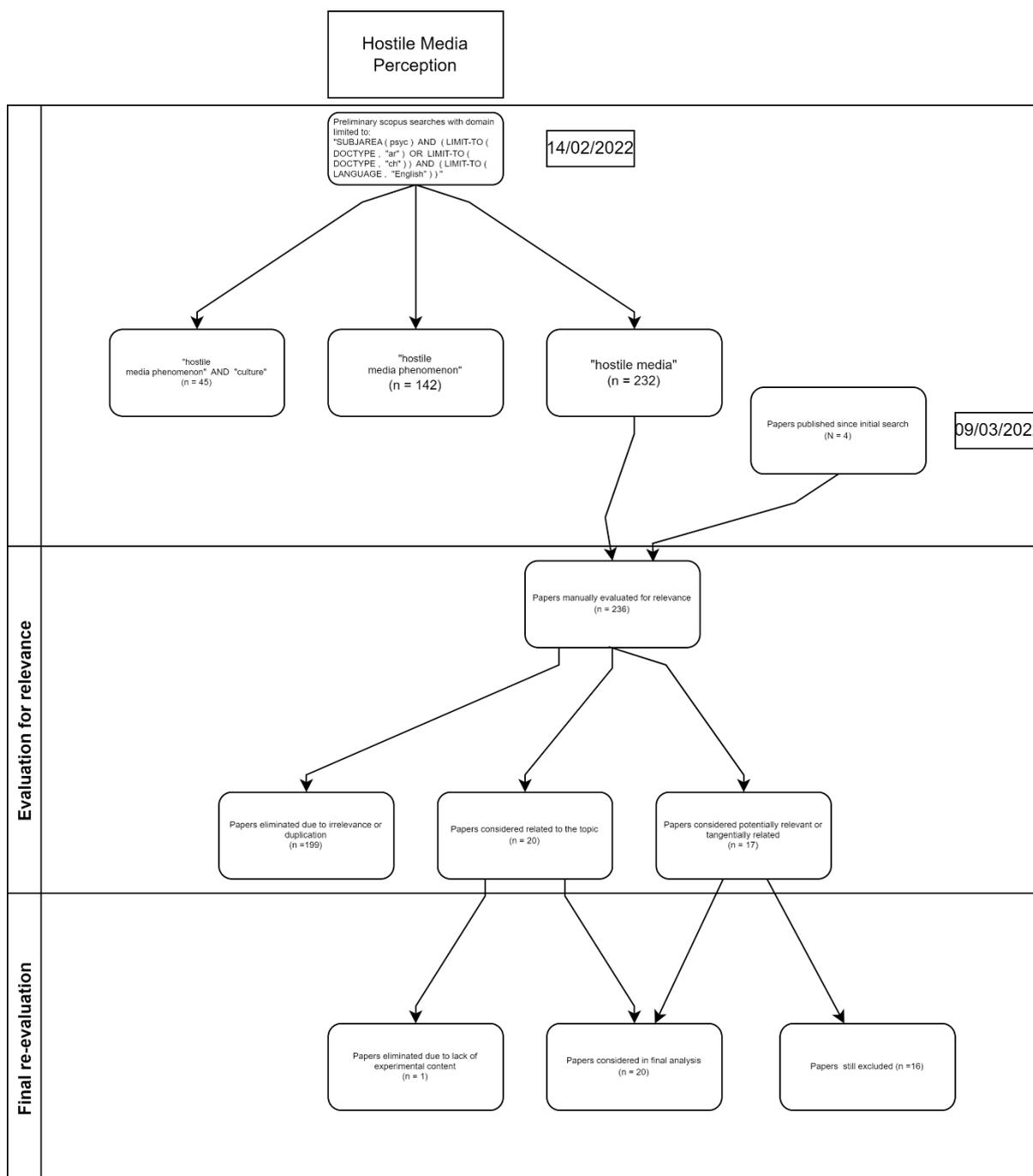


Figure 1. Flow diagram of search steps

## Chapter 2: Results

Once the articles had been refined to a selection of relevant papers, they were analysed with the goal of extracting key information. The following details were recorded in an excel spreadsheet:

- study method (questionnaire, observation, ...)
- type of media studied in the paper
- country of focus of the study
- country of the sample
- type of participants/users (patients or not, age, sex...)
- study hypotheses
- independent variables
- dependent variables and related measurement strategy
- results for each hypothesis reported
- Has there been reported any cultural difference/effect of culture on?
- What material was presented and how was it validated for biased/nonbiased?
- was the effect confirmed on all dimensions measured in the research? and if not, on which was/was not confirmed?
- Does the article present direct stimuli?
- Does the article present neutral stimuli?
- Does the article present attitudinal stimuli? Does the article use media source as a variable?
- Relative HME? (In the sense that the study was looking at perceptions of already counter attitudinal source, by definition this will include all the attitudinal ones but also involves the source bias ones)
- Does the article propose a cognitive mechanism or pathway for the HME?
- Does the article consider behavioural outcomes?
- Does the article connect HME to other frameworks?
- Does the article connect the HME to other effects?

The papers were then further classified on how they contributed to the HME literature. Three broad categories were established. Papers that attempted to test and replicate the existence

of the HME, papers that investigated features of the HME and potential mechanisms involved, and papers that used HME and hostile media perceptions as part of a broader investigation into some other phenomenon. The papers that tested the existence of the HME could be subdivided into those that used neutral media, as is the classic understanding based on (Vallone et al., 1985) and those that presented attitudinal media, investigating the Relative HME. The Relative HME is an extension of the HME that addresses biased perceptions of already slanted news media, first described in (Gunther & Chia, 2001).

*Table 1: Number of papers identified that fall into each of the categories being reviewed*

Category:	Number of Papers Identified in Analysis
Papers that use neutral media stimuli	10
Papers that use attitudinal media stimuli	3
Papers investigate the properties of the HME (suggests a cognitive mechanism or pathway, within the context of a certain cognitive framework, investigates behavioural outcomes)	18
Papers that investigate the relationship between the HME and other effects	10
Papers that propose some sort of mechanism or pathway for the HME <sup>1</sup>	15
Papers that consider behavioural outcomes	6
Papers that examined the HME through a specific framework	8

## 2.1 The existence of the HME

The empirical evidence for the existence and validity of the effect can be summarised as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> During analysis this was further divided into predictive variables and actually proposed processing mechanisms

Of the 10 studies included in analysis that directly presented neutral media to the participants 7 actually tested the HME directly in its classical sense. Of those, 4 considered their findings to directly corroborate its existence, the others observed the effect but with weak results in some metrics or populations. Although there are some findings that did not show statistically significant results, 100% of the studies that directly measured it, did find the effect to some degree. Taken together these findings suggest the validity of the effect.

Some of the earlier papers in the field, namely (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Vallone et al., 1985), were limited by the fact that the neutral or impartial group in their experiments aligned more closely with one or other of the partisan groups, thus suggesting there is validity to one of the partisan groups opinions about the bias, however it was later demonstrated that the effect was present even in cases where the neutral party perceived no bias (Matheson & Dursun, 2001).

There is also a significant body of work investigating the differences in how people perceive media they are already expected to disagree with. Either through directly counter attitudinal articles or the exploration of how the author/source of the article influences perceptions.

the findings in general suggest the existence of the so called relative HME which states that people will view counter attitudinal media as more biased than pro-attitudinal media. a finding that is completely expected but must nevertheless be corroborated. they also show how a person's expectations about the likelihood of bias can influence their perceived bias as demonstrated by those that read or discuss media authored by counter attitudinal sources.

This combined with evidence that self-majority incongruence is linked to HME (Hwang et al., 2008) builds a picture of an effect that manifests based on a belief that the world is against a person or at the very least the media is. It is noted that perceived allegiance of a media source precludes a neutral interpretation of the content (Ariyanto et al., 2007)., and it is the case a large proportion of the population (59%) view the media in general as politically biased (NW et al., 2002).

This was investigated by a number of the papers that did not present direct media stimuli but instead simply asked participants their opinions on the media's treatment of their beliefs. Most explicitly this was investigated by (Stalder, 2009), who sought to fill this exact gap in the literature at the time, because most HME literature only looks at a narrow scope of bias i.e.

only looking at single issues or candidates rather than the general treatment of an entire ideology or group, which is an issue noted by (Lee, 2005).

There are 9 papers included that did not directly present stimuli and investigated the HME through opinion and impression only. Of those 9, 4 reported results related to the corroboration of the HME. 2 directly supported its existence, 1 found evidence for the relative HME (Zheng & Lu, 2021). However, 1 only found the existence of HME statistically important enough in women and not men (Elder & Greene, 2003). The other 5 papers did not investigate the existence of the HME, so are not relevant to this part of the analysis.

### 2.1.1 The Relative Hostile Media Effect

A way in which the literature on the HME has evolved is the shift of attention to media pieces that do have a biased slant one way or another. This development suggests that the degree to which a person perceives media to be biased will be mediated by partisan beliefs. I.e., that partisans will perceive an article that favours them as less biased than those who disagree with the content, and vice versa, perceiving articles to be more biased than others if the content is counter attitudinal.

Of the papers analysed it could be said that 5 investigated this form of the bias in some sense, either by manipulating the perceived source of the media (2), or by presenting attitudinal media/attitudinal sources (3).

Michael & Breaux (2021) found that political ideology influences which news sources are considered fake news and Kim (2016) corroborates the relative HME.

The main paper concerned with the relative HME is Zheng & Lu (2021) which explicitly relates the pathway between media consumption and affective polarisation through likeminded discussion and the relative HME. They found support for this sequential relationship which fits with the filter hypothesis which states that political discussion, especially interaction with like-minded others, allows people to filter partisan information from daily news consumption and thus mediates the impact of media use on affective polarization. (Neiheisel & Niebler, 2015; Song & Boomgaarden, 2017, as cited by Zheng & Lu, 2021).

The consensus among papers that investigated bias perceptions is that there is a significant difference between how partisan groups interpret slanted media pieces (Arpan & Peterson, 2008; Chung et al., 2015; M. Kim, 2016).

## 2.2 The properties of the HME

Another key part of the literature on the HME is the attempts to work out what personal factors can predict susceptibility, and what mechanisms may drive the belief process.

### 2.2.1 Theorised mechanisms

From the beginning, 2 mechanisms were proposed by Vallone et al. (1985). The first is that those with strong views on a partisan subject would believe the facts to be conclusively on their side, thus any attempt to provide a neutral account of the issue would be giving unfair credence to the wrong (opposing) side. The second is that there was a genuine distorted perception of the neutral article. This second point can be subdivided into two distorted perceptions, one of selective categorisation and the other of selective recall. That is partisans can perceive the same pieces of information and categorise them differently as either hostile or supportive of their position, or they can have a stronger attention to and recall of those hostile portions of a piece of media. The selective recall explanation of the HME can be explained by increased attention and engagement with negative aspects however it was found in one study that aimed to identify which mechanisms contributed that selective categorisation was the only one evidenced by their findings (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006).

These mechanisms as well as other processing mechanisms suggested by papers reviewed are summarised in Table 2.

*Table 2: Summary of mechanisms suggested for the operation of the HME*

<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Definition/summary</b>	<b>References</b>
Unfair credence “different standards”	Those who have strong partisan views, presumably believe that the evidence supports their viewpoint, therefore any neutral coverage of the issue will be perceived as unjustifiably balanced and giving too much weight to the 'clearly incorrect' viewpoint	(Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Vallone et al., 1985)
Incorrect memories and perceptions “selective categorisation	when participants recall the same items but classify them differently (as opposing to their own views)	(Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Vallone et al., 1985)

Heard vs Sound	What people have “Heard” from others about media bias, compared to how the media “sounds” to them in terms of bias	(Stalder, 2009)
Media consumption Likeminded communication/filter hypothesis	Partisans tend to engage in communication with other partisans, and these likeminded discussions tend to “filter” the way the articles read are interpreted.	(Zheng & Lu, 2021) <sup>2</sup>
Selective recall	Participants are encoding different parts of the article when reading, and these parts are the counter-attitudinal parts.	(Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Vallone et al., 1985)

Beyond the 3 core processing mechanisms of Vallone et al. (1985), it has also been proposed that the way in which partisans interact with each other and members of their in-group, the opinions of others and what they have ‘heard’ from these others or their chosen news sources can significantly control the opinions both in the moment and in advance that partisans will hold about an article (Stalder, 2009; Zheng & Lu, 2021).

Beyond

### 2.2.2 Correlated variables

Most studies on the HME investigate to some extent variables that are correlated or associated either with the observation outright of the HME in partisan participants, or simply the strength and degree of the HME observed. Those theorised to predict or precede the HME are summarised in Table 3: Summary of variables that predict observation of the HME Table 3, and those that are thought to follow the HME, either as part of some theoretical model or simply as a consequence, are summarised in Table 4.

#### 2.2.2.1 Antecedents to the HME

Throughout the literature the HME is found to be preceded and associated with a number of personal variables of the participants studied. Those that are thought to predict or potentially mediate the HME are summarised in table 3, alongside a brief description and the papers within which they are discussed. From these findings it is possible to approximate some sort of model similar to that of (Perloff, 2015) that shows the various features that contribute to

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<sup>2</sup> This study involved the relative HME

the HME. A key variable that stood out was Republican partisanship (and conservatism) because multiple studies found that Republicans and conservatives are more prone to perceive the HME (Eveland & Shah, 2003; Lee, 2005; Mutz & Martin, 2001 as cited by Stalder, 2009) See also Lee (2010). To potential explanations for this exist. The first is that democratic partisanship is an inappropriate opposition to Republican partisanship, as it is often argued that the democratic party is not a substantially left-wing party especially when compared to global trends. Arguments like this have been made by the likes of US representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez but lack academic rigor, with no related findings in the literature on the subject. As such it will not be discussed further and will simply be noted as a potential limitation of the methodology. An explanation more grounded in the literature is that of Minority Perceptions. While the amount of political power Republicans have is fairly evenly divided in the US, both historically and currently, Republicans make up a numerical minority in the US (Manning, 2022; *Official 2020 Presidential General Election Results*, 2020; *Party Government Since 1857 | US House of Representatives*, n.d.). Research like Ariyanto et al. (2007) has suggested that minority groups are more prone to see the media as hostile towards them and it is suggested that this is because it could be more functional for minority groups to uphold positive group identities. However, while these findings on paper align it is necessary to justify them in context as the previous studies on Minority Perception have been limited to specifically oppressed minorities, which Republicans are not. Yun et al. (2016) showed how factors other than actual minority status, can influence Minority Perceptions. It can also be discussed that pervasive sentiments about the political makeup of universities and colleges will influence Minority Perceptions, Hwang et al. (2008) found that ideological conservatism is associated with increased self-majority opinion incongruity. This is a limitation because Undergraduates are not an immediately generalisable sample based on their proximity to certain issues and most studies use undergraduate students as participants. Another factor discussed is the opinions participants pick up from their chosen news sources. Stalder (2009) focused specifically on the differences between Republican and Democratic students, (also suggested that there is there is not an age difference in perception of HME) and whether HME was a result of what participants had 'seen' or 'heard' finding that what participants had 'heard' from other news sources peers and others was a significant contributor to the HME. This can contribute to the difference, both by right-wing partisan media being more explicitly accusatory about liberal bias (Watts et al., 1999) as well as the

mediated contribution of increasing Minority Perceptions. For example, Stalder (2009) found that the perception that the media is biased towards liberals overall seems to be influenced more by what participants had ‘heard’ from others rather than how it sounds to them. i.e., Democrats and Republican had different perspectives but only based on what they thought they had 'heard'. Democrats and Republicans apparently heard different information, perhaps as a function of news source and of the people with whom they interacted (e.g., Eveland & Shah, 2003 as cited by Stalder, 2009).

Table 3: Summary of variables that predict observation of the HME

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>References</b>
Argumentativeness	an individual’s underlying motivation to argue and is classified as a constructive, aggressive communication trait (Infante & Rancer (1982); Rancer & Avtgis (2006), as cited in Arpan & Peterson, (2008))	(Arpan & Peterson, 2008)
Cognitive differentiation	Ratio between beliefs differences between in-group and out-group and differences within in-group	(Matheson & Dursun, 2001)
Conservative Ideology	Degree of political conservatism	(Lee, 2010; Michael & Breaux, 2021; Stalder, 2009)
Economic evaluation	A person’s beliefs about the health of their economy	(Lee, 2010) <sup>3</sup>
Gender	Whether a person is a man or a woman	(Elder & Greene, 2003)
Group centrism	the degree to which such principles within a group “mattered to its members” (Kruglanski et al. (2006), as cited by Stalder (2009))	(M. Kim, 2016; Stalder, 2009)
Identity salience	How important party identity is to the participant (i.e., is it a factor that readily comes to their mind when thinking about the issue)	(M. Kim, 2016)
Ideological Extremity	How strong a person’s political beliefs are, includes party affiliation and ideological beliefs (does not consider	(Hwang et al., 2008; K. S. Kim, 2011; Matheson & Dursun, 2001) <sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The relationship between strength of identification with the in-group and HME in direct stimuli is mediated by cognitive differentiation (Matheson & Dursun, 2001).

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>References</b>
	direction of extremity, only degree)	
Issue attitude Extremity	Strength of opinion on the topic being discussed (does not consider direction of extremity, only degree)	(Hwang et al., 2008; Vallone et al., 1985)
Media distrust	General trust in media fairness.	(Ariyanto et al., 2007; Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Hwang et al., 2008)
Media source	Whether the source/author is considered to be reliable or pro-attitudinal	(M. Kim, 2016; Yun et al., 2016; Zheng & Lu, 2021)
Need for cognition	Enjoyment of effortful cognitive activity	(Arpan & Peterson, 2008)
Personal trust	Trust in others	(Lee, 2010) <sup>3</sup>
Political trust	Trust the person has in their government	(Lee, 2010)
Republican Partisanship	Strength of identification with the American Republican party	(Lee, 2010; Stalder, 2009)
Self-reported knowledge of the topic	How knowledgeable a person believes themselves to be on the topic being discussed	(Vallone et al., 1985)
Value-involvement	How close the role of a person's values is in relation to the topic being discussed	(Hwang et al., 2008)

#### 2.2.2.2 Descendants of the HME

Throughout the literature there was not a particular emphasis on any particular outcome variables, those studied are summarised in Table 4.

One fairly consistent attitude observed was some sort of feeling of hostility and opposition to the outgroup be that the general population, the media, or counter-attitudinal partisans. This is exemplified by all the variables studied in some way.

In all the studies in which an attitude or belief was measured as a consequence, the HME it was associated with an increased perception of opposition.

Table 4: Summary of variables predicted by observation of the HME

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Papers that found a statistically significant connection</b>
Affective polarisation	the tendency of partisans to view out-party members	(Zheng & Lu, 2021)

	negatively and in-party fellows positively	
Media indignation	negative moral emotions toward the perceived unfair media presentation	(Hwang et al., 2008)
Minority perception/self-majority opinion incongruity	Perceived difference between one's own beliefs and what one believes the majority opinion is or just the general conception that one's views are held by the minority of the population	(Ariyanto et al., 2007; Hwang et al., 2008; Yun et al., 2016)
Out-group blame	Assigning fault to those outside the in-group in a situation	(Matheson & Dursun, 2001)
Perceptions of public opinion	Expectations about the general population's opinion on the issue. Closely tied to the Third Person Effect and self-majority opinion incongruity	(Perloff, 2015; Yun et al., 2016)
Audience legitimacy	Applied specifically in reference to police forces, the perceived opinion of the general public about the reputation of the police force.	(Nix et al., 2020; Nix & Pickett, 2017)

All the above variables, except media indignation, can be described as a sentiment that opinions of others towards the in group is hostile. So, it is not just that a particular journalist is perceived to be biased, or even the whole media apparatus in general (media indignation), but this “unfair” representation is thought to represent the opinions of the world at large or at least those of contrary views, and it positions the in-group as a minority in opposition to these others.

### 2.3. Behavioural outcomes of HME

The number of papers that discuss the behavioural outcomes of the HME is surprisingly limited, with only 5 being identified in the analysis. A number of others do discuss the potential consequences, especially in regards to the impact on democratic society as polarisation and the HME increase, however no actual behaviours are studied only speculated.

Within the review the key behaviours or intentions to behave are summarised in Table 5. The most studied of these outcomes is likelihood to comment on an online news article. As news and media consumptions moves more and more online it becomes increasingly important to

understand the HME in these contexts (Perloff, 2015). Both Chung and Yun found that the HME was significantly related to engaging with the online article (Chung et al., 2015; Yun et al., 2016). They also found that this pathway was mediated by the Third Person Effect (see 2.4 Relationship between the HME and other effects) and subsequently Minority Perceptions, Suggesting, that the HME lead to perceptions that the media environment was hostile, that others would be influenced and that the participant was in the minority with incongruent self-majority views. This sentiment was associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in online comments.

However, this finding seems to be limited to only comments as there is not a mediating role of perceived self-majority incongruence on the HME to behavioural intention relationship (Hwang et al., 2008). It was found that there was a relationship between the HME and a perception of an incongruence between one's personal opinion and that of the majority. It was theorised that this would mediate the relationship between HME and behavioural intentionality. However, the findings did not show a significant link between the perceived incongruence and intention to participate in any of the participatory behaviours. It was noted that in this particular sample, there was the general perception that universities are liberal institutions as a confounding variable, this led to those Republicans that had the strongest perceived incongruence being the demographic represented, and it was also found that conservative and republican political identification is negatively associated with behavioural intention, thus counterbalancing the relationship between Minority Perceptions and behavioural intentions.

Another notable behavioural outcome is that of selective exposure. Partisans on the global warming debate were prone to selective exposure and this was shown to be a consequence of the HME (K. S. Kim, 2011). It is also worth noting that those who denied the danger of global warming, a position associated with the conservative's Republican party of America, were those more prone to this biased media consumption.

So, while republicans were less engaged in the more involved behavioural consequences investigated by Hwang et al. (2008), they were more influenced to participate in behaviours that require less effort, such as commenting and selective consumption of media.

The final behavioural outcome studied is the that of vote choice, Elder & Greene (2003 found that the relationship between the media consumed and what choice would be made was mediated by the HME, but they also found gender differences in the way these variables interacted Women were more prone to perceive the media as hostile to their preferred candidate in American elections, and it is hypothesised that this is due to their general alienation from the political process.

Table 5: Summary of behavioural outcomes or intentions measured in relationship to the HME

<b>Behaviour/intention</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Papers that found a statistically significant connection</b>
Likelihood to comment	Whether a person is likely to leave a comment on an online news article	(Chung et al., 2015; Yun et al., 2016)
Selective exposure	The tendency to only consume congruent and pro-attitudinal media when given the choice.	(K. S. Kim, 2011; Zheng & Lu, 2021)
Vote Choices	Who or what party a person will vote for in an election	(Elder & Greene, 2003)
Willingness to engage in discursive activities	How open a person was to engage in a number of possible activities that involved promoting their ideas.	(Hwang et al., 2008) <sup>5</sup>

#### 2.4 Relationship between the HME and other effects

It is quite clear from the literature that the HME does not exist in a vacuum, there are a number of notable effects that have a close relationship with this phenomenon. Most significantly the seemingly contradictory Biased Assimilation and the also extensively researched Third Person Effect (TPE). A summary of these related effects to be discussed is present in Table 6.

Table 6: Effects closely related to the HME

<b>Effect</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Papers</b>
Third-Person Effect (TPE)	The bias people have to believe others will be more influenced, than themselves, by a given piece of media (Davison, 1983)	(Chung et al., 2015; Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Nix & Pickett, 2017; Richardson et al., 2008; Vallone et al., 1985)

<sup>5</sup> Relationship between HME and Willingness to engage in discursive activities is mediated by Media indignation

Biased Assimilation	The inclination to interpret incoming stimuli as congruent with the perceiver's preconceptions (Lord, Ross, & Lepper (1979) as cited by Richardson et al.(2008))	(Perloff, 2015; Richardson et al., 2008)
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The TPE is a sister effect of the HME which was observed in Vallone et al. (1985) but not identified as such the time. The effect was first extensively written about by Davison (Davison, 1983). It later spawned its own branch and field of, that would be too broad to include in this analysis but should be addressed nonetheless as a description of the HME is incomplete without it.

The definition of the TPE is the bias people have to believe others will be more influenced, than themselves, by a given piece of media (Davison, 1983). This places it nicely as what appears to be another self-serving bias that treats the self as exceptional amongst others.

One of the keyways the TPE is thought to relate to the HME is as evidence for the idea that the HME could be explained by a distorted perception of the article. While not explicitly referring to the TPE by name in the article Vallone et al. (1985) suggested that the fact partisan participant groups both expect non-partisans to be swayed towards the opposition by the media, is evidence that the partisans truly believe and perceive the media to be hostile and not just an unjustified rendition of what should be a clear-cut issue. Perloff (2015) in fact goes further, and suggests that this perception that non-partisans will be affected (or the reach of the media) is a mediator that determines whether the HME will take place or Biased Assimilation will.

Another key effect is the aforementioned Biased Assimilation which is the tendency to assimilate supportive information and critically scrutinise oppositional information, when presented with ambiguous or mixed evidence on an issue which one holds an opinion on (Lord et al., 1979).

It was first related to the HME by Vallone et al. (1985), who present the HME to as what at first appears to be an exception, but they contend is just another aspect of the same confirmatory bias. Perloff (2015), as previously stated, suggested that what determines when the HME effect is observed and when instead Biased Assimilation occurs is dependent on the perceived reach of the media i.e. HME could be mediated by perceived reach of the media.

This was an idea actually proposed significantly earlier by Gunther & Schmitt (2004) who explicitly tie this hypothesis to the TPE. Gunther & Schmitt according to Richardson et al (2008) suggest that the TPE and the anticipation of others being influenced changes the way people look at a piece of media, shifting their perception from that of Biased Assimilation to the HME. However, the only paper in the literature review to explicitly investigate the relationship between these two effects is Richardson et al. (2008). They suggest that contrary to prior hypotheses, Biased Assimilation and the HME are not mutually exclusive. Thus, hypotheses suggesting mechanisms by which each is observed are aiming in the wrong direction. It is still useful to consider how Biased assimilation and the HME can be viewed as manifestations of naive realism or how HME and Biased Assimilation reduce cognitive dissonance (See (Pronin et al., 2004; Zanna et al., 1976). But crucially, Richardson showed that both effects can occur simultaneously and so it is not correct or necessary to view them as two opposing phenomena that manifest themselves at different times due to different factors, Biased assimilation are the HME and not contradictory.

## Chapter 3: Discussion

The goal of work was to investigate what the HME is; the way the field of research has developed since its inception; how well corroborated it is as a phenomenon both cross culturally and in validity; what relationships it has with other variables and effects, as well as how its existence has been used in the literature. To do this, relevant papers were extracted from a Scopus search and manually evaluated for their relevance to the HME. Based on whether the HME was mentioned in the title or abstract or if idea related to the biased perception of media were discussed. After this salient information was extracted regarding the methodology, hypotheses, and contexts of the experiments. Following which the papers were divided into those that attempted to replicate or validate the existence of the HME, those that investigated the mechanisms surrounding the HME and those that used the HME as a basis for investigation into other phenomena such as the Third Person Effect.

The results showed that overall the HME was a well-supported effect in many contexts, including those outside the initial one of Israeli-Arab conflict (e.g. K. S. Kim, 2011; Matheson & Dursun, 2001). Although it was not found in all contexts studied, or partisan groups included (Ariyanto et al., 2007; Elder & Greene, 2003; Vallone et al., 1985). There are many potential factors that can explain the lack of a significant result in these cases, the consensus was always in support of the effect existing.

It then becomes a factor of considering what mechanisms and variables to contribute to whether the HME will be observed or not. A key predictive variable when investigated was that of Minority Perception (Ariyanto et al., 2007; Hwang et al., 2008; Yun et al., 2016). It seems that there is a strong link between the observation of the HME or the magnitude of the effect, and the perception among partisans that their position is in the minority and incongruent with the views of the majority of people. It has been suggested that this increased perception of hostility is a functional response for minority groups, who would perceive themselves to be under great pressure to uphold their ingroup identity as they are low status. Thus they will be more sensitive to negative or in many cases simply non-positive media portrayals of their group (Hartmann & Tanis, 2013 as cited by Perloff, 2015). This would explain why the HME is associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in “corrective action” like commenting on disagreeable online news articles, as this would protect the groups reputation in the public eye (Chung et al., 2015; Yun et al., 2016).

This Minority Perception could serve as a research grounded explanation for the increased perception of hostile media portrayals in American Republicans. It was consistently observed that Republicans more than Democrats were prone to the HME (Lee, 2010; Michael & Breaux, 2021; Stalder, 2009). A potential reason for this could be that Republican partisans view themselves as making up the minority. In 2.2.2.1 Antecedents to the HME it is discussed how, both the numerical reality could bare this perception out as well as how media choice and peer interactions could contribute to the idea that they are in the minority, despite their relatively even political power. However no empirical link has been shown, so further research investigating the mediating role of Minority Perception on the relationship between republican identification and the HME.

The variables shown to be predicted by the HME all appear to feed into this minority and oppositional perspective, suggesting that there could be a significant reciprocal relationship between the effect and Minority Perception. It has been suggested that the relationship between partisanship and the HME is also not unidirectional and in fact reciprocal (K. S. Kim, 2011).

The potential mediating and descending variables however do not give any insight into the actual mechanism through which the HME manifests. The prevailing hypotheses are those 3 first proposed by Vallone et al. (1985). The first being the “different standards” explanation that partisans with strong opinions on an issue will perceive any rendition of their position that does not align with their perspective to be unfair i.e., they perceive a neutral article to be an unjust description of what they believe to be a clear-cut issue. In support of this explanation, Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken (1994) found that while attitude did have a direct impacted judgements of bias in the treatment of the 3 groups (Palestinians, Israeli settlers, and the Israeli Military), there was no direct effect on the judgement of which side of the conflict was favoured by the media.

The other broad hypothesis proposed was that of “biased perception”, in that the partisans were actually perceiving and viewing the media in a materially different way from each other. They suggested this validity of this mechanism was evidenced by the TPE. If partisans believe that neutral third parties would be swayed away from their position by the media, then they must believe there was something actively hostile about it, rather than it simply being an unjustly “neutral” piece. This mechanism was further divided into a hypothesised bias in

categorisation of events in the media, and a biased recall of the events reported. Further evidence for these hypotheses is however limited. Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken's study actually found that both of these features were impacted positively by partisan attitudes, and more recent experiment only found evidence for biased categorisation (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006).

The key behavioural outcome to come out of the few experiments to focus on them was likelihood of commenting on online articles (Chung et al., 2015; Yun et al., 2016). This is a much more poignant development to the field as news consumption increasingly moves onto the online sphere. Understanding the way in which partisans will interact with this medium is vital.

It is also important how the field of study has now been broadened to the relative HME, which takes into account the perceptions of bias in already biased media. The results that people's partisan views will prevent an objective analysis of even partisan media, perceiving pro-attitudinal media to be relatively less biased and vice versa (Arpan & Peterson, 2008; Chung et al., 2015; M. Kim, 2016; Zheng & Lu, 2021). This expansion of scope is important because of the aforementioned move to digital media and the rise in popularity of explicitly partisan media (Axt et al., 2020). It is no longer to look to the general media as a generally neutral exclusively nonpartisan and so knowing that the relative HME will exaggerate the perceptions of bias when presented with disagreeable information is important to keep in mind. Although it has been suggested the role of source plays an important role and this bias can be utilised by media to promote a balanced message. If counter-attitudinal media is presented to partisans from an "in-group" source, there is far less perceived bias and the partisans will be more willing to accept the information presented (M. Kim, 2016).

The final section of this work was dedicated to describing the areas not strictly part of the HME but still crucial to discuss when understanding it. The conceptual connections between the Hostile Media Effect, the Third Person Effect and Biased Assimilation are strong. It has been suggested that the HME and Biased Assimilation are two manifestation of either naïve realism or the alleviation of cognitive dissonance, and that which effect is observed could be mediated by the TPE (Perloff, 2015; Pronin et al., 2004; Richardson et al., 2008; Zanna et al., 1976). Richardson, however, suggests that the two effects are not opposites of each other and found that they can in fact occur simultaneously. This was explained conceptually as Biased Assimilation causing the partisan to interpret the media as congruent and favourable,

but still hostile as it was not a fair treatment of the material (the HME). This finding in fact lines up with the surprising results of Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken (1984) mentioned earlier as well as supporting the different standards interpretation of the HME.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

This work has summarised the findings and developments in the literature of the Hostile Media Effect since its inception with Vallone et al (1985), based on papers initially drawn from scopus.com. The effect has been placed in the context of predictive variables, as well as those that are predicted by the effect. It has been related to other effects, namely the Third Person Effect and Biased Assimilation. Behavioural outcomes have been explored as well as analysis trying to explain the conceptual importance of Minority Perceptions to the effect with American Republicans used as a key example of how the variable can play a role in the dynamic and reciprocal relationship the HME has with associated concepts.

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