REVOLUTIONARY EMOTION: EMPATHY AND EQUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract

Why does public opinion become more egalitarian regarding marginalized or stigmatized out-groups? Whites became dramatically more egalitarian during the 1960s in their views about civil rights for African Americans, but what were the mechanisms that motivated this massive egalitarian shift? The activities and strategies of the civil rights movement were critical to changing the nation’s hearts and minds, but what was it about the actions of movement activists that changed public opinion? Similarly, twenty years ago it was unthinkable to most Americans that gay men and women would be able to marry legally, but now thirteen states grant this right and a majority of the American public supports gay marriage. What caused these egalitarian changes?

Central to this research is the distinction between empathy, which involves feeling the emotions of another, and sympathy, which refers to feeling pity or sorry for another. I advance two theories in which I propose that the emotional states of empathy and sympathy motivate different kinds of political opinions and outcomes: a theory of empathy and equality and a theory of sympathy and charity. I test these theories in the context of the modern-day civil rights debate over gay rights using a multi-method approach to answer the question: how does empathy for gay individuals influence heterosexuals’ opinions about policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans? This specific question can speak to the general question of how empathy changes public opinion about policies affecting marginalized or minority groups.

In field experiments, a natural experiment, and a survey experiment, I use real world media to stimulate emotional responses to gay and lesbian individuals as naturally as possible in order to test the effects of empathy and sympathy states on heterosexuals’ opinions about gay
rights. I also collect the first national survey of Americans (N=3010) to include validated
measures of the traits of global empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective-taking and further
explore the relationships between these traits and political outcomes. On the whole, I find
support for the theories but also generate numerous questions for future research regarding the
workings of empathy and sympathy in U.S. politics.
Acknowledgements

The roots of this project can be traced back to my experiences as an undergraduate at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Discussions with my instructors and fellow students in one seminar in particular, Gender and Group Process in a Multicultural Context, allowed me to experience and witness empathy in communication across social difference in a very real way, although I may not have called it “empathy” at the time. I will always be grateful to Orli Avi-Yonah, Melissa Peet, and my fellow students for honestly grappling with and sharing both their thoughts and emotions about contentious political issues for three hours every Friday morning in the winter semester of 2002. I am also thankful to the wonderful MAPSS staff, John MacAlloon, and other extraordinary faculty at the University of Chicago. My M.A. thesis adviser at Chicago, Dorian Warren, deserves special thanks for his patient advising, kindness, and encouragement.

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Those I have mentioned thus far have contributed in so many ways big and small to the overall development of this dissertation and the (at times arduous) endeavor that is graduate school. However, individuals who assisted with specific elements of this dissertation research
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x
For Grace, who sees it all
## Contents

*Abstract*  

*Acknowledgements*  

**CHAPTER 1** Political Dramas, Public Emotion, and Minority Rights  

**CHAPTER 2** Two Theories of Emotional Motivations and Outcomes: Empathy and Equality, Sympathy and Charity  

**CHAPTER 3** Are the Kids All Right? Evidence of the Effects of Empathy Deficits from Two Movie Theater Field Experiments  

**CHAPTER 4** Love and Basketball: Estimating the Effects of Out-group Empathy Encounters on a National Sample of Americans  

**CHAPTER 5** Feeling with, Feeling for, & Not Feeling at All: How the Traits of Empathy, Sympathy, and Perspective-taking Influence Politics  

**CHAPTER 6** Recognition and Revolution  

**APPENDIX A** Appendix to Chapter 3  

**APPENDIX B** Appendix to Chapter 4  

**APPENDIX C** Appendix to Chapter 5
Introduction

Political Dramas, Public Emotion, and Minority Rights

“Empathy is the most revolutionary emotion.”
~Gloria Steinem

Less than a year after leading a national bus tour to rally opposition to gay marriage for the National Organization for Marriage (NOM), former organizer Louis Marinelli announced that he supports marriage equality. Mr. Marinelli attributed his drastic change of opinion to the empathy he experienced for the gay and lesbian individuals whom he encountered while working for NOM. In a blog post, he describes how he suddenly realized the humanity of these individuals and had empathy for them, which made him question his opposition to gay marriage:

“Even though I had been confronted by the counter-protesters throughout the marriage tour, the lesbian and gay people whom I made a profession out of opposing became real people for me almost instantly. For the first time I had empathy for them and remember asking myself what I was doing…I really came to understand that gays and lesbians were just real people who wanted to live real lives and be treated equally as opposed to, for example, wanting to destroy American culture. No, they didn’t want to destroy American culture, they wanted to openly participate in it. I was well on my way to becoming a supporter of civil marriage equality…”
~Louis J. Marinelli, blog post, April 7, 2011

Mr. Marinelli describes his experience of empathizing with gay and lesbian individuals as enabling him to understand the identities, aspirations, and desires of gay and lesbian Americans and as motivating him to completely change his mind on the issue of gay marriage—from a passionate opponent to a strong supporter. The story of Mr. Marinelli illustrates, at the individual level, the process and importance of empathy-motivated, egalitarian opinion change that I
examine in this dissertation. But in addition, I argue that in certain political moments, large numbers of individual changes like that of Mr. Marinelli produce aggregate egalitarian shifts in public opinion. Accordingly, the main focus of this dissertation is the relationship between empathy and egalitarian public opinion change. The objective of this research is to understand why, during particular periods, public opinion becomes more egalitarian regarding marginalized or minority out-groups. Whites became dramatically more egalitarian during the 1960s in their views about civil rights for African Americans (Schuman et al. 1997), but what were the mechanisms that motivated this massive egalitarian shift? Certainly, the activities and strategies of the civil rights movement were critical to changing the nation’s hearts and minds (Lee 2002; McAdam 1982), but I want to understand the why and the how: why did movement events change public opinion and how, psychologically, did this occur? Similarly, twenty years ago, it was unthinkable to most Americans that gay men and women would be able to marry legally (Loftus 2001), but now thirteen states grant this right and a majority of the American public supports gay marriage (USA Today/Gallup poll, Nov. 26-29, 2012). To what can we attribute these changes? More broadly, what are the causal mechanisms that motivated (and perhaps continue to motivate) the slow march to equality witnessed throughout United States history? In this dissertation, I suggest that one cause may be empathy.

Empathy is defined as an affective response to another’s situation or wellbeing—that is, an emotional response more appropriate to the other’s circumstances than one’s own—which often results when an individual puts herself in another’s place (Hoffman 2000; Batson et al.
Psychologists have studied empathy extensively and have demonstrated that experiencing empathy can have a host of positive effects on intergroup relations, including reducing prejudice and prompting feelings of injustice on others’ behalf (Stotland 1969; Hoffman 2000; Baron-Cohen 2003; Paluck and Green 2009; Galinsky & Moscowitz 2000; Vescio et al. 2003; Finlay & Stephan 2000; Dovidio et al. 2004). Empathizing with an out-group individual has also been shown to increase warmth toward and desires to help the individual’s group (Batson et al. 1997, 2002). The existing psychology research provides key insights for helping scholars and the public understand the relationship between empathic predispositions and experienced empathy states as well as the causal links between empathy for out-group individuals and subsequent feelings and behavior toward out-groups. However, this research has been conducted almost exclusively in lab settings with student subjects, which raises the usual concerns regarding the generalizability of the findings to real world contexts and to broader, more diverse populations. In addition, psychologists often induce states of empathy among subjects with artificial, cognitive instructions to imagine a “day in the life” of an out-group member or to engage in “perspective-taking,” and then they proceed to measure states of empathy with survey items that conceptually align more closely with the related but distinct affective construct of sympathy (Batson et al. 1997, 2002; Dovidio et al. 2004; Galinsky and Moscowitz 2000). Furthermore, to my knowledge, none of the psychological studies have examined empathy’s effects on political attitudes, instead focusing exclusively on outcome variables related to personal or private acts of helping, such as donating money or time.

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1 In this dissertation, I use the term empathy to refer to the specific phenomenon of emotional congruence, the state of feeling another person’s emotions (Hatfield et al. 1992), which I distinguish from other types of emotional responses to others’ circumstances, such as feeling sorry, pity, or compassion, referred to throughout as sympathy.
In this dissertation, I aim to address the weaknesses of this prior work by utilizing research settings, populations, and experimental stimuli that engender greater external validity. I report the results of two field experiments that used local student and community samples as well as a survey experiment and a natural experiment utilizing a large national panel study of heterosexual Americans. The stimuli in the first three experiments are real videos created by professionals for broad audiences: movies in the case of the field experiments and a video advertisement in the case of the survey experiment. The stimulus in the natural experiment is the personal “coming out” story of NBA player Jason Collins that saturated the U.S. media environment from April 29th to May 1, 2013, fortuitously while one of my surveys was in the field. This timing enables me to assess what effects, if any, this real opportunity to empathize with a gay individual had on public opinion. My objective in using real-world stimuli in all of these studies is to create (or capture, in the case of the natural experiment) true emotional experiences of empathy with out-group individuals and then to show that these real, natural experiences of empathy change people’s opinions about policies affecting minority out-groups. However, how a person responds to these sorts of potential empathy encounters will depend upon the character of the specific encounter as well as on the character of the individual himself, and in particular, his trait of or predisposition for empathy. Accordingly, the theory proposed herein considers individual differences and contextual factors that shape the way that people respond emotionally to their environments, offers a more comprehensive conceptualization of experienced emotional states than previous research, and generates specific predictions for the ways in which particular emotional states will affect dominant individuals’ opinions related to the rights and well-being of marginal out-groups. To test these predictions, I incorporate precise
measures of both dispositional (trait) and situational (state) empathy and sympathy as well as a host of dependent variables that operationalize both political and charitable outcomes.

The broad question I attempt to answer in the dissertation is: How do empathy and sympathy for marginal individuals influence majority political behavior and opinions about policies affecting marginal out-groups? The theory of empathy and equality that I propose is that empathy is a unique emotion that motivates egalitarian action and policy preferences for marginal groups because empathy enables the dominant individuals to actually feel the emotions of the other. This is in contrast to other kinds of emotions, like anxiety or sympathy, in which the person experiencing the emotion remains rooted in her own perspective. Empathy thus gives people the experience of feeling what it is like to be a member of a marginalized group, and thus to feel inequality from the minority perspective. This unique experience, this emotional glimpse into the heart and mind of an out-group other, in turn, leads people to desire greater equality for the other’s group. I also propose and test a theory of sympathy and charity, in which I predict that experiencing sympathy for out-group others motivates preferences for alleviating needs rather than ensuring rights, for example, through private acts of helping or support for needs-based policies. While sympathy for the less fortunate and associated outcomes certainly have a place in civilized society, I suggest that sympathy alone has a democratic dark side. In this dissertation, I explore the possibility that sympathetic motivations actually inhibit equality by reinforcing existing power dynamics and producing political apathy, thereby ignoring structural inequalities.

I test these theories in the context of the contemporary debate over equality for sexual minorities by examining the effects of heterosexuals’ empathy and sympathy toward gay and lesbian individuals. The survey and experimental methods I employ in this dissertation research
aim to answer the question: How do empathy and sympathy for gay individuals influence heterosexuals’ opinions regarding policies that affect gay and lesbian Americans? This specific question speaks to the general question of how empathy and sympathy influence majority individuals’ behavior toward and opinions about policies affecting marginalized groups.

**Historical Motivations**

Stories like that of Mr. Marinelli and a large body of psychology research suggest that empathy may have important implications for politics, yet thus far, there has been no theory of empathy in the political science literature. In many ways, this makes sense. Empathy and politics do not naturally or intuitively seem to go together. Indeed, watching even five minutes of a cable news talk show could quite understandably lead a wise observer to believe that there is no empathy in politics. However, I want to suggest that in certain political moments, empathy is not only present but powerful. For example, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was arguably the greatest political achievement of the civil rights movement, and its passage is often linked directly to the events of “Bloody Sunday” that occurred earlier that year in Selma, Alabama on March 7, 1965. Images of extreme police violence against peaceful African American protestors were broadcast around the nation, and Lee (2002) presents evidence from letters that Americans wrote to the president that public reactions to these images were what provided the political will and urgency to pass the Voting Rights Act. What I hope readers will consider after weighing the evidence contained in this dissertation is that, before these television images could substantially influence public opinion in this way, watching the events of Bloody Sunday may have first produced the emotional reaction of empathy. This dissertation was motivated, in part, by the observation that
particular kinds of events and/or media coverage of those events, such as “Bloody Sunday,” can rivet public attention and produce strong emotional reactions among large portions of the public. These kinds of events transform from “regular news” and take on the qualities of theatre to tell a compelling, dramatic story, engaging not just people’s minds, but their hearts as well. I call these types of events political dramas, and I argue that particular kinds of political dramas have the power to change prevailing public opinion and catalyze important political outcomes.

During the political drama of Bloody Sunday, white viewers from across the nation may have empathized with African-American marchers as they were being brutally beaten by police, and this empathy may have “mobilized public opinion” (Lee 2002), and also, moved many people to action—by either writing letters to their political representatives or by actually physically moving to join the protests. A historical account of public reactions to Bloody Sunday from George Leonard, a San Francisco magazine editor who watched the events unfold on his living room television with his wife, illustrates this assertion:

A shrill cry of terror, unlike any sound that had passed through a TV set, rose up as the troopers lumbered forward, stumbling sometimes on the fallen bodies…Unhuman. No other word can describe the motions…The bleeding, broken and unconscious passed across the screen, some of them limping along, others supported on either side, still others carried in arms or on stretcher. It was at this point that my wife, sobbing, turned and walked away, saying, “I can’t look anymore.” …I was not aware that at the same moment people all up and down the West Coast were feeling what my wife and I felt…[that] hundreds of these people would drop whatever they were doing; that some of them would leave home without changing clothes, borrow money, overdraw their checking accounts; board planes, busses, trains, cars; travel thousands of miles with no luggage; get speeding tickets, hitchhike, hire horse-drawn wagons; that these people, mostly unknown to one another, would move for a single purpose: to place themselves alongside the Negroes they had watched on television. (Leonard 1965, xx; in Lee 2002, 3; emphasis mine)

Anecdotally, this passage suggests that the media images from Bloody Sunday had powerful emotional effects on many white viewers—emotional effects that led them to desire real equality for African Americans. These images even moved some viewers to make significant personal sacrifices and travel great distances to stand alongside their fellow citizens—literally on
the same, equal ground. Others wrote letters expressing their outrage to their political representatives, and while most probably took no action at all, Lee’s (2002) analysis of letters provides evidence that the strategies of the civil rights movement mobilized massive, egalitarian changes in white public opinion. ² Lee (2002) makes an important contribution to political science by challenging elite-driven accounts of racial attitude change in the 1960s (Carmines & Stimson 1989). However, if opinion change was motivated from the bottom up as Lee (2002) convincingly claims, scholars of public opinion still do not have a theoretical framework for understanding the mechanisms behind this massive egalitarian shift in white Americans’ opinions. I suspect that the mechanism of experiencing empathy for African Americans—that is, getting an emotional glimpse into what oppressive Jim Crow policies felt like and why African Americans deeply desired an end to these policies—enabled many whites to recognize African Americans as their fellow citizens and to viscerally understand what was at stake, which then motivated these white Americans to change their opinions in an egalitarian direction about the rights that African Americans were entitled to as full and equal American citizens.

Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, particularly as it played out in New Orleans, is a more recent example of a political drama that elicited strong emotional reactions from many who watched the disaster unfold on television. Political observers, including many in academia,

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² Lee (2002) also makes a convincing argument for using letters written to the president to gauge public opinion as an alternative to traditional public opinion polls. He shows that the creation of survey questions addressing key civil rights issues most of the time lagged behind the civil rights events that influenced the public. Without comparable survey measures asked consistently throughout the civil rights period that would allow for pre-post assessment of public opinion relative to particular events, he argues it is impossible to adjudicate between elite-driven accounts of public opinion change and his alternative bottom-up theory by using survey evidence alone. Still, for survey-oriented readers, I have found two comparable (though not identical) questions, one asked shortly before and one asked shortly after “Bloody Sunday.” In October 1964, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) asked a national sample of U.S. adults: “Do you think white children and Negro children should go to the same schools or to separate but equal schools?” In June 1965, NORC again asked a national sample of U.S. adults: “Do you think white students and Negro students should go to the same schools or to separate schools?” In October 1964, 63% of whites responded “same schools,” and in June 1965, 70% of whites gave this answer (Schuman et al. 1997). Given the differences in question wording and the other key events besides “Bloody Sunday” that occurred during the period between these surveys (including President Johnson’s initiation of the Voting Rights Act, its passage by the Senate, and debate over it in the House), these data provide only suggestive evidence that the events of “Bloody Sunday” mobilized public opinion. Though the survey evidence is worth noting, as Lee (2002) argues, his more fine-grained analysis of letters provides stronger support.
expected that the disaster’s disproportionate impact on African Americans would serve to expose continuing racial inequality in the United States. Frymer et al. (2005) remarked that “perhaps the inequalities laid bare by the hurricane will provide a longer-term wake-up call to those who wish to actively build a more fair and meaningful democracy,” taking for granted that racial inequalities had indeed been “laid bare.” However, surveys in the months after the hurricane indicated that the Katrina disaster did not uniformly communicate a message of persistent racial inequality as they and many others assumed (See Figure 1.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race of Respondent</th>
<th>Pew Research Center Survey</th>
<th>University of Chicago Survey</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Pew Research Center (2005) survey conducted Sept. 6-7, 2005 and the 2005 Racial Attitudes and the Katrina Disaster Study conducted Oct. 28-Nov. 17, 2005 (Dawson, Cohen, & Harris-Lacewell 2006); exact question wording: “felt that the disaster revealed the persistence of racial inequality” (Pew 2005) and “Katrina shows there’s a lesson to be learned about continued racial inequality” (Dawson et al. 2006).

Although a vast majority of African Americans believed that the Katrina disaster exposed the persistence of racial inequality, only a minority of whites drew the same conclusion (Pew Research Center 2005; Dawson, Cohen, & Harris-Lacewell 2006). Furthermore, evidence from letters to the editor written to USA Today suggests that some Americans saw discussions of racial inequality in Katrina’s aftermath as inappropriate, discouraging, and in stark opposition to the charity and volunteerism that the disaster elicited (Czaja 2007). Eric Sanford, Ed Hardin, and Becky Taylor all wrote to USA Today to express their disagreement with talking about racial inequality in relation to the Katrina disaster:
“I am outraged at rapper Kanye West and other critics who have turned the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina into an issue of ethnicity and race ("Leaders push to make sure blacks given fair share of rebuilding jobs," News, Wednesday). We, as Americans, have come together and supported the survivors of Hurricane Katrina with food and water...Charities have collected numerous donations from the entire nation. Our government has done a good job in helping survivors, despite adverse conditions in New Orleans. Let us not confuse a natural disaster with an ethnic issue. This comparison is a slap in the face for those of us who have poured out our hearts and given donations to the survivors of Hurricane Katrina.” – Eric Sanford / Wichita (USA Today, 9/12/05: A.22)

“I read with frustration USA TODAY's report on the perceptions of African-Americans toward the president for his role or lack thereof in the Katrina relief effort...And I find it hard to recall when any African-American leader has stepped up and recognized President Bush for anything positive. Never before has the president's home state of Texas -- considered a bastion of conservatism -- shown such an outpouring of selfless love and hospitality. As a Texan, I don't care in the least whether victims are white or black, poor or rich, Democrat or Republican. Katrina didn't discriminate, and neither will most of those helping our neighbors to the east...To those who see this catastrophe as an opportunity to gain political ground, stop your bashing. And to USA TODAY and other media, why not direct polls at Katrina's victims now living in Texas to determine what they think? My guess is that you'd get quite different results.” – Ed Hardin / Houston (USA Today, 9/15/05: A.12)

“How distressing it is to hear the continued focus on the division Hurricane Katrina created in this country vs. the unity 9/11 brought about ("Views of whites, blacks differ starkly on disaster," Cover story, News, Tuesday). USA TODAY has it backward. For those of us who are actually working with Katrina survivors, these are times not of division, but of healing. These are times of crossing racial and economic lines to help one another and perhaps to heal some of the old wounds. USA TODAY’s poll focusing on the racial issue creates a problem. It also may dissuade some from doing volunteer work. Don't push people down, pull them up. I bet readers would be impressed to find out just how much people have done to help Katrina survivors and how appreciative most of these survivors are for the assistance. When 9/11 hit, it was scary, but it did not pull people together to help one another, as Katrina has done.” – Becky Taylor / Fort Worth (USA Today, 9/15/05: A.12)

Each of these letter writers emphasized the charitable deeds that they and others had done for Katrina victims. Ed expressed his “frustration” at hearing about African Americans’ negative perceptions of President Bush’s response to the disaster, rebutting these perceptions by highlighting that “the president’s home state of Texas—considered a bastion of conservatism—[had] shown such an outpouring of selfless love and hospitality.” Eric was not only frustrated but offended, arguing that the introduction of race into the debate was “a slap in the face for those of us who have poured out our hearts and given donations.” Similarly, Becky found talk of racial
inequality not only “distressing” but counterproductive, saying that “focusing on the racial issue creates a problem…[and] may also dissuade some from doing volunteer work” (Czaja 2007). I do not claim that the sentiments expressed in these three letters are representative, necessarily, of the sentiments of all Americans (or even all white Americans) in response to the Katrina disaster. They are representative, however, of a broader orientation toward others that prioritizes individual private acts of helping as a solution to social problems and thus downplays problems and solutions conceived as political (Eliasoph 1999). Eliasoph’s (1999) ethnographic work demonstrates that some people strongly prefer addressing issues they see as manageable enough for them to directly make a difference through private action. Eliasoph (1999) documents how these people produce political apathy by actively placing larger political problems outside of their spheres of concern. She argues that such problems are viewed as too big for people to address on their own, and thus too discouraging to attempt to solve, which is what, according to Eliasoph (1999), produces an avoidance of politics. In addition to this cognitive explanation, I suggest that the emotion of sympathy is what motivates the desire to individually and immediately make a difference in the first place. When someone feels sympathy in response to the problem or suffering of another, he or she “feels sorry” or “feels bad” for the other, but also feels badly himself. When the person takes private action to alleviate the problem or suffering of the other, the actor also alleviates his or her own unpleasant feelings. For someone driven by sympathy, it would make sense to avoid exposure to problems that do not allow for such a direct route to making oneself feel better. And although individual acts of helping are valuable and necessary in society, the active disengagement from politics that Eliasoph (1999) describes suggests a potential dark side of sympathy as a motivator for social behavior.
Returning to the case of white responses to the Hurricane Katrina disaster, despite their lower acknowledgment than African Americans of the role that racial inequality played in the disaster, whites were not indifferent to the suffering in New Orleans that was broadcast into their homes.Corroborating the letter writers’ claims of widespread altruism in the storm’s aftermath, the records of charitable organizations show that the Katrina disaster produced a massive and rapid charitable response from across the nation—from all Americans—which well surpassed the rate of giving for other recent disasters. Within two and a half weeks after the Katrina disaster, Americans had contributed $587 million to charities assisting Katrina victims; compare that to $239 million raised within 10 days of the 2001 terror attacks and $163 million raised by American charities within nine days of the South Asian tsunamis. The American Red Cross alone raised $439.5 million in the initial two and a half week period after Hurricane Katrina, compared to the $173 million it raised during the same time frame for the South Asian tsunami victims (Lewis and Wallace 2005).

What explains these unprecedented levels of charitable giving from a majority white public to help the Katrina disaster’s disproportionately African American victims? Although most whites did not understand the disaster through the lens of racial inequality as most African Americans did, the images of African American suffering that were broadcast into their homes motivated many to donate money to charities that were assisting Katrina victims, and some, even to travel to New Orleans to volunteer. What was it about these images that motivated these altruistic actions and simultaneously allowed for vehement denial that race had any role to play in the disaster? I propose that the mechanism of feeling sympathy for African Americans is what motivated white altruism in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, but at the same time, foreclosed
deeper understanding of racial inequality. Indeed, survey evidence suggests that an overwhelming majority of whites felt “very” or “somewhat” sympathetic for hurricane victims (Huddy and Feldman 2006), and the racial gap between whites and African Americans in sympathy for the victims was much smaller than the gaps in opinions about racial inequality noted above (See Figure 1.2). Unlike the empathy I suggest was elicited by “Bloody Sunday,” whites’ sympathetic response to African American Katrina victims did not enable whites to feel or see the tragedy from an African American perspective. I suspect that most whites did not feel emotions along with the Katrina victims whom they witnessed on television. Indeed, a national survey of Americans conducted in the aftermath of the disaster that asked respondents about a series of negative emotions they had felt since the storm demonstrates persistent emotional gaps between white and black Americans that mirror the gaps in opinion reported above (Harris-Lacewell 2007). The proportion of African Americans who reported feeling sad, nervous, and hopeless “very often” since the storm was more than double the proportion of whites reporting these emotions (Harris-Lacewell 2007). This comparison suggests that African Americans were more than twice as likely as whites to strongly feel emotions in line with those of the storm survivors. That is, African Americans seemed much more likely to experience empathy for the Katrina survivors than white Americans. Instead, it seems that whites felt sympathy for the predominantly African American victims, and white sympathy nearly matched African American sympathy (Huddy and Feldman 2006). However, the nature of sympathy is such that victims are the objects of sympathizers’ emotion (Darwall 1998). Sympathetic white observers remained rooted in their own emotions and worldviews, unable to take the emotional or cognitive
What I hope to suggest with these two historical anecdotes is the power of political dramas to produce different kinds of public emotions, which have differing consequences for both public opinion and political outcomes. Central to my research is the distinction between sympathy, which refers to feeling sorry for another, and empathy, which involves feeling another’s emotions and putting oneself—either consciously or unconsciously—“in another’s shoes.” In the two theories I propose in this dissertation, I argue that these two emotional phenomena can lead to very different political outcomes. Because empathy involves what psychologists call “self-other overlap”—a kind of mental merging with the other—I argue that empathy enables dominant group members to feel inequality from the minority perspective. These experiences of empathy can change majority individuals’ opinions about matters of equality and increase their desires to remedy inequalities using political means (e.g. public policy). Empathy is a revolutionary emotion. In contrast, in sympathy, dominant individuals’ pre-existing worldviews remain. I suggest that sympathy for others in need is a key mechanism underlying the production of political apathy that Eliasoph (1999) documents by motivating
private preferences for and acts of altruism. Thus, while a sympathetic majority member may feel sorry for an out-group individual and want to help, the altruistic attitudes and actions that result will be private or personal—not political—and thus will not challenge the status quo or change systemic inequalities. To summarize, I posit that the political dramas mentioned above generated different kinds of public emotion—empathy in the case of Bloody Sunday and sympathy in the case of Hurricane Katrina—and I suggest that these different emotional responses to African American individuals were the mechanisms behind the different patterns of white public opinion and resultant political outcomes that these events catalyzed.

These claims are scholarly intuitions, and I do not attempt to test them empirically in this dissertation. Instead, I use these well-known examples of political dramas involving primarily African American actors to illustrate, first, that not all public emotion is the same. Furthermore, not only might different types of public emotion have different political consequences, but also, the dominant type of public emotion elicited by a particular event likely depends upon the characteristics of the event and the ways in which the actors are framed by the media and/or the actors themselves. The “Bloody Sunday” marchers, as participants in a social movement, had much more control over the way that they were framed by the media than the victims of the Katrina disaster. Civil rights activists dressed in their Sunday best and strategically employed nonviolent direct action, self-consciously turning the other cheek to the violence they knew would be meted out by Alabama state troopers. These activists had agency and intentionally portrayed the utmost respectability, and the purpose of this strategy was indeed to dramatize the horribly unjust conditions in the Jim Crow South for the entire nation. In his 1963 Letter from a Birmingham Jail, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. explains, “Nonviolent direct action seeks to create
such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to so dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.” King was writing in response to a group of white clergymen who expressed their disapproval of the movement’s strategies and timing and urged King to wait to see whether conditions in the South would gradually improve on their own. King (1963) went on to explain to the white clergymen why he and other African Americans could no longer wait, in my view, appealing to their empathy. The following impassioned passage from King’s letter suggests that one underlying goal of civil rights movement strategies may have been to elicit white empathy as well—to give “those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation” an emotional glimpse into what segregation felt like for African American individuals:

“Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"--then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.”

King’s (1963) rich, personal account of his experiences offer a window into how it felt to be an African American in the South, and through that window, King hoped the clergymen he was writing to would come to “understand why we find it difficult to wait…[and] our legitimate and
unavoidable impatience.” Similarly, this passage suggests to me that movement events like “Bloody Sunday” were strategically designed to give the white viewing public a similar window into, not only the racist, oppressive conditions of the Jim Crow South, but also a window into the stinging, terrifying, smothering, and humiliating nature of those conditions as well as the heartbreak, anxiety, resentment, and despair that those conditions produced.

In contrast, there was no coordinated, strategic purpose driving citizens to stay in New Orleans as Hurricane Katrina approached. People stayed for myriad reasons: because they had no transportation out of the city, because they had nowhere else to go, because they wanted to stay with relatives who were too ill, immobile, or stubborn to leave, because they’d weathered many storms before, etc. Although some have since argued that the Katrina disaster showed the nation how little the government cares about black people, most notably popular R & B artist Kanye West, dramatizing this message was not the objective of those who stayed. It is probably fair to say that very few people, if anyone, predicted the scale of death and destruction that the hurricane (and the breeched levees and subsequent government response) would bring. And when the camera crews arrived and the media began reporting on the disaster, there were multiple competing frames of the nature of the event (Czaja 2007). Was it a natural or man-made disaster? Was the slow government response a result of incompetence, indifference, or racism? Who was to blame for the scope of the tragedy? Who were the people that had been tragically impacted by the disaster: were they survivors, victims, evacuees, refugees, citizens, heroes, or criminals? Many who remained in New Orleans asserted their status as American citizens by waiving or wearing American flags (Harris-Perry 2011), exercising the agency they still had available to them and attempting to elicit the respect and aide they deserved amidst the chaos of
the disaster. Yet, in a broader sense, the men and women stranded in New Orleans after the levees breeched were not strategically donning their best, most respectable clothing to expose structural racism to the nation. They were ordinary American citizens, stuck for days in a flooded city lacking basic services, food, and potable water, literally stripped down to their most vulnerable.

Social movement events in which the individuals involved have some measure of control lend themselves to eliciting public empathy, whereas situations in which those involved have little control, like natural disasters, are more likely to produce public sympathy. This is because those involved in social movements, by the nature of movement activity itself, are most often viewed as agentic actors. Likewise, natural disasters, by their very nature, primarily frame those affected as needy victims. Because people empathize more readily with those they perceive as similar to themselves (Harrison 2011; Batson et al. 2005; Hoffman 2000; Cialdini et al. 1997) and people most often view themselves as autonomous individuals (Kelley and Michela 1980), I posit that most people also have an easier time empathizing with agentic actors than they do with needy victims. That is, people emotionally identify with agentic actors, feeling emotions that correspond more to these others’ situations than their own. Conversely, people pity or feel sorry for needy victims, but importantly, these feelings of sympathy are one’s own emotions, not the victims’ emotions. For these reasons, dramatic social movement events in which movement members present themselves as models of autonomy are likely to produce the public emotion of empathy while dramatic crises or disasters in which human vulnerabilities transform people into needy victims are likely to produce the public emotion of sympathy.
Civil rights movement events like “Bloody Sunday” and the more recent racialized disaster of Hurricane Katrina inspired this dissertation, but the location of these events in the past and the associated data limitations prevent me from testing the psychological mechanisms I propose in these specific cases. Thus, I now want to pivot from these motivating cases of white emotion toward African Americans to an ongoing, modern-day civil rights issue: the political conflict over same-sex marriage and gay rights. In the context of this contemporary national debate over equality for sexual minorities, I test my theoretical predictions by examining the effects of heterosexuals’ empathy and sympathy toward gay and lesbian individuals.

**Contemporary Test Case**

In the last decade or so, the American public has seen more political battles over same-sex marriage and gay rights play out on television, which has given many Americans exposure to gay individuals (including those publicly participating in emotional marriage ceremonies) that they may not otherwise have in their everyday lives. However, social movements and political protests are just one possible producer of empathy in the political realm. I want to suggest that entertainment media may also play an important role in stimulating empathy for minority out-groups among the dominant public. Specifically, I argue that, in the contemporary period, gay and lesbian individuals’ increasing media presence has allowed the heterosexual public to empathize with these individuals and that the cumulative effects of empathy are evident in the public’s steadily increasing egalitarianism on gay rights. Openly gay talk show hosts like Ellen DeGeneres and Rosie O’Donnell, the gay main characters on popular TV sitcoms like *Will and Grace* and *Modern Family*, and the protagonists of recent movies like *Brokeback Mountain*,
MILK, and *The Kids Are All Right* all invite viewers to empathize with them. And the most recent example of a possible real-world empathy stimulus in the media is Jason Collins, a professional NBA player who authored a deeply personal article in *Sports Illustrated* about his decision to come out as gay to his family, friends, and the public at the age of 34. The article, which was posted on the *Sports Illustrated* website on April 29, 2013 and published as the cover story of the magazine a week later, served as Mr. Collins’ initial announcement of his gay identity to the public as well as his fellow players. Subsequent media coverage of his announcement, including an exclusive interview with Collins on *Good Morning America* and another interview with Collins and members of his family on *Oprah’s Next Chapter*, may also have generated empathy for him as an individual. In fact, some research suggests that media encounters with out-group others might be more effective at inducing empathy because it is less threatening than direct interpersonal contact (Allport 1954; Cameron & Rutland 2006; Oatley and Mar 2006, in Hsu 2008). Moreover, vicarious contact with out-group individuals in TV and film might be the primary or only way for certain members of the public to “interact” with out-group individuals with whom they would otherwise have only limited or no contact in “real life.”

Using the debate over gay marriage, family, and individual rights as a testing ground, in this dissertation, I attempt to identify the processes that lead heterosexual individuals to support equal rights for gay and lesbian Americans and suggest that these processes may also be responsible for the egalitarian trends in public opinion on matters of gay rights that have been observed over the last two decades. According to the *theory of empathy and equality*, when heterosexuals experience states of empathy for gay individuals, their opinions about policies affecting gay Americans as a group will change in an egalitarian direction. In other words, I
expect empathy for gay individuals to be the motivating mechanism that causes heterosexuals to become more egalitarian in their opinions about gay marriage and family rights. I do not expect states of sympathy for gay and lesbian individuals to motivate egalitarian public opinion change. It should be noted that whether experiencing empathy prompts a heterosexual person to change her opinions on gay rights to more egalitarian positions requires that her initial positions are sufficiently inegalitarian, and thus, ripe for change. Heterosexual individuals who already possess highly egalitarian views on policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans may have already undergone an empathic process of opinion change, and in any case, are a difficult group on which to test the theory because already-egalitarian opinions leave little room for further egalitarian movement, making such analysis subject to ceiling effects. In the experimental analyses, I also take into account heterosexual subjects’ predispositions for empathy and sympathy, as individual differences in these tendencies will likely moderate the effects of the stimuli on emotional states and therefore on changes in gay rights opinions. In Figure 1.3, I provide a relational mapping of each key component in the hypothesized process of empathy-motivated opinion change as well as a representation of the alternative sympathy-driven process: individual differences in empathic and sympathetic predispositions (moderator variables), environmental empathy and/or sympathy stimuli (independent variables), states of empathy and/or sympathy (hypothesized/alternative causal mechanisms), and out-group affecting policy opinions and behavior (dependent variables). I will undertake additional explanation of the hypothesized process of egalitarian opinion change in the next chapter.
In addition to exploring traits of empathy and sympathy as moderators in the experimental analysis, I also undertake observational analysis of a large national survey of Americans in which these traits are employed to test my theoretical claims more broadly. The theories proposed herein apply not only to heterosexuals’ opinions about policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans, but should also apply to a range of opinions held by majority or dominant individuals with regard to policies affecting minority or marginal groups, including whites’ opinions regarding policies affecting African Americans and the poor as well as men’s opinions regarding policies affecting women.\footnote{The empirical studies reported herein were conducted according to Princeton University IRB Protocols #5580 (Chapter 3), #5424 (Chapters 4 and 5), and #6236 (Chapter 5).}

Dating at least as far back as Converse (1964), scholars of public opinion have noted the importance of affect toward groups in the formation of people’s opinions about political issues and public policies. In this research tradition, sentiments toward groups are derived from the public’s judgments of the moral worth and deservingness of the groups, and these sentiments are a demonstrated driver of public opinion (Nelson and Kinder 1996). As Nelson and Kinder (1996)
note, “Americans reach political decisions on matters of policy as if they had first determined the moral qualifications of the intended beneficiaries. The resources of government – material benefits and symbolic recognition – should go to those who deserve it” (1071). However, group sentiments can be made more or less salient, and thus central to individuals’ reported opinions in a given context, based upon the considerations that are primed and the frames that are offered by the media (Zaller 1992; Nelson and Kinder 1996). According to these scholars, the public behaves as consumers of elite packaging of political issues in which group members are merely attitude objects contained within those packages (Nelson and Kinder 1996). To the extent that the public attends to elite messages, provided there are no competing messages from more “credible” elite sources that would lead to resistance, the public mostly follows the lead of political elites (Zaller 1992). This understanding of public opinion and media influence suffers from several limitations. First, to reiterate an important point made earlier by Lee (2002), these elite-driven accounts fail to consider the ways in which actors not traditionally considered political elites, such as individual members of out-groups or organizations representing them, may gain access to the media in order to communicate to the public and mobilize public opinion. Public opinion scholars often overlook the fact that ordinary citizens have the power to prime considerations, frame issues, and influence public opinion, too. On a related note, although the media empathy stimuli under investigation in this dissertation might be considered non-traditional political stimuli by some, public opinion researchers would be remiss if they continue to narrowly focus on overtly political, elite-driven forms of media like television news and attack advertising (except see Mutz & Nir 2010). Cultural narratives, including those produced by members of marginal groups themselves like the films and pop culture stories used in these
studies, undoubtedly make their mark on the dominant public consciousness (Williams 2001). Accordingly, the creation and dissemination of these cultural products can be viewed as political acts by out-groups and their allies intended to influence public discourse (Patterson and Monroe 1998). Finally, while it is true that sentiments are often felt toward or about group members or groups (i.e. as attitude objects), I argue in this dissertation that sometimes emotions are felt with out-group individuals, as fellow humans and citizens. This sort of empathic identification with out-group others and its possible political consequences have for the most part been neglected in the literatures on public opinion and media effects.

In sum, the possible effects of particular kinds of actors, particular kinds of media stimuli, and particular kinds of emotion have received scant attention from scholars of public opinion, vastly limiting the kinds of political truths that scholars can know. In this dissertation, I hope to call attention to these gaps in political science knowledge and contribute to the important task of filling them. Furthermore, this dissertation advances political science knowledge of at least one other important but not well-understood facet of politics: public opinion change. Why does public opinion change, and specifically, why does it change in the direction of desiring greater equality for members of marginal or minority groups? If empathy operates in politics by shifting or changing dominant individuals’ emotional perspectives from their own to that of an out-group other, the theoretical framework and empirical tests described in this dissertation will give public opinion scholars a better understanding of why, at particular political moments, public opinion changes, becoming more egalitarian relative to policies affecting out-groups.
Dissertation Overview

In the next chapter, I explicate two theories of emotional motivations for political opinions and behavior: the *theory of empathy and equality* and the *theory of sympathy and charity*. I review existing literature on empathy and sympathy as well as related concepts; I discuss the empirical measurement of empathy and sympathy; I explore the foundations for the proposed theories; and I detail the original theoretical contributions I hope to make in this dissertation. In Chapter 3, I describe the design and results of two field experiments conducted in real movie theaters with local student and community samples. In Chapter 4, I detail the design and findings of a natural experiment and a survey experiment, both utilizing a large national panel survey of heterosexual Americans. The natural experiment leverages the timing of real, naturally occurring empathy stimuli for NBA player Jason Collins who publicly came out as gay on April 29, 2013, halfway through the administration of the pre-treatment survey fielded for the aforementioned survey experiment. I used real, professionally-produced audio-visual stimuli created for broad audiences as treatments in the field and survey experiments—contemporary films in the case of the former and a video advertisement in the case of the latter—with the goal of stimulating the emotions of empathy and sympathy as naturally and with as much external validity as possible. The analyses presented in Chapters 3 and 4 test the hypotheses that states of empathy for gay individuals produce egalitarian opinion change in heterosexuals’ opinions about policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans while states of sympathy for gay individuals do not. In these chapters, I also test my theoretical claim that how a person responds to such stimuli will depend upon the person’s predispositions for empathy and sympathy. In Chapter 5, I take a step back from experimentally examining the specific emotional mechanisms underlying opinion
change in the case of gay rights to assess the relationship between dominant group members’
emotional predispositions and a broader set of out-group-related political opinions and behavior.
Using original data from the first national survey of Americans to include measures of both
empathy and sympathy traits, I examine the impact of these other-oriented traits on
heterosexuals’ opinions about gay rights, men’s opinions about women’s issues, and whites’
policy preferences related to African Americans and the poor. I also explore the relationships
between these traits and political efficacy and interest, humanitarian and egalitarian values, and a
host of political and charitable behaviors. Several tenets of the proposed theories find support in
these chapters with a few notable caveats, which I will discuss in greater detail in the chapters
that follow. Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation with a discussion of implications for public
policy and political life.
Chapter 2

Two Theories of Emotional Motivations and Outcomes: Empathy and Equality, Sympathy and Charity

“A sense of empathy...is how I understand the Golden Rule—not simply as a call to sympathy or charity, but as something more demanding, a call to stand in somebody else’s shoes and see through their eyes. Like most of my values, I learned about empathy from my mother. She disdained any kind of cruelty or thoughtlessness or abuse of power, whether it expressed itself in the form of racial prejudice or bullying in the schoolyard or workers being underpaid. Whenever she saw even a hint of such behavior in me she would look me square in the eyes and ask, ‘How do you think that would make you feel?’”

~President Barack Obama

Harold Lasswell (1936), one of the earliest political psychologists, famously described politics as the arena for deciding “who gets what, when, how,” endorsing the idea that the political realm is one of conflict in which self-serving, economically-motivated actors duke it out for limited resources. Later work developed these ideas further, painting citizens and elites as the rational, utility-maximizing, self-interested actors of Rational Choice Theory (Downs 1957; Fiorina 1981), and while Rational Choice remains a dominant paradigm for understanding political behavior in political science today, political psychologists have for the most part heeded the call to move “beyond self-interest” (Mansbridge 1990). There are numerous theoretical frameworks within the political psychology literature that provide insight into political conflict among groups rather than individuals, including the foundational theories of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius and Pratto 2001), and
Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Sherif et al. 1961). These theories foreground personal self-esteem needs met by group membership, desires to maintain dominant group status, and real or perceived group conflicts over actual resources, respectively, as the prime motivations for individual attitudes and behavior toward out-groups. Political psychologists have also identified the personality trait of authoritarianism and found that it is a powerful predictor of out-group antipathy, particularly under conditions of political threat (Adorno et al. 1950; Feldman and Stenner 1997; Hetherington and Weiler 2009). Specifically in the case of racial groups, V.O. Key (1949) argued that the economic “racial threat” to white Americans presented by increasing proportions of African American residents is a key predictor of whites’ political attitudes toward African Americans. More recently, scholars of racial politics have debated whether the continuing divisions in public opinion between white and black Americans on both explicit and implicit racial issues are due to a newer kind of values-veiled racism (Sears 1993; Kinder and Sanders 1996), principled conservatism (Sniderman and Piazza 1993), or real conflict over material resources (Bobo 2000) (See also eds. Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000 for an overview of this debate). In addition, in his study of white Americans’ social welfare policy attitudes, Martin Gilens (1999) has demonstrated that negative stereotypes about African Americans as undeserving influence whites’ low levels of support for social welfare policies perceived to benefit African Americans.

Yet all of the above theories, while they abandon Rational Choice Theory’s assumptions of individual rationality and pure economic self-interest, still conceptualize people as self-rather than other-interested. Whether they are fulfilling their own needs for self-esteem, status, or resources, or adhering to their own values, ideology, prejudices, or stereotypes, according to
these accounts, political actors are conceived as entirely self-serving. Furthermore, in their near exclusive attention to conflict and negative orientations toward others, political psychologists have in many cases theoretically transformed the selfish citizen into the hateful, intolerant citizen. However, surely there are people who, at least sometimes, look beyond themselves to focus on the rights and well-being of others outside of their own group and are then motivated to change their opinions, or sometimes even to act, based on these other-focused experiences.

Indeed, we must not forget that nearly all major advances in political equality in the United States have been achieved by people working together, often across group lines of difference and status, and accompanied by massive shifts in dominant public opinion. As described in greater detail in the introduction, the small number of whites who toiled alongside African Americans during the civil rights movement and the much larger number who changed their minds about the citizenship rights due to African Americans represent just one example (Schuman et al. 1997; Lee 2002). Yet scholars of American political behavior still do not have a theoretical framework for understanding the mechanisms behind this cross-group cooperation or the massive egalitarian shift in white Americans’ opinions that occurred during the Civil Rights Era. In fact, only a handful of political behavior scholars have studied other-regarding motivations for political actions and attitudes. Kristen Monroe (1996) uses evidence from interviews with non-Jews who risked their lives to rescue Jews during the Holocaust to argue that true altruists (i.e. completely selfless helpers) are distinct from other people in their belief that all people belong to the same group: the human race. According to Monroe (1996), this belief in a common humanity drives helping behavior, not self-interest or a warm glow of good feeling posited by some economists (Andreoni 1990). Relatedly, using survey evidence, Stanley
Feldman and Marco Steenbergen (2001) argue that humanitarianism, or “a sense of responsibility for one’s fellow human beings that translates into the belief that one should help those who are in need,” is the key value—not egalitarianism—that explains Americans’ social welfare policy attitudes (660). Furthermore, they claim that the greater prevalence of humanitarianism relative to egalitarianism accounts for the needs-based (rather than rights-based) structure of the American welfare state (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001). More recent survey research has also found positive associations between beliefs about the importance of helping others in need, which the study termed “altruistic values,” and support for social spending as well as interpersonal helping behaviors (Smith 2006). See Figure 2.1 for a summary of this research.

This scholarship on positive, other-regarding values is mostly an exception to the apparent rule in political psychology of studying why and under what conditions groups conflict and harbor negative out-group attitudes, particularly with regard to the attitudes of dominant group members toward lower status groups (Mansbridge ed. 1990; Gilens 1999; Kinder & Sanders 1996; Feldman & Stenner 1997; Sidanius & Pratto 2001). And although this literature on other-regarding values represents some important first steps toward understanding the political impact of the brighter side of human nature and intergroup relations, more work needs to be done in order to understand what motivates people to prioritize the rights and well-being of out-group others in the first place.4

4 Cara Wong’s (2010) work on how Americans imagine and subjectively draw the boundaries of “community” and the effect this has on whether and who they feel obligated to help and grant political rights is another notable exception. Still, the underlying mechanisms that are responsible for how limited or inclusive people imagine their communities remain unexplored. Empathy may be one such mechanism.
Figure 2.1. Other-Regarding Belief Systems Studied in Political Science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief System and Definition</th>
<th>Operationalization</th>
<th>Associated Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanitarianism</strong> (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001) or <strong>Altruistic Values</strong> (Smith 2006) “the belief that people have responsibilities toward their fellow human beings and should come to the assistance of others in need” (F &amp; S 2001, p. 659)</td>
<td>In Feldman &amp; Steenbergen 2001: 1. One should always find ways to help others less fortunate than oneself. 2. It is better not to be too kind to people because kindness will only be abused. (R) 3. The dignity and welfare of people should be the most important concern in any society. 4. People tend to pay more attention to the well-being of others than they should. (R) 5. All people who are unable to provide for their basic needs should be helped by others. 6. One of the problems of today's society is that we are often too kind to people who don't deserve it. (R) 7. A person should always be concerned about the well-being of others. 8. I believe it is best not to get involved taking care of other people's needs. (R)</td>
<td>Support for needs-based social spending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Egalitarianism</strong> (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001) “belief in equality” (p. 661)</td>
<td>In Feldman &amp; Steenbergen 2001: 1. One of the biggest problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance. 2. If wealth were more equal in this country we would have many fewer problems. 3. We have gone too far in pushing equality in this country. (R) 4. All in all, I think economic differences in this country are justified. (R) 5. More equality of income would allow most people to live better. 6. Incomes should be more equal because every family's needs for food, housing, and so on, are the same. 7. This country would be better off if we worried less about how equal people are. (R) 8. Incomes cannot be made more equal since people's abilities and talents are unequal. (R)</td>
<td>Support for redistributive social spending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belief in common humanity</strong> (Monroe 1996) belief that all people belong to the same group: the human race</td>
<td>Open-ended interview evidence</td>
<td>Personal helping / altruism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Potential psychological mechanisms—like prosocial personality traits and other-focused emotional states—that might produce or activate such positive orientations have received little attention from political psychologists. Furthermore, the direct impact of such mechanisms on political opinions and behavior has yet to be investigated. In this dissertation, I am primarily concerned with the psychological precursors to egalitarian opinion change and behavior, which I propose are states of empathy and the predisposition (or trait) to experience them. The primary tenet of the theory of empathy and equality that I elaborate in this chapter is that experiencing empathy for out-group individuals contributes to equality by increasing public preferences for equality for the out-group and the desire to remedy inequalities using political means. In this chapter, I also distinguish empathy from the related but distinct concept of sympathy, which can also be operationalized as both a state and a trait. I propose a theory of sympathy and charity in which I posit that experiencing sympathy reinforces existing power dynamics and perpetuates inegalitarian outcomes by motivating altruistic attitudes and private actions that do not alter the structural status quo, such as beliefs about the importance of helping the less fortunate and donating time and money to charity, rather than egalitarian attitude change and public actions. Together, these theories highlight that, as very different psychological states and tendencies, empathy and sympathy motivate very different sorts of political attitudes and behavior, which has implications for the kinds of outcomes that each of these might produce.

As mentioned, prosocial psychological mechanisms—and empathy and sympathy in particular—have received little attention in political science.⁵ As Figure 2.2 below makes clear,

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⁵ One notable exception is the work of Mutz (2002) and Mutz and Nir (2010). Mutz’s (2002) study of the effects of exposure to dissonant political views on political tolerance used a survey experiment to identify trait empathy as a moderator of these effects; that is, only those with high levels of cognitive empathy showed increased political tolerance when exposed to views different from their own. Mutz and Nir (2010) examine the effects of fictional TV crime dramas on public policy attitudes about crime and find that the former had effects primarily when the viewers experienced states of empathy for the main characters in the show.
this means that political behaviorists have been neglecting an entire category of potential motives for prosocial political opinions and outcomes. The social and political variables in the second half of Figure 2.2 represent the kinds of attitudes and behavior that these scholars most often study, while the top half of the figure represents their potential psychological explanations. Note that these psychological variables might exert independent, direct effects of their own on prosocial political outcomes. For example, psychological states of empathy for gay individuals might directly affect opinions about rights-based policies affecting gay Americans as I will argue later in this dissertation. Psychological variables may also influence political outcomes indirectly through mediating prosocial orientations or belief systems, as when a person’s predisposition toward sympathy might lead him to hold strong humanitarian values, which in turn could influence his support for needs-based social spending. Another important thing to note is that the understudied psychological variables at the top of Figure 2.2 are arguably almost always causally prior to the social and political variables lower in the figure. A person’s capacities for empathy and sympathy, and her actual and often automatic or involuntary experiences of these emotions, necessarily precede deliberative thought and the development of cognitive belief systems like egalitarianism and humanitarianism as well as political attitudes and behavior. Therefore, it seems both hasty and unwise to overlook these psychological concepts without thorough investigation as political science has so far done.
Though psychologists have long identified individual differences in the tendency to experience states of empathy (Davis 1983)—different levels of empathic capacity or the trait of empathy—the (re)bourgeoning literature in political science on personality has so far only considered the “Big Five” personality traits and has ignored empathy entirely (Mondak et al. 2010; Gerber et al. 2010; except see Bekkers 2005, 2006). The emotions literature in political science has exclusively explored self-focused emotions like anxiety and enthusiasm (Marcus et al. 2000; Huddy and Feldman 2005; Brader 2005), and political scholars of affect have yet to consider the other-focused emotion of empathy (Darwall 1998). In contrast, psychologists have studied empathy extensively as both a trait and a state (Stotland 1969; Davis 1994; Hoffman 2000; Baron-Cohen 2003) and have demonstrated that experimentally-induced states of empathy can have a host of positive effects on intergroup relations (Paluck and Green 2009). These effects

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6 Earlier work on personality and politics studied the influence of social dominance orientation (SDO) and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), referenced above, which are both conceived as individual predispositions.
include reducing stereotypes (Galinsky and Moscowitz 2000; Vescio et al. 2003) and in-group/out-group biases (Finlay and Stephan 2000), increasing situational rather than dispositional attributions for the outcomes of others’ behavior (Vescio et al. 2003), and prompting feelings of injustice on others’ behalf (Dovidio et al. 2004). Empathizing with an out-group individual has also been shown to increase positive feelings for and willingness to help the individual’s group (Batson et al. 1997; Batson et al. 2002). What’s more, much of this research suggests that such positive, democratically desirable effects can occur even in the absence of real face-to-face contact between members of different groups, decreasing the high practical demands of fulfilling the ideal conditions of contact theory and inclusive democratic deliberation (Allport 1954; Young 2000; Mendelberg 2002). Thus, it stands to reason that empathy may have real and important implications for politics.

To my knowledge, however, little or no research has examined how the empathy trait and related emotional states interact in context in order to influence dominant public opinion with regard to marginal minority out-groups. The two main questions I attempt to answer in this dissertation are: How does an individual’s level of the trait of empathy—usually measured through self-reports of how she typically interacts day-to-day with others in her social network, most likely members of the in-group—impact her emotional responses to out-group members encountered in the public realm? And how do these emotional responses to individual out-group members influence public opinion toward marginal minority groups?
What is Empathy?

Empathy is a basic human capacity that nearly all people possess and develop to some degree, and as such, it is the primary psychological avenue that allows people to move beyond exclusive concern for the self and entertain the thoughts and feelings of others (Hoffman 2000). Both biological factors and early childhood experiences contribute to the levels of empathy that individuals develop (Baron-Cohen 2003; de Waal 2009; Hoffman 2000; Gordon 2005). For example, Baron-Cohen (2003) explains differences in men’s and women’s capacity for global empathy as at least partially a result of male-female brain differences. Other scholars emphasize the role of parenting in determining the extent of children’s empathy development (Hoffman 2000), and others have even designed empathy interventions for kindergarten classrooms in order to ensure that young children cultivate this capacity regardless of their particular parents (Gordon 2005). A thorough review of the antecedents of the trait of empathy is beyond the scope of this dissertation, however, there are several definitional issues that require clarification before I outline my theoretical framework. Goldstein and Michaels (1985) begin their book on empathy by describing the construct as “elusive, confusing, and quite difficult to operationalize,” and they cite 16 different twentieth century definitions of the term (ix, 1-3). The confusion and difficulty derive from several related issues: 1) as I have made reference to above, empathy can be defined as both a trait and a state—as a personality trait or predisposition and as an emotional/mental state; 2) empathy is often conflated with the related, but I argue, distinct concept of sympathy; and 3) relatedly, traits and states of empathy are often conceived of as multidimensional, including both affective and cognitive elements. I discuss and attempt to clarify each of these issues below.
Concepts and Measurement

First, empathy is defined as both a personality trait or predisposition and an experienced mental/emotional state. Individuals’ levels of empathic predisposition influence whether and the degree to which people are impacted by other individuals or empathy encounters (or stimuli) in their environments. In political science terminology, empathy traits might be thought of as indicators of individual sensitivity to empathy cues that influence the likelihood that a person will experience states of empathy in any given situation. The trait of empathy is a latent disposition while states of empathy are manifestations of the trait in particular contexts. When and for whom a person’s trait empathy is activated such that she experiences state empathy depends upon context, including the identity of the empathy target as well as other cues in the environment. For example, numerous scholars have demonstrated that the experience of empathy for another individual is subject to “similarity bias”—that is, people empathize more readily with those that they perceive as similar to themselves (Harrison 2011; Batson et al. 2005; Hoffman 2000; Cialdini et al. 1997).

Empathy as a Trait

As a personality trait, the definition of empathy I use in this dissertation is “the drive to identify emotions and thoughts in others and to respond to these with an appropriate emotion” (Wakabayashi et al. 2006, 930; see also Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004, 170). Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2004) conceive of this drive as having both cognitive and affective dimensions that involve tendencies for “understanding/predicting what someone else might think, feel, or do” and “feeling an appropriate emotion triggered by seeing/learning of another’s
emotion,” respectively (165). Davis’ (1983a, 1983b) definition of trait empathy also includes cognitive and affective elements; however, his conceptual definitions and operationalization of these concepts are more limited than those of Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2004). Davis (1983a) defines perspective-taking as the purely cognitive tendency “to adopt the psychological perspective of other people—to entertain the point of view of others,” (169). Likewise, Davis (1983a) defines the primary affective dimension as the tendency to experience feelings of sympathy and compassion (169). However, nowhere in Davis’ conception is the capacity to feel the other’s emotions or to understand the other’s thoughts, feelings, or behavior. Furthermore, his concept of the affective component of empathy is one of many instances of the conflating of empathy and sympathy in the psychology literature. Figure 2.3 below shows the self-report survey statements that these scholars use to operationalize these traits.

The first column includes a 7-item subset of Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright’s (2004) 40-item “Empathy Quotient” scale for measuring the ability of global empathy,7 and I use these items for measuring the trait of empathy in the studies reported in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. The second column contains Davis’ (1983a) “Empathic Concern” subscale for measuring the tendency to feel sympathy and compassion. Although this subscale was originally developed to capture an affective dimension of empathy, I believe this subscale is more appropriate for measuring the trait of sympathy, and I use the scale accordingly in the studies reported in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Lastly, the third column contains Davis’ (1983a) “Perspective-Taking”

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7 Based upon the factor loadings reported in Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright’s (2004) paper testing the reliability and validity of their “Empathy Quotient” scale, I selected the four positively-worded items with the highest factor loadings and the three negatively-worded items with the highest factor loadings (to minimize survey effects in my shortened scale).
subscale for measuring the tendency to adopt others’ points of view, and I include these items in the analysis reported in Chapter 5 to adjudicate whether it is this purely cognitive trait that influences political orientations, attitudes, and behavior, or whether as my theory suggests, it is the global ability to empathize with others’ feelings as well as their thoughts that matters politically.

Figure 2.3. Operationalizations for Different Definitions & Dimensions of Trait Empathy and Sympathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global Empathy (Baron-Cohen &amp; Wheelwright 2004)</th>
<th>Sympathy (Davis 1983)</th>
<th>Cognitive Perspective-Taking (Davis 1983)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It is hard for me to see why some things upset people so much. (-)</td>
<td>1. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.</td>
<td>1. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Friends usually talk to me about their problems as they say that I am very understanding.</td>
<td>2. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (-)</td>
<td>2. If I’m sure I’m right about something, I don’t waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I can tune into how someone else feels rapidly and intuitively.</td>
<td>3. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (-)</td>
<td>3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the &quot;other guy's&quot; point of view. (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other people often say that I am insensitive, though I don’t always see why. (-)</td>
<td>4. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.</td>
<td>4. I try to look at everybody’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I am good at predicting how someone will feel.</td>
<td>5. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I often find it difficult to judge if something is rude or polite. (-)</td>
<td>6. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (+)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Other people tell me I am good at understanding how they are feeling and what they are thinking.</td>
<td>7. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All items contained in Figure 2.3 are directly quoted from the source. Items followed by the symbol "(-)" are negatively worded (greater agreement indicates less of the trait) in order to minimize survey effects.

**Empathy as a State**

As a mental *state*, empathy is most frequently defined as an emotional response to another's circumstances or well-being that often results when an individual puts herself in

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8 This subscale was reduced from seven to four items in order to eliminate redundancy within the scale and in relation to the Global Empathy subscale; in addition, one item was excluded because it referenced feelings, and the scale is intended, according to Davis (1983a, 1983b), to measure a purely cognitive dimension of the empathy trait.
another’s place—an emotional response more appropriate to the other’s circumstances than one’s own (Hoffman 2000; Batson et al. 1997). In this dissertation, I use a slightly more refined definition of the state of empathy that bears resemblance to Hatfield et al.’s (1992) concept of emotional contagion: feeling another’s feelings by consciously or unconsciously putting oneself “in another’s shoes.” I limit the definition of state empathy to feeling the emotions of the other in order to distinguish it from state sympathy, which I define as feeling sorry for another. Notice that empathy states are, by definition, individual and situational. They are emotional states experienced in response to another’s situation. Therefore, a person needs to come into contact with another individual, either directly and in person, or indirectly through some type of media, in order to experience states of empathy for that individual. Empathy states thus require empathy encounters. When someone experiences states of empathy for another, the person infers the other’s thoughts or feelings from facial expressions, tone of voice, speech content, other behaviors displaying thoughts or emotion, and/or background knowledge of the other’s situation (as in news stories or even fictional narratives). While it is possible to call to mind an abstract individual or exemplar of a person afflicted by a particular plight (e.g. a survivor of Hurricane Katrina or a gay man who is prohibited from visiting his dying partner in the hospital because of laws that do not recognize gay relationships), unless the prototypical person called to mind is heavily based upon the story of another individual once encountered, I doubt that this sort of abstract imagining produces real states of empathy. Real empathy requires that the observer experience the emotions of the other, and if the other is entirely a product of one’s own imagination, then the observer is not truly stepping outside of himself to experience the feelings of another. Sympathy, on the other hand, can be experienced for prototypical imagined
individuals since awareness of the plight or suffering of the other is all that is required to feel sorry for another. Still, the emotions of both empathy and sympathy are most strongly stimulated by individuals, not masses of people (Davis 1994; Small and Loewenstein 2003). Although there is some research indicating that emotional extrapolation from one person to other people who are similar or belong to the same group is both possible and effective at producing desires to help the group (Batson et al. 1997; Batson et al. 2001), an encounter with an identifiable individual is first necessary in order to produce the emotion related to the individual that then motivates consequences for the group. By definition, the emotions of empathy and sympathy cannot be felt with or for groups directly. This dissertation adds to the research on emotional extrapolation by exploring the consequences for political opinions when the effects of experiencing states of empathy for out-group individuals are transferred to the out-group as a whole.

Problems with conflating the traits of empathy and sympathy are mirrored in the experimental psychology literature on the effects of empathy states. Psychological experiments that induce states of empathy using instructions to engage in perspective-taking often check to see if the empathy inducement worked using questions about sympathetic emotions, like tenderness, warmth, sympathy, and compassion. For example, Batson et al. (1997) claim that “if the other is oppressed or in need, empathic feelings include sympathy, compassion, tenderness, and the like…empathic feelings often result when one takes the perspective of a person in need, imagining how that person is affected by his or her plight” (105). Yet, if the definition of empathy as feeling the emotions of the other is taken seriously (given that the other could be experiencing any number of emotions, which may or may not include feeling sympathy for oneself), this is problematic because sympathetic emotions are such a small subset of all possible
empathic emotions. Developing new ways to measure these distinct states in order to isolate their
effects is one of the contributions I hope to make in this dissertation. Because empathy is
experienced for individuals as described above, the measures I develop contain references to the
individuals portrayed in the audiovisual materials that I use as empathy stimuli. The items I use
in each of the three experimental studies I report in this dissertation are included in Figure 2.4.
The item wording and coding for all variables analyzed in this dissertation are included in the
appendix, which is organized by chapter.

Figure 2.4. Measuring Individualized States of Empathy and Sympathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Experiment 1-Student Sample (Chapter 3)</th>
<th>Field Experiment 2-Community Sample (Chapter 3)</th>
<th>Survey Experiment-National U.S. Sample (Chapter 4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathy States</strong></td>
<td><strong>Empathy States</strong></td>
<td><strong>Empathy States</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I could feel what the main characters were feeling.</td>
<td>1. I could feel what {&lt;character name&gt; was feeling}.</td>
<td>1. I could feel what the main character was feeling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I imagined myself in the main characters’ situation.</td>
<td>2. I imagined myself in {&lt;character name&gt;’s situation}.</td>
<td>2. I had a hard time understanding the main character's emotions. (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. I imagined myself in the main character's shoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sympathy States</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sympathy States</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sympathy States</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Compassion</td>
<td>1. I felt sorry for {&lt;character name&gt;}.</td>
<td>1. I felt sorry for the main character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 The variable is an index of agreement with these two statements. Stem: “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?” Response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree (coded 0-5 such that higher values = greater empathy).
10 The variable is an index of agreement with these two statements for both of the main characters in the community study. Stem: “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about {<character name>}?” Response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree (coded 0-5 such that higher values = greater empathy).
11 The variable is an index of agreement with these three statements in the survey experiment. Stem: “Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.” Response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree (coded 0-5 such that higher values = greater empathy).
12 The variable is an index measure of the degree to which respondents in the student study said they experienced these emotions while watching the films. Stem: “While you were watching the movie, how strongly did YOU experience the following emotions? I felt…” Response options: Very Strongly, Strongly, Somewhat Strongly, Moderately, Somewhat Weakly, Weakly, Very Weakly (originally coded 1-7; recoded 0-5 such that higher values = greater sympathy).
13 The variable is an index of agreement with this statement for both of the main characters in the community study. Stem: “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about {character name}?” Response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree (coded 0-5 such that higher values = greater sympathy).
14 The variable is a level of agreement with this item in the survey experiment. Stem: “Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.” Response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree (coded 0-5 such that higher values = greater sympathy).
Mutz and Nir (2010) conduct one of few political science studies to examine the causal impact of fictional media dramas on political attitudes, and in line with the theoretical framework of this dissertation, they identify empathy as a mechanism through which the influence of fictional media operates. Specifically, they study the effects of crime dramas on people’s attitudes about crime and find that crime shows can influence crime attitudes in the direction suggested by the particular episode, primarily when viewers experience empathy for the characters (Mutz and Nir 2010). Mutz and Nir (2010) use individualized statements similar to those above to measure states of empathy for the characters in the television crime dramas; however following the psychology literature on empathy, these authors conflate feelings of sympathy and pity with measures of empathic feelings. Furthermore, their items reference specific emotions that the characters experienced (e.g. frustration) in response to specific events in the dramas, which limits the set of character experiences with which viewers might empathize.\textsuperscript{15} In contrast, I measure empathy and sympathy states separately and use general language regarding subjects’ overall viewing experiences so that their self-reported states are essentially summary judgments of the degree to which they could feel and understand the characters’ emotions and put themselves in the characters’ shoes (in the case of empathy) and the degree to which they felt sorry or compassion and pity (in the case of sympathy) for the characters. Notice that none of my state measures directly include the words empathy or sympathy. These were intentional omissions given that lay people, like scholars, often use the terms empathy and sympathy interchangeably without regard for their unique, nuanced meanings.

\textsuperscript{15} Two examples of Mutz and Nir’s (2010) state empathy items are “I felt sympathy for Bobby Campbell, the man who served time for a crime he did not commit” and “I could sense the frustration Bobby Campbell felt when he was in prison and no one believed that he was innocent” (217).
To point out a further departure from Mutz and Nir (2010), my focus in this dissertation is not on the effects of fictional media per se (although the findings do inform the literatures on public opinion and media effects), but on the effects of empathy itself, and specifically, empathy that is experienced by dominant individuals for out-group others. Furthermore, as I will describe in greater detail a bit later in this chapter, the theory proposed herein explains why such intergroup empathy will move opinion in one direction only—an egalitarian direction relative to out-group rights—moving beyond and complicating the view that people are simply swayed in their opinions by the frames and primes provided by specific media content (Iyengar and Kinder 1987).

Theoretical Foundations

I am so careful to distinguish between empathy and sympathy both conceptually and empirically because, building on the insights of political theorists and philosophers, there are also critical theoretical distinctions between empathy and sympathy that I argue have important implications for politics. Although she argues that both are crucial in bringing about political justice, Nussbaum (2001) distinguishes between empathy and sympathy, or what she calls “compassion,” in two primary ways. First, Nussbaum (2001) argues that empathy, which she defines as the (purely cognitive) imagined reconstruction of another’s experience, minimally requires the recognition of the humanity others; compassion does not. She highlights the example of Nazi Germany – and I will add American Slavery – in which state-sanctioned atrocities were committed by otherwise rational, “good” people because the politics of these eras intentionally

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16 Nussbaum (2001) argues that emotions are part of, rather than oppositional to, rational decision-making.
foreclosed empathy by denying the humanity of marginalized minority out-groups (Nussbaum 2001). It never occurred to these “good” people to imagine what it would feel like to be a persecuted Jew or an enslaved African American because these individuals were so dehumanized by the culture and political rhetoric of those times. They were so other. According to Nussbaum (2001), compassion only requires the observation of the suffering of another and an acknowledgement that the suffering is bad, but compassion does not necessarily include the vicarious imagining of that suffering, nor conviction of the other’s humanity. Notice that both empathy and compassion, for Nussbaum (2001), have cognitive components, but the second difference between these two concepts for her is that compassion necessarily involves emotion that motivates action to alleviate suffering while empathy may or may not produce emotion, and thus, does not necessarily prompt remedial action. Thus, Nussbaum (2001) privileges the emotion of compassion as “the basic social emotion” (27) because it extends a person’s sphere of concern, which she claims will thus lead to greater social justice than empathy. However, I disagree that sympathy alone leads to motivating emotion and thus motivates action moreso than empathy. Empathy and sympathy both involve emotions – albeit qualitatively different types of emotion – and to determine whether sympathy or empathy is a better avenue to social justice, I argue that the types of attitudes and actions each of these emotions is likely to motivate must be theorized and examined more closely. It may be that empathic emotion motivates different sorts of remedies for suffering than sympathetic emotion, remedies that neither philosophers, behavioral economists, nor psychologists have considered, such as changes in political attitudes and behavior related to the rights and equality of others.
What sorts of remedial actions can an individual compassionate person take to alleviate the suffering of another? Meeting the other person’s immediate needs for medical attention, water, food, money, or maybe even emotional support are all possibilities, but does caring for this one individual create greater social justice at the macro level? Perhaps in small societies or tight-knit communities, compassion is the “basic social emotion” that allows community members to take care of one another in direct, tangible ways, and in these settings it may be possible to achieve social justice through such micro interactions. However, this seems less feasible in a large democracy comprised of many groups defined by race, religion, and region of origin, just to name a few. More problematic is the assumption that actions motivated by compassion, usually some type of helping behavior aimed at alleviating suffering by meeting immediate needs, are sufficient to bring about social justice. I argue that these sorts of sympathy-motivated altruistic actions may only be addressing the symptoms of larger structural problems, which ultimately go unaddressed when needs are met on an individual basis. If this is true, sympathy and compassion may actually stall social justice rather than promote it. Building upon and breaking from Nussbaum (2001), I argue that empathy is the foundational political emotion. Why? Because empathy is the normatively superior route for truly democratic politics in which all individuals enjoy liberty and equality. There are at least two reasons to support this claim. First, because compassion does not necessarily include a belief in the humanity and equality of those the action is meant to assist, compassionate action is less politically durable. If the object of one’s sympathy is, in fact, deemed merely an object with which one does not share common humanity, it seems likely that compassion might more quickly degenerate into political apathy. Compassion oftentimes seems to motivate private remedies for suffering that are outside of
politics altogether and instead within civil society. Thus, compassionate motivations might leave members of marginalized groups subject to the limited resources and fickle generosity of dominant group members (i.e. volunteer efforts, donations), which reinforces unequal power dynamics in society. In contrast, I will demonstrate that empathy promotes a kind of political efficacy among the dominant group that sympathy and compassion do not. Second, political solutions that do arise from compassion absent empathy will likely be less successful in the long run. An inability or unwillingness to feel and/or imagine what another’s problems are like will always preclude the possibility of adequately solving those problems because merely compassionate solutions are not informed by a full understanding of the challenges (and inequalities) to be addressed.

Darwall (1998) makes a similar distinction between empathy and sympathy, highlighting the different perspectives from which each of these emotions is felt. Sympathy is feeling for another while empathy is feeling with another. He argues that sympathy is an emotion that flows from a person’s own perspective, and thus the other is viewed in the 3rd-person as an object of one’s own emotion. For example, “She made me feel sorry for her” is a statement in the third-person perspective. In contrast, empathy flows from taking the perspective of the other, and thus from a standpoint that is closer to a first-person perspective with the other. For example, “I would feel devastated if in her position.” The related psychological concept of emotional contagion naturally follows from this philosophical concept of perspective (Hatfield et al. 1992). When someone empathizes with another, he experiences something more akin to the other’s feelings than to his own, which means that his emotions are congruent with the other’s emotions—they line up. In contrast, sympathy is felt from the observer’s perspective and is about
experiencing the observer’s own feelings, which means there is no emotional congruence with the other. This philosophical distinction is supported in the psychology research on empathy. According to psychologists, empathy involves “self-other overlap”—a kind of mental merging with the other in which the other becomes more self-like and the self also becomes more other-like—that enables empathizers to see and feel the situation from the other’s perspective (Galinsky et al. 2005; Inzlicht et al. 2012; Hoffman 2000).

Theoretical Contributions: Empathy and Equality, Sympathy and Charity

The promise of empathy rests in its ability to foster recognition of others (Markell 2003; Harris-Perry 2011), rather than just regard. The distinction between other-recognition and other-regard is a fine but important one. On the one hand, both are other-oriented in a positive sense. That is, in contrast to negative other-orientations like racism and social dominance, both other-recognition and other-regard involve some measure of positive regard or goodwill toward others. However, recognition is more than a measure of goodwill. Recognition means clearly seeing another and understanding her for whom she really is as a unique individual; it means experiencing another person as neither stereotyped nor stripped of her flaws, but rather, fully seeing and hearing her as her authentic, true self (Harris-Perry 2011). Recognition is arguably the highest regard that we can pay to each other as citizens because it is only through the radically clear lens of recognition that we view, accept, and relate to others as true equals (Harris-Perry 2011).

Building upon Nussbaum (2001), Darwall (1998), and Harris-Perry (2011), I argue that empathy is an other-recognizing emotion. The very nature of the empathic exercise is what
enables people to give recognition to one another. Empathy is particularly critical in dominant majority individuals’ relationships with marginalized minorities, because in these cases, there are often formidable barriers to recognition in the form of social stigma and stereotypes. Harris-Perry (2011) argues that pervasive stereotypes about marginalized groups foster misrecognition, which has pernicious consequences for not only how the dominant public views marginalized groups and related political attitudes, but also, for how marginalized individuals view themselves. However, I propose empathy as a remedy for such misrecognitions and argue that empathy enables recognition because, as detailed above, one who empathizes first acknowledges the other’s basic humanity (Nussbaum 2001) and then feels and/or views the situation from the other’s perspective rather than her own (Darwall 1998). This allows the empathizer to better understand the other’s emotions, thoughts, and actions in light of his particular “self” and circumstances, and thus, to truly see or recognize the other. By shifting one’s perspective—both cognitively and affectively—empathy enables dominant individuals to feel inequality from the minority perspective and can thus create greater awareness of the true problems, needs, concerns, and feelings of out-group others. This awareness, accompanied by the conviction that the other is an equal and the motivating emotion that empathy induces, should generate the political will to address these needs and problems through appropriate political means. In contrast, I conceive of sympathy as solely an other-regarding emotion. The sympathetic person bestows some measure of positive regard on the other, but is so doing, continues to give primacy to her own perspective (Darwall 1998; Nussbaum 2001). A sympathetic person, then, approaches the other with her own worldview, and in cases of power or status disparities, her regard for the other may be paternalistic, coming from a place of superiority or dutiful adherence to principles—not from a
place of emotionally identifying (or sharing emotions) with the other (Schuman and Harding 1963). In addition, someone may positively regard and feel sorry for another while remaining blind to the other’s real needs (Belachew 2012).

Therefore, in cases of inequality between groups, I theorize that the distinct capacities of empathy and sympathy and their corresponding emotional manifestations can motivate different patterns of public opinion and behavior, and thus, lead to very different political outcomes. The primary theory I propose in this dissertation is the *theory of empathy and equality*, which states that empathy for out-group individuals can change public opinion about policies affecting minority out-groups by motivating preferences for equality for out-groups. Thus, I argue that the experience of cross-group empathy motivates majority individuals to turn away from less egalitarian views related to the rights of out-groups and to want to remedy inequality using political means (e.g. public policy). On average, this process should result in egalitarian change in opinions regarding policies that affect out-group rights. Though not all individuals who empathize with an out-group member will desire greater equality for the out-group—either because they are already very egalitarian toward the group or because the experience of empathy is out-weighed by competing considerations—all else equal and on average, I expect experiencing empathy for out-group individuals to increase support for egalitarian rights-based policies for the group.

States of sympathy will not motivate egalitarian opinion change because, in sympathy, no sharing of emotion or perspective between the self and an out-group other occurs. Dominant individuals remain rooted in their own feelings and pre-existing worldviews, and the other is an object of the sympathizer’s emotion (Darwall 1998). While dominant individuals may feel sorry
for an out-group other and want to help, this altruistic desire derives, in part, from the need to alleviate their own psychological discomfort at witnessing the needs or suffering of the other. Therefore, according to the secondary theory of sympathy and charity that I propose in this dissertation, altruistic attitudes and actions that are motivated by sympathy will often be personal in nature and always focused on addressing needs, not rights (e.g. donating money, food, or time to charity; expressing support for humanitarian values and needs-based policies). In this way, sympathy-motivated attitudes and actions allow people who are feeling sorry for others to directly or indirectly meet a perceived need, and thus, also make themselves feel better. However, such sympathetic attitudes and actions do not challenge current structural conditions or change systemic inequalities. For these reasons, I argue that empathy is a “revolutionary emotion” (Steinem 1993) while sympathy is a status quo emotion.

A Note on the Directional Effects of Empathy and Differences in Intergroup Empathy

The theories proposed herein are unidirectional in the sense that they are specifically about the effects of empathy and sympathy felt by dominant or majority group members for individuals belonging to marginalized or minority out-groups. The theory of empathy and equality proposes that such empathy will lead dominant members to increase their preferences for equality for the out-group. Likewise, the theory of sympathy and charity proposes that such sympathy will not lead dominant members to increase their preferences for equality for the out-group but instead will motivate preferences for needs-based policies and private altruism to address the plight of the out-group. Although empathy and sympathy can certainly flow in the opposite direction from subordinate individuals to dominant individuals, and I have no reason to
believe that the actual emotional experiences of empathy and sympathy would be qualitatively different under these circumstances, these theories are about the effects of empathy and sympathy on egalitarian opinion change about the out-group. These effects or consequences for equality will in fact depend upon the relative statuses of the empathizer and the empathy target because the weight of preexisting inequality only tips the scale in one direction. It makes little sense to talk about empathy for a dominant individual conferring greater equality on the majority group because the rights and privileges of this dominant group set the standard by which the equality of other groups is judged. The theorized effects of emotion on public opinion will thus only operate when the empathy or sympathy target is in the subordinate, unequal position and the observer is in the dominant position. Therefore, it is important to note that these theories do not encompass the empathy and sympathy of the marginalized toward dominant individuals.

However, there are both empirical and theoretical reasons to suspect that the tendency to empathize is greater and the incidence of cross-group empathy is higher among marginal individuals than dominant ones. That is, I would expect that the same structural forces that contribute to inequalities may also unequally demand cross-group empathy and sympathy from women, racial minorities, and sexual minorities. For example, numerous studies of empathy and sympathy have empirically demonstrated that women possess higher levels of these traits than men, and although some argue for a biological basis for these differences, there is also evidence to suggest that these differences stem, at least in part, from socialization in a culture that values nurturance and emotionality from women and independence and decisiveness from men (Baron-Cohen 2003; Hoffman 1977; Eisenberg and Lennon 1983). Moreover, marginalized individuals may be encouraged or compelled to empathize with individuals higher up on the group hierarchy
more than dominant individuals are expected to identify emotionally with marginalized individuals. Freedom from engaging emotionally with others may flow from the privileges of dominant status, while empathizing with one’s oppressors may be an additional burden or even an imperative to survival (but perhaps also a silver lining) for individuals from marginal or stigmatized groups (Sidanius and Pratto 2001). As a result, marginalized persons might be particularly adept at empathizing with dominant group members. W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) described this ability to see “through the eyes of others” as “double-consciousness,” writing that the African American is

> gifted with second-sight in this American world,-- a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciling strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, -- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost…He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius…Here in America, in the few days since Emancipation, the black man’s turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength to lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness. And yet it is not weakness, --it is the contradiction of double aims” (168-169).

I am unable to find any existing empirical evidence to suggest that African Americans are more predisposed to empathy and sympathy than whites, although I am able to explore potential racial differences in these emotional traits using a large dataset that I collected for Chapter 5 (See Figure 2.5 below). Theoretically, the tenets of Social Dominance Theory corroborate what W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) observed long ago: that the experience of subordination and the social and political processes that lead to it may cultivate within marginalized individuals a keen
capacity for seeing through the eyes and anticipating the emotions of dominant individuals (Sidanius and Pratto 2001). In general, the experience of marginalization may often (but probably not always) be accompanied by an awareness of dominant others’ misrecognition of the self (Harris-Perry 2011). This kind of role-taking, although potentially and deeply painful, may provide marginal and minority individuals with practice in empathizing and/or sympathizing—additional practice which dominant individuals, by virtue of their high status positioning, do not have to undergo. Whether this is the case, and whether these emotional skills are then applied in other realms and toward individuals from one’s own in-group as well as toward individuals from other marginalized out-groups are interesting questions in their own right. However, in this dissertation, I am primarily concerned with inequality based on group membership and how public emotions of empathy and sympathy toward out-group individuals who bear the brunt of inequality affect public opinion and subsequent political outcomes. I argue that dominant individuals’ empathy for marginal or minority individuals motivates egalitarian policy preferences and outcomes, but that dominant individuals’ sympathy for marginal or minority individuals motivates preferences for limited need-based policies as well as private solutions to problems, such as volunteer efforts and charitable giving (which in turn, may produce political apathy and actually perpetuate inequalities). Thus, my near exclusive focus is on the empathy and sympathy of dominant group members in relation to marginalized or minority individuals.

Correlates of Tendencies to Experience Empathy, Sympathy, and Perspective-taking

At this point, some readers may be wondering whether the capacities and emotional-cognitive states I am describing are truly distinct from one another. Some may also wonder
whether empathy is simply a proxy for liberalism or Democratic partisanship, which could then explain the theoretical link between empathy and egalitarian preferences that I theorize without truly adding anything new to the political science literature. To address and alleviate these potential concerns, I present correlational data below in Figure 2.5 from a large national survey of Americans that I conducted online in the spring of 2013 for the analyses presented in Chapters 4 and 5. These data demonstrate that, although the traits of empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking are strongly correlated with one another, they are by no means one in the same. In addition, although all three of these traits have a negative relationship with partisanship and ideology, these relationships are relatively weak, indicating that Republicans and conservatives possess only slightly lower levels of these traits than Democrats and liberals, on average. The data provide evidence that partisans and ideologues of all persuasions possess the capacities for empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking, which may point to the power of these traits and their associated states to influence opinion and behavior in the ways that I theorize.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the positive relationships between African American identity and the capacities of empathy and perspective-taking proposed in the previous section are also weak but statistically significant in these data. Other notable associations include women’s greater tendencies to possess all three of these traits, which has also been shown in previous research (Davis 1994; Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright 2004), as well as the moderately strong, intuitive relationship between the trait of sympathy and expressing the importance of religion in one’s daily life.
### Empathic Encounters Bridging Intergroup Empathy Gaps

Although empathy has the potential to bridge differences between in-groups and out-groups through the process of “self-other overlap” described above (Galinsky et al. 2005; Inzlicht et al. 2012; Hoffman 2000), social group difference is one of the key inhibitors of empathy for out-group others because empathy for another individual is subject to “similarity bias”—that is, people empathize more readily with those that they perceive as similar to themselves (Harrison 2011; Batson et al. 2005; Hoffman 2000; Cialdini et al. 1997). It follows that, on average, people would empathize less strongly and/or less frequently with out-group individuals than with in-group individuals, creating what I will call intergroup empathy gaps.

Intergroup empathy gaps are bridged when personal life circumstances, media, or sociopolitical events sufficiently stimulate people to step outside their usual (in-group), comfortable “empathy

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Empathy Trait (N=2999-3008)</th>
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<th>Perspective-Taking Trait (N=3000-3009)</th>
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<td>.23*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.09*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
<td>-.08*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.06*</td>
<td>-.09*</td>
<td>.04*</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Knowing a Gay Person</td>
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</tbody>
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These data were collected by the author as part of the Empathy and Equality Study (2013) described in Chapters 4 & 5. Significant correlations are denoted *p<.05. All variables are rescaled 0-1 or dichotomous, except age.
zones” and empathize with out-group individuals. For example, parents often empathize very strongly with their children (Hoffman 2000), who are by definition similar in-group members; however, when a child comes out to his heterosexual parents and tells them he is gay, he becomes an out-group member on the dimension of sexuality. Yet many parents continue to empathize with their child regardless of his sexuality and often subsequently change their political views about the rights of gay and lesbian Americans as a group (e.g. Senator Rob Portman’s (R-OH) change of heart on gay marriage, which he announced in March 2013). More generally, knowing a gay friend or family member is one of the biggest predictors of egalitarianism on gay rights (Herek & Glunt 1993; Lewis & Gosset 2008; Barth & Parry 2009), and while it is probably true that gay people are more likely to come out to friends and family members who are already at least somewhat supportive of gay rights, the theory of empathy and equality would suggest that the empathy that people experience for the gay individuals in their lives also causes them to become more egalitarian on matters of policy affecting gay and lesbian Americans. Furthermore, “knowing” a gay or lesbian individual through the media may be a similarly powerful empathy stimulus. Devout viewers of The Ellen DeGeneres Show, for example, get to know Ellen, laugh with Ellen, and empathize with Ellen five days a week, and my theory would predict that empathy for Ellen has the power to, over time, increase viewers’ egalitarianism on matters of gay rights. Finally, sociopolitical events such as public protests surrounding the issue of gay marriage or public awareness campaigns about bullying and related suicides of gay teens, which are often (though not always) experienced through the media, may also stimulate empathy for gay individuals, thereby changing gay rights opinions. The most striking example of this comes from the story of Louis Marinelli, a former organizer for the
National Organization for Marriage (NOM), who blogged extensively against gay marriage and led a bus tour in the summer of 2010 to promote opposition to gay marriage. He credits the encounters he had with gay and lesbian individuals while working for NOM—and specifically his empathy for them—for changing his heart and mind about the issue of gay marriage. In a 2011 blog post, he writes:

“Ironically, one of the last tour stops added to the itinerary was Atlanta and I bring this site up because it was in Atlanta that I can remember that I questioned what I was doing for the first time. The NOM showing in the heart of the Bible-belt was dismal and the hundreds of counter-protesters who showed up were nothing short of inspiring. Even though I had been confronted by the counter-protesters throughout the marriage tour, the lesbian and gay people whom I made a profession out of opposing became real people for me almost instantly. For the first time I had empathy for them and remember asking myself what I was doing...One article I wrote, towards the end of October, 2010 caught the attention of a blogger by the name of RJ, who writes on the blog AmIWorking. He responded to my article about the homosexual agenda with an article addressed personally to me regarding marriage equality. In short, his article had the miraculous effect of instantly putting things into perspective for me. At that point, between what I had witnessed on the marriage tour and RJ’s post about marriage equality, I really came to understand that gays and lesbians were just real people who wanted to live real lives and be treated equally as opposed to, for example, wanting to destroy American culture. No, they didn’t want to destroy American culture, they wanted to openly participate in it. I was well on my way to becoming a supporter of civil marriage equality...”

~Excerpts from former NOM Organizer Louis J. Marinelli’s blog, posted April 7, 201117 (emphasis added)

These are the kinds of egalitarian opinion changes that I seek to explain with my theory of empathy and equality and with the field, natural, and survey experimental tests of the theory described in this dissertation. In speculating about the relative strength of the three empathy encounters (or stimuli) described above, it is reasonable to assume that, for most people, the pull to empathize with one’s own child is probably the strongest. It is difficult to adjudicate between the mediated experiences of an Ellen viewer and the direct interpersonal experiences of Mr. Marinelli in terms of which is a stronger producer of empathy. One might think that direct interpersonal experiences with live humans would always be stronger than indirect mediated experiences at inducing empathy, but on the other hand, mediated encounters with out-group

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17 Special thanks to Matt Incantalupo for bringing this example of empathy and opinion change to my attention.
others may be less threatening than direct contact (Allport 1954; Cameron & Rutland 2006), possibly making media encounters just as strong or stronger at inducing empathy for out-group others (Oatley and Mar 2006, in Hsu 2008). In any case, the effectiveness of each stimulus at inducing empathy depends upon the characteristics of the particular encounter the viewer and Mr. Marinelli had with Ellen and gay rights activists, respectively. If Ellen were less funny or charming, viewers might not empathize with her as much. If the gay rights activists had been hostile and disrespectful to Mr. Marinelli, he may not have empathized with them at all. As it stands, Ellen and the gay rights activists Mr. Marinelli encountered seem to have presented themselves as empowered, agentic actors. I theorize that a primary benefit of out-group individuals’ portrayals of agency is the empathy among dominant group members that these portrayals generate. Historically, the politics of respectability have been strategically and successfully employed by rights-seeking marginalized groups—most notably in the civil rights movement’s careful choice of litigants and commitment to nonviolent protest. In Chapter 1, I provide suggestive evidence that the success of this movement’s strategic portrayals of agency and respectability can be at least partially attributed to the ability of these strategies to generate empathy among the dominant public.

A Note on Intersectionality and the Politics of Respectability

Complicating the above framework and the more detailed discussion of agentic and respectable portrayals in Chapter 1 is the observation that certain marginalized identities, often those of the most advantaged within marginal groups, become the focus of marginal groups’ efforts to secure rights for the group while the identities of less advantaged members (and their
specific experiences and needs) are ignored (Crenshaw 1993). Crenshaw (1993) highlights the example of the intersection between race and gender, explicating the ways in which civil rights groups foregrounded the concerns of African American men while women’s rights groups advocated primarily for white women, leaving African American women and their particular concerns and needs invisible and unaddressed. Similarly, Cohen (1999) documents the black community’s inadequate response to AIDS in the 1980s and early 1990s, calling attention to the neglect of marginal members within the community who were living with AIDS. One potential reason that such intragroup marginalization may occur is that some identities lend themselves to public portrayals of agency and respectability more readily than others. Indeed some identities (or identity labels) – such as the homeless, convicted criminals, and welfare recipients – may preclude the possibility of agentic, respectable portrayals (and thus, empathy) altogether. This has normative as well as practical implications for political strategy and policy-making, which I only begin to address in this dissertation. It also has empirical implications for the kinds of empathy targets one might study and the conclusions that can be drawn from a study of any particular empathy target.

In the experiments presented in Chapters 3 and 4, I encourage empathy through encounters with gay individuals who possess a diverse set of additional intersecting identities. For example, in the movie field experiments described in Chapter 3, one film stimulus features white, upper-middle-class, middle-aged, feminine lesbians while the other film stimulus features white, working-class, young, drug-doing, gay men. In the natural experiment in Chapter 4, Jason Collins – an African-American, Stanford-educated, NBA-playing, rich, famous, masculine, gay man – is the empathy target, and the Chapter 4 survey experiment features a white, blonde,
middle-class, young, attractive gay man. Although there is variation in the intersecting identities of the gay empathy targets used, and I acknowledge that the comprehensive identities of each of the individuals may impact the degree of empathy that subjects experience for these targets as well as the effects of that empathy on subjects’ gay rights opinions, the primary focus in this dissertation is to first establish whether and how empathy for gay individuals influences heterosexuals’ opinions about gay rights. Unpacking the relationships among various intersectional identities, agency, respectability, and empathy remains a task for future work.

*Narrative as a Vehicle for Empathy*

Narrative may also be a powerful element of an out-group encounter that promotes the production of cross-group empathy. Political theorist Iris Marion Young (2002) argues that storytelling during political discussions promotes understanding across difference. Specifically, she argues that the telling of political narratives by marginalized group members is one useful strategy for overcoming unequal power dynamics during political communication: “Storytelling is often the only vehicle for understanding the particular experiences of those in particular social situations, experiences not shared by those situated differently, but which they must understand in order to do justice” (Young 2002, 73-74). Narratives can also serve to explain the reasoning and meaning behind group values and priorities as well as to correct misrecognitions of out-group individuals, or what Young calls inaccurate “pre-understandings,” which are typically based on stereotypes and present “biased pictures of the needs, aspirations, and histories of others” (Young 2002, 74-75). Accordingly, some deliberative democracy scholars and even former President Bill Clinton have argued for the utility of community dialogue programs for
promoting cross-racial empathy between African Americans and whites. The stated goals of these facilitated group discussions are typically to find common ground in order to develop specific action plans for addressing community racial issues (Walsh 2007; One America in the 21st Century 1998). Contrary to the stated goals of these programs but in line with Young’s theorizing, Walsh’s (2007) minority participants told personal stories that emphasized their differences, rather than focusing on sources of unity. Walsh (2007) also finds that these groups increased whites’ understanding of the circumstances and challenges faced by African Americans. The eagerness with which Walsh’s (2007) minority participants told stories that demonstrated difference—in spite of the formal structure of the programs—points to a deep desire for recognition (Harris-Perry 2011). Furthermore, the success of these groups at improving whites’ understanding of African Americans’ circumstances also suggests that story-telling may be an effective means for encouraging empathy across lines of social difference.

Other types of narratives, such as those told through novels, news, entertainment television, and film, may also produce empathy and understanding. For example, one study finds that reading black women’s fiction as part of Oprah’s Book Club increases white female readers’ propensity for cross-racial empathy as well as their awareness of their own white privilege (Davis 2004). Psychology research on “narrative transport” suggests that stories conveyed through print and audio-visual media may give people practice at interacting with and empathizing with others (Oatley and Mar 2006, in Hsu 2008). Furthermore, this research suggests that narrative format may actually be more persuasive than the kinds of facts and arguments usually contained in more traditional political stimuli because people are less likely to counter-argue ideas presented through stories and thus more likely to accept those ideas and
change their minds (Escalas 2007). In addition, the less political, more personal context of such narratives and the emotional engagement with others that they provide are two probable explanations for the findings of reduced counter-argument and increased opinion change.

Emphasis on rugged individualism may discourage attention to emotions in the political realm, and even individuals who possess great sensitivity to others’ emotions in their personal lives may get into the habit of “switching it off” in public contexts (McCloskey and Zaller 1984; Sanchez-Burks and Huy 2009, 27). Therefore, the apparently apolitical nature of narratives removes barriers to emotional responding that might otherwise be present in traditional political stimuli, increasing the likelihood that people will bring their emotional capacities, like empathy, to the table when encountering narratives about out-group individuals. Furthermore, rather than just the absence of counter-argument explaining the opinion changes that can result from narrative, the emotions experienced in response to narrative may actually motivate opinion change. Taken together, these findings suggest that narrative—through the production of empathy—may be useful for correcting the misrecognitions that stereotypes and stigma create, promoting understanding across difference, and motivating opinion change in an egalitarian direction.

Several historical examples of the potential power of narrative come to mind. Published slave narratives such as those written by Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Jacobs as well as Harriet Beecher’s Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, are often credited with garnering public support for the plight of the enslaved, thereby contributing to slavery’s abolition (Williams 2001). One mechanism through which these narratives may have worked is empathy. A century later, on what came to be known as “Bloody Sunday,” civil rights activists told the story of violent Jim Crow policies through broadcast television, and as described in greater detail
in Chapter 1, there is historical evidence to suggest that white viewers empathized with the
African American protestors who were brutally beaten by police. The actions of these activists
emotionally and literally moved people to travel from their homes “to place themselves
alongside the Negroes they had watched on television” and mobilized public opinion in support
of the sweeping civil rights reforms that were passed shortly thereafter (Lee 2002, 3). It appears
that the ability of marginalized African Americans to elicit empathy and the capacity of
dominant whites to empathize cross-racially, at least at certain political moments, have been
crucial for the progress toward racial equality that the United States has made through the
present moment.

Yet as suggested by the example of the 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster in Chapter 1, not
all narrative portrayals of African American suffering generate empathy and increased
preferences for racial equality among whites. Iyengar’s (1991) classic study of media framing
effects points to one plausible reason for whites’ responses to the Katrina disaster. Iyengar
(1991) categorizes media framing of social problems as either “thematic” or “episodic” and finds
that the type of framing has implications for public beliefs about both the causes and appropriate
remedies for problems. Thematic frames depict problems in terms of national conditions and
statistical trends, while episodic frames tell a personal story (or narrative) by focusing on
particular cases or victims of problems (Iyengar 1991). In an experiment about the issue of
poverty that compared thematic framing to episodic frames depicting both African American and
white homeless individuals, Iyengar’s (1991) subjects cited significantly less structural causes
for poverty when they were exposed to the episodic frames rather than the thematic frames.
Furthermore, subjects assigned to these episodic frames were significantly more likely to cite
individual causes and individual remedies for poverty than when exposed to thematic frames. That is, compared to subjects exposed to the thematic frames that did not feature specific individuals, subjects who were shown stories about homeless individuals were significantly more likely to blame poor people as a group for their condition and express beliefs that it is the responsibility of the poor themselves to address the problem of poverty. At first blush, the findings of these framing studies seem to stand in direct opposition to those of the “identifiable victim effect” literature (Small and Loewenstein 2003). According to this literature, presenting people with an “identifiable victim” produces greater charitableness, usually measured in the amount of money people are willing to give to address the victim’s plight, than presenting people with “statistical victims”—that is, thematic information about the scope of the problem in terms of the number of victims that are affected (Small and Loewenstein 2003). Small et al. (2007) claim that the emotion of sympathy that is felt for individual victims (but cannot be felt for a mass of statistical victims) is the mechanism behind the greater giving that identifiable victims produce relative to statistical victims, despite the fact that in a strictly rational sense, people ought to allocate more funds to large numbers of victims than they do to a single victim. Together these studies suggest that portrayals of individual victims simultaneously generate greater sympathy and charity for victims, and greater individual attribution of responsibility to the victims themselves for both causing and remedying their own problems, than abstract presentations of problems. These findings are not incompatible, and indeed, the individualistic nature of private charitable action aligns well with the notion of the victim being individually responsible for creating and remedying his problems—perhaps he just needs a little help in doing so, and sympathy motivates people to meet the needs of and help less fortunate others.
However, individual portrayals need not exclusively elicit the emotion of sympathy. Other types of portrayals—specifically, those that depict individuals as respectable agents rather than needy victims—may predominantly encourage empathy for the target individual, not sympathy. Moreover, empathy may motivate different sorts of attitudes and action tendencies. Another episodic condition within Iyengar’s experiments was a depiction of an unemployed automobile worker and his family, and after exposure to this condition, subjects’ levels of individual attribution for the causes and appropriate remedies for poverty were statistically indistinguishable from those of subjects exposed to the thematic frames. Subjects in the auto worker condition and subjects in the thematic conditions also expressed statistically equivalent societal attribution for the causes and remedies of poverty. Although Iyengar’s findings do not speak to the level of charity particular individuals may or may not elicit, they do suggest that public beliefs about the sources and solutions to the social problem of poverty may depend in part on whom they perceive the poor to be, and thus, the types of individuals that are portrayed by the media as “the poor,” as well as how those individuals are framed. I argue that how individuals are portrayed impacts the types of emotions that are generated for those individuals, and different types of emotions then motivate distinct attitudes and action tendencies relative to solving the problems that those individuals represent.

In contemplating plausible explanations for the different sets of findings that the homeless individuals generated relative to the auto worker and his family in Iyengar’s episodic experiments, one such explanation might be that homeless individuals elicit different emotional responses than an unemployed auto worker and his family. Homeless individuals are the epitome of “the needy”—they do not even have a home. Homelessness “other-izes” and may even serve
to dehumanize homeless poor people in the minds of some, which according to Nussbaum (2001), forecloses the possibility for empathy but not necessarily sympathy or compassion.

Workers, on the other hand, work by definition. Portraying individuals as workers, even if they are temporarily unemployed, frames them as agents. Rather than discouraging empathy as in the case of Iyengar’s homeless depictions (and I argue, needy victim frames more generally), agentic frames encourage empathy. Why? People most often view themselves as autonomous individuals (Kelley and Michela 1980), and because people empathize more readily with those they perceive as similar to themselves (Harrison 2011; Batson et al. 2005; Hoffman 2000; Cialdini et al. 1997), I posit that most people also have an easier time empathizing with agentic actors (e.g. workers, social movement activists) than they do with needy victims. In other words, people can emotionally identify with agentic actors more easily, feeling emotions that correspond more to these others’ situations than one’s own.18

Further exploration is required to understand whether agentic rather than victim portrayals of individuals produce different sorts of attributions for the causes of problems and different kinds of preferences over the types of remedies that are most appropriate. There is some evidence to suggest that creating empathy for an individual can increase observers’ situational rather than dispositional attributions for others’ circumstances (Vescio et al. 2003). However, additional work needs to be done to investigate other potential outcomes beyond charitable

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18 The dimensions of “respectability” and “agency,” which I argue contribute to the ability of out-group portrayals to elicit empathy from dominant individuals, bear resemblance to the two orthogonal dimensions of Fiske et al.’s (2002) Stereotype Content Model: warmth and competence. Fiske et al. (2002) argue that the content of out-group stereotypes derives from perceptions of group competition (informing warmth) and group status (informing competence) and are associated with distinct emotions. High warmth, low competence groups like the elderly and the disabled are associated with sympathy and pity, while low warmth, low competence groups such as welfare recipients and the homeless are associated with contempt and disgust. These authors show that their research subjects rated in-group members high on both dimensions (Fiske et al. 2002), so it may be that out-group portrayals that defy stereotypes and present out-group individuals as both highly respectable (or warm) and highly agentic (or competent) serve to increase the similarity of the out-group to dominant individuals’ perceptions of the in-group. Thus, a plausible group-level process that could be responsible for the production of empathy (instead of or in addition to the individual-level process proposed) is that increased perceptions of in-group/out-group similarity may facilitate empathy for out-group individuals.
giving, such as political attitudes and behavior directed at the other’s group. In this dissertation, I theorize that empathic portrayals of out-group individuals that elicit states of empathy for those individuals will increase dominant group members’ preferences for equal rights for the out-group. Correspondingly, I theorize that sympathetic portrayals of out-group individuals that elicit states of sympathy for them will not increase dominant group members’ egalitarian preferences for rights-based policies, but instead, will induce support for a more limited set of needs-based policies affecting the out-group (e.g. government assistance to the poor) as well as altruistic attitudes and private actions, like charitable giving.

**Individual Differences in Responses to Empathic Encounters**

The effectiveness of empathic encounters at bridging intergroup empathy gaps also depends upon the empathic predispositions of the responding individuals. Despite the “similarity bias” observed in empathic responding on average (Harrison 2011; Batson et al. 2005; Hoffman 2000; Cialdini et al. 1997), the capacity for empathy is what enables individuals to gain insight into the internal states of all others—including close and/or similar others as well as distant and/or dissimilar others. One explanation for “similarity bias” may be that others who are similar or closely associated with the self, like members of one’s family or racial in-group, are easier to empathize with on average. Because there is less (real or perceived) psychological and social distance between the self and a similar/in-group other than between the self and a dissimilar/out-group other, I theorize that less empathic ability is needed to bridge the gap between self and similar other. For example, even a relatively unempathic person may naturally experience empathy for his or her own child, and friends who frequently share backgrounds, life
experiences, and social positioning more easily understand each other’s feelings and thoughts, at least in part, because of all the things they share in common. In these cases, an especially well-developed sense of empathy is not necessary; even low or moderately empathic people can at times empathize with those that are close and/or similar to them. In contrast, only the most empathic individuals can readily empathize with people who are very different or distant from them. Extreme and obvious examples of societally stigmatized and thus socially distant persons with whom highly empathic individuals would be much more likely to empathize include serial killers and pedophiles. However, as discussed above, compelling narrative may encourage wider swaths of the population, including people with only average empathic abilities, to empathize with such thoroughly stigmatized individuals. The popularity of the 1995 film Se7en and the classic novel Lolita anecdotally suggest as much. Thus, I predict that people will respond differently to empathy encounters depending upon individual differences in empathic predispositions. Highly empathic people will respond more readily and with more empathy to out-group individuals than people with average or low levels of empathic predispositions.

Moreover, the characteristics of empathy encounters and the predispositions of individuals likely interact to determine how much empathy for the out-group member will be produced. For instance, highly empathic people may empathize for out-group individuals even in response to relatively weak empathy encounters (e.g. when the target out-group individual behaves in a way the observer judges to be deviant or morally questionable) whereas people low in the empathy trait may require very strong empathy stimuli (e.g. particularly upstanding behavior on the part of the target out-group individual) in order to elicit their empathy. Note that, while this interaction hypothesis cannot be tested formally in the studies presented here
because of lack of variation in the empathy stimuli within each study, a comparison of the results of the field experiments presented in Chapter 3 with those of the survey experiment presented in Chapter 4 can shed some light on this question. In the field experiments, there are some unbecoming behavioral elements in the films that might make it difficult for some people—especially those with low empathic predispositions—to empathize with the gay main characters, namely an extramarital affair in the community study treatment film and hardcore recreational drug use in the student study treatment film. I expect highly empathic subjects to empathize with the gay characters despite these behaviors, but conversely expect low empathic subjects to penalize the gay characters for these behaviors with reduced empathy. Despite the inclusion of the aforementioned “bad” behaviors, the full-length films used in this research are likely among the strongest real-world stimuli that can be employed in field experimental research of this type; however, the films used in these studies probably reside somewhere in the middle of the spectrum of all possible empathy encounters with gay individuals, ranging from direct experience with one’s gay child on the high end to mediated experience with a gay stranger who also happens to be a serial killer, for example, on the very low end. In contrast, the survey experiment uses short video clips to induce empathy in which the characters are portrayed in almost entirely positive terms: they meet, go to an amusement park, swim and play softball at the beach, grocery shop, go out to dinner, eat popcorn and watch movies, do chores, and at the end of the video clip, get engaged. There are only two scenes that might be characterized as negative, however, these are scenes that show negative but understandable emotions—not negative, morally questionable behaviors as in the field experiment films. In the first scene, the main character becomes angry or frustrated with his partner when they are driving somewhere
and get lost, and in the second, the main character weeps when his mother is sick and dying. I expect all subjects to empathize with the gay characters in the positive survey experimental stimuli, regardless of their levels of empathic predisposition. That is, relative to the low empathy subjects who viewed the treatment films containing negative behavioral elements in the field experiment study, I anticipate that low empathy subjects in the survey experiment will be able to empathize more readily with the gay characters in response to the much more positive stimulus.

Furthermore, if my theory of the positive relationship between empathy states and egalitarianism is correct, dominant individuals with high levels of the empathy trait should be, on average, more egalitarian in their out-group policy preferences than dominant individuals with middling or low empathic capacities. Holding exposure to out-group others constant (whether direct or mediated), if highly empathic people empathize more with out-group members whom they encounter throughout their lives while those with less developed empathic capacity empathize little with the out-group members they encounter, according to my theory, these differing emotional responses to out-group individuals should lead to distinct patterns of opinion about out-group-affecting policies among these two groups. In other words, when given the same opportunities to empathize with out-group others, highly empathic individuals will strongly empathize with them and thus become more egalitarian in their policy attitudes pertaining to out-groups while less empathic individuals will empathize with out-group members less and thus be motivated less by empathy’s equality-motivating character. If highly empathic individuals are also more likely than low empathy individuals to seek out opportunities for contact with out-group members as a result of their empathy, and if the quality of this contact is also greater because of empathy, then the differences between these two groups should be even starker. This
logic applies not only to heterosexuals’ opinions about policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans, but also to a range of opinions held by majority or dominant individuals with regard to policies affecting minority or marginal groups, for example, whites’ opinions regarding policies affecting African Americans and men’s opinions regarding policies affecting women.

However, the trait-empathy-based differences that should arise from opportunities to empathize with out-group others, holding those opportunities constant, require that dominant individuals have a sufficient number of such opportunities in the first place. Variation in dominant individuals’ degree of exposure to minority or marginal individuals, and thus their opportunities to empathize with these out-group individuals, will influence the role that trait empathy can play in particular political moments and in particular cases of intergroup inequality. In the contemporary period, the United States remains highly segregated by both race and class (Massey and Denton 1993) and mainstream popular culture provides few empathic portrayals of African Americans in film and television, calling into question the number of opportunities whites have to empathize with African Americans today (in contrast, perhaps, to empathic news portrayals of African Americans during the Civil Rights Era). Relative to the racial case, gay and lesbian individuals represent a numerical minority that is much more integrated with the heterosexual majority, both residentially (and this is more consequential today, given the greater numbers of gay and lesbian Americans that feel safe and comfortable enough to openly express their identities) and increasingly, in popular culture as well. Arguably, heterosexual Americans in the contemporary period have more opportunities than ever before to empathize with gay and lesbian Americans.
Finally, on the high end of the exposure continuum, women have always been half the population and fully and intimately integrated with men in the United States—at least in the private sphere (Pateman 1988). Despite women’s numbers and men’s many opportunities for cross-gender empathy, as in the aforementioned cases of racial and sexual inequality, gender inequality has persisted, at least in part, due to the stigmatizing stereotypes and marginalizing misrecognitions that have clouded both men’s and women’s understandings of whom women really are, as individuals (Harris-Perry 2011). Even still, given men’s greater opportunities for empathy with women relative to the opportunities that whites and heterosexuals have to empathize with African Americans and gay Americans, respectively, I expect men’s trait empathy to be more influential in their attitudes about women’s rights, than for example, whites’ attitudes about the rights of African Americans. Likewise, I predict that the impact of heterosexuals’ empathy traits on their gay rights attitudes will be mediated by their opportunities to empathize with gay and lesbian individuals—either through knowing a gay friend or family member or encountering gay individuals through empathic portrayals in the media. I undertake a more thorough exploration of the influence of empathy (as well as sympathy) predispositions on dominant individuals’ out-group policy attitudes in Chapter 5 using a large national survey of heterosexual Americans.

Chapter Summary

Building upon insights from psychology, philosophy, and political science, the theories I have proposed in this chapter attempt to explicate why and how empathy and sympathy states and traits produce distinct patterns of public opinion and political behavior. In this chapter, I
have also begun to describe the characteristics of political encounters that lead the dominant public to either empathize or sympathize with marginal or minority out-group individuals. This theoretical framework incorporates the types of events (i.e. movement protests vs. disasters or diseases) and the types of individuals (i.e. agents vs. victims) that contribute to stimulus strength by influencing the degree to which out-group members are impacted by the “similarity bias” that typically accompanies observers’ expressions of empathy and sympathy. Admittedly, this theoretical framework generates more hypotheses than what can be realistically tested in this dissertation; however, my goal in this chapter has been to develop a rich framework and a corresponding set of expectations that can be tested in the current as well as future work.

In conclusion, to be human is to be rational and self-interested, biased in favor of one’s in-group, prejudiced toward and intolerant of out-groups, and thus, prone to conflict, sometimes. Most political scientists have overlooked the fact that human nature is also emotional—and specifically empathic—social, and cooperative with in-group as well as out-group members, at least some of the time (Hoffman 2000; Batson et al. 1997; de Waal 2009). Empathy facilitates smooth social interactions and relationships by allowing individuals to feel the emotions of others, and thus, to better understand others (Hoffman 2000; Hatfield et al. 1992). Who empathizes for whom, in what contexts, and to what effect are the primary subjects of this dissertation, and I hope to demonstrate that empathy has important implications for politics—for “who gets what, when, how” (Lasswell 1936)—especially when it comes to marginal or minority groups struggling for rights and wellbeing equal to that of the dominant group.
Chapter 3

Are the Kids All Right? Evidence of the Effects of Empathy Deficits from Two Movie Theater Field Experiments

“I find myself returning again and again to my mother’s simple principle – ‘How would that make you feel?’ – as a guidepost for my politics. It’s not a question we ask ourselves enough, I think; as a country, we seem to be suffering from an empathy deficit...I believe a stronger sense of empathy would tilt the balance of our current politics in favor of those people who are struggling in this society. After all, if they are like us, then their struggles are our own.”

~President Barack Obama

Why does public opinion become more egalitarian regarding marginalized or stigmatized out-groups? The answer I suggest in this dissertation and test empirically in this chapter is empathy. Recall that empathy is defined here as an affective response to another’s “situation” (Hoffman 2000, 4) or “perceived welfare” that often results when an individual puts herself in another’s place (Batson et al. 1997, 105). I theorize that, in the contemporary period, gay and lesbian individuals’ increasing media presence has allowed the heterosexual public to empathize with these individuals and that the cumulative effects of empathy are evident in the public’s steadily increasing egalitarianism on gay rights. In this chapter, I test this claim and answer the question: how does empathy for gay individuals influence heterosexuals’ opinions about policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans? This specific question can speak to the general question of how empathy changes majority opinion about policies affecting marginalized or minority groups.

This chapter reports the results of two field experiments in which states of empathy were encouraged among heterosexual subjects for gay and lesbian individuals using fictional media
dramas. In these field experiments, I manipulated the empathy context by randomly assigning the in-group/out-group identity of the empathy targets using real contemporary movies, which subjects viewed in actual theatres with other participants. In contrast to reading a vignette or newspaper article, full-length films should be more successful at really drawing people in emotionally. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of a good movie is that it causes people to empathize with the characters. Thus, I reasoned that movies would be strong stimuli for realistically inducing states of empathy among heterosexuals for gay and lesbian individuals in the treatment condition (out-group context) and comparable heterosexual individuals in the control condition (in-group context). In the first field experiment, films encouraged empathy among university students for a young gay couple in the treatment condition or a similar straight couple in the control condition. In the second field experiment, films encouraged empathy among adult community members (non-student) for a middle-aged lesbian couple in the treatment condition or a straight couple in the control condition.

**Hypotheses and Preview of Findings**

The primary hypothesis I aim to test in these real-world field experiments is that, when heterosexuals experience empathy for gay individuals, their opinions about policies affecting gay Americans as a group will change in an egalitarian direction. In other words, I expect empathy for gay individuals to be the motivating mechanism that causes heterosexuals to become more egalitarian in their opinions about gay rights. Of course whether a heterosexual person experiences empathy for a gay individual will depend on the heterosexual person’s capacity or predisposition for empathy. In addition, whether experiencing empathy prompts a heterosexual
person to change her opinions on gay rights to more egalitarian positions requires that her initial positions are sufficiently inegalitarian, and thus, ripe for change. Heterosexual individuals who already possess highly egalitarian views on policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans may have already undergone an empathic process of opinion change, and in any case, are a difficult group on which to test the theory because already-egalitarian opinions leave little room for upward movement. As will become evident later in the chapter, the samples recruited for these studies may suffer from this problem, making the analysis reported here a conservative test of the theory. In addition, whether a heterosexual person experiences empathy for a gay individual will also depend on the nature of the empathy-inducing stimulus she encounters. In these film experiments, there are some unbecoming behavioral elements in the film stimuli that might make it difficult for some people—especially those with low empathic predispositions—to empathize with the gay main characters, namely infidelity in the community study treatment film and frequent recreational drug use in the student study treatment film. I expect highly empathic subjects to empathize with the gay characters despite these behaviors, but conversely expect low empathic subjects to penalize the gay characters for these behaviors with reduced empathy. These expectations are confirmed in the analyses, however, this also resulted in unanticipated negative effects on low-empathy subjects policy preferences related to the suitability of gay and lesbian individuals for parenthood. I address these challenges by using a more diverse national sample and a more thoroughly positive portrayal of a gay individual as the treatment stimulus in the survey experimental study presented in Chapter 4. Still, the hypotheses tested in this chapter yield illuminating findings relative to the role of empathy in encounters with out-group individuals and subsequent policy positions related to out-group rights.
First, I test whether the treatment stimuli create empathy for the gay characters as intended. In light of previous findings of similarity bias in empathic responding (Harrison 2011; Batson et al. 2005; Hoffman 2000; Cialdini et al. 1997), I hypothesize that heterosexual subjects will empathize somewhat less with the gay characters than with the straight characters (H1). I expect this negative treatment effect on state empathy to be moderated by empathic predispositions such that the effect is strongest among subjects with low levels of the empathic predisposition (H1-Mod). Second, I test whether the treatment stimuli affect policy opinions in the predicted egalitarian direction. I hypothesize that subjects in the treatment condition will exhibit significantly more egalitarian opinions (and opinion changes) on gay rights issues than subjects in the control condition (H2). I expect this positive treatment effect on opinion to be strongest among highly empathic subjects (H2-Mod). Finally, in order estimate the particular influence of empathy states on opinion, I model policy opinions (and opinion changes) as a product of film assignment and empathy states experienced in response to the characters. I hypothesize that states of empathy for the gay characters in the treatment films will strongly and positively affect gay rights policy egalitarianism (H3). In addition, I hypothesize that the influence of states of empathy will be strongest among subjects high in the trait of empathy (H3-Mod). These hypotheses find mixed support in the data, but nonetheless, the results support a view of empathy as a critical mechanism underlying dominant public opinion on minority rights.

I find that relative to control films that featured heterosexual main characters, the treatment films portraying gay and lesbian characters negatively changed heterosexual subjects’ opinions about gay adoption. However, the negative changes occurred primarily among subjects with low levels of the empathic predisposition who were exposed to the gay and lesbian
characters in the treatment films. Moreover, relative to their low trait empathy counterparts who viewed heterosexual characters in the control films, low trait empathy subjects experienced *significantly weaker states of empathy* for the gay and lesbian characters. However, low trait empathy subjects did experience *some empathy* for the gay characters despite their in-group empathy bias; and at the same time, these low trait empathy subjects were positively affected by the treatment films in their support for gay marriage. Subjects *high in the empathic predisposition*, on the other hand, experienced *statistically equivalent states of empathy* for the gay characters relative to the empathy states that their control counterparts experienced for heterosexual film characters; and subjects high in the empathic predisposition who viewed the treatment films did not decline in their egalitarianism on gay adoption rights. On average, I find that weak states of empathy negatively influence opinions about a range of gay rights issues. Taken together, these findings suggest that empathy may be a necessary condition for achieving egalitarian outcomes for minority groups through encounters with out-group individuals. Without empathy, intergroup contact—even vicarious contact through fictional media—may have undesirable, inegalitarian effects on public opinion. Empathy deficits seem to beget equality deficits.

**Methodology: Movie Theatre Field Experiments**

I designed two field experimental studies to examine the causal impact of heterosexual subjects’ empathy for gay and lesbian individuals while maximizing realism and external validity. As the experimental manipulations, I used real contemporary movies, which subjects viewed in actual theatres with other participants; therefore, the experimental interventions were
nearly identical to what people often experience when they “go to the movies” in real life. Relative to television, film may be a particularly influential and emotionally engaging medium due to its length and the lack of distractions in a theater. Movies produced by gay and lesbian filmmakers that featured gay and lesbian main characters and focused on the struggles and emotions the characters experienced were used as the treatments in these studies. Films with comparable storylines and emotional content that featured heterosexual main characters served as controls. Ideally, from the standpoint of achieving maximum internal validity, I would have been able to use the exact same movie plots and characters in the treatment and control conditions with only the sexual orientation of the characters undergoing manipulation. However, the desire to maximize the external validity of the studies by using real films that had previously played in theatres across the United States (not to mention the prohibitive costs of producing one’s own motion pictures for research purposes) rendered such a precise manipulation impossible. One potential downside of this decision is that the treatment and control movies could have varied in important ways beyond the sexual orientation of their characters, for example, in the actions and/or likeability of the characters. To address these concerns, considerable effort was taken to find control films that mirrored the treatment films as closely as possible. Despite these efforts, the treatment film in the community study was rated by subjects as significantly more enjoyable than the control film.¹⁹ (Students rated the treatment and control films that they viewed as equally enjoyable.)

¹⁹ In the community study, movie enjoyment, rescaled to 0-1, was significantly greater in the treatment film (M=.84, SD=.26) than in the control film (M=.75, SD=.26). The difference of .08 (SE=.05) was significant at p<.10 in a two-tailed t-test. In the student study, there was no significant difference in mean movie enjoyment between the two films (Treatment M=.65, SD=.26; Control M=.67, SD=.35).
I negotiated with a small (two-screen) but popular local theatre in the business district of a small east coast town to permit me to conduct the community field experiment on a Saturday morning before regular business hours. Likewise, I worked with a university film organization to conduct the student movie showings at the campus center movie theatre, which is ideally situated directly adjacent to a large theatre-style classroom also within the campus center. The compact, side-by-side theatre floor plans of both venues allowed me to show treatment and control films simultaneously and to easily conduct “on the spot” random assignment to one of the two screens when subjects arrived for the studies (See Appendix to Chapter 3 for pictorial representations of the theatres used in these studies). In both studies, subjects were not told what movies were being shown and did not learn the title of their assigned movie until the film began.

**Study 1: Weekend, a Modern Story about Falling In Love**

“They [straight audiences] seem to be reacting really, really well to it. I never wanted to pretend it’s not about two gay men because it obviously is. It is about being gay, so it was always important that I was honest about that, but I always wanted the ideas and themes beneath that to be wider, so when you speak to straight people who’ve seen it, they’re almost surprised that they find it emotionally engaging, which is weird to me, and I don’t know what that says about the world, but especially straight men seem to get quite a lot from it. I don’t know why that is, but the struggles the two lead characters are facing are not just about their sexuality. You don’t have to be gay to understand some of those struggles. I mean, there’s always going to be people who say ‘it’s a bit too gay for us’, you know?” – Andrew Haigh in a 2011 interview with “Edge Philadelphia”

For the first field experiment, I chose Weekend (2011) directed by Andrew Haigh as the treatment stimulus to induce empathy for gay individuals. The film addresses the universal struggles of finding and loving both yourself and another. Glen and Russell are two very different gay men—one out and out-going, the other semi-closeted and introverted—who meet at a bar and engage in what they intended to be a one-night stand that turns into something much more meaningful. The men spend most of the weekend together, getting to know each other and themselves, and both are deeply shaken when their romance is cut short by Glen’s previously
planned departure for an art program abroad. *Weekend* ends with an emotional good-bye at a train station. After choosing *Weekend* as the treatment film, *Before Sunrise* (1995), directed by Richard Linklater, was an easy choice for the control film featuring heterosexual characters because the films were frequently compared in reviews of *Weekend* (e.g. Dennis Lim, Sept. 22, 2011, New York Times Review). Some of the reasons for these frequent comparisons are that both are independent, talk-heavy films that explore questions of identity in the context of budding romantic relationships that are cut short by circumstances. I expected these films to be particularly well-suited to studying empathy because the films exclusively focused on the main characters, their thoughts, their emotions, and their facial expressions. In both films, there is minimal plot and no other main characters, so there is very little to distract audiences from focusing on the characters. In *Before Sunrise*, Celine and Jesse meet on a European train trip, and Jesse invites Celine to get off the train with him in Vienna before he must fly home to the U.S. the next morning. Despite their different personalities—Jesse is carefree while Celine is serious and analytical—the two form an immediate connection and spend a romantic night together that neither wishes to end. *Before Sunrise* also concludes with an emotional farewell at a train station.

**Student Sample and Design**

Two-hundred eleven students\(^{20}\) from an east coast university\(^{21}\) were recruited for a “study on love, sex, and movies” primarily via email invitation.\(^{22}\) Participants were invited to take a 10-minute survey online, to attend a free movie showing at the central student activity building on

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\(^{20}\) Two-hundred seventeen subjects consented to the online survey and answered the first question battery, providing pre-test data on trait empathy; however, six participants discontinued the survey before providing demographic information, resulting in a usable pre-test survey sample of 211 student subjects.

\(^{21}\) The sample included 75 men and 136 women (\(M_{\text{age}} = 20.09\), SD = 2.03).

\(^{22}\) Access to a random sample of 4000 undergraduate email addresses was obtained through the university, so nearly 80% of the student population was invited to participate.
campus on a Friday night in March 2012, and to take another short paper survey following the movie. In addition to the free movie, participants were promised free pizza, free beverages, and four chances to win $100 or $50 gift cards in a raffle. Of the 211 student subjects who participated in the pre-test, 82 attended one of two movie showings\textsuperscript{23} and completed the paper post-test survey. Given the objectives of this research to examine the effects of empathy across group lines of sexual difference, 17 of these subjects who self-identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual were excluded from the analysis. Only analyses of the first student movie showing are included here. Thirty-seven heterosexual student subjects (11 men, 26 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 20$, $SD = 1.29$) attended this showing, and 16 were randomly assigned to the treatment film while 21 were randomly assigned to the control film. I checked for covariate balance across the treatment and control films, and the conditions were balanced on all standard observables as well as other relevant variables measured in the pre-test.\textsuperscript{24}

Study 2: \textit{The Kids Are All Right, a Modern Story about Marriage and Family}

“They're [moviegoers are] looking at it like a relationship film and a family film, a comedy, a drama, in all the right ways, all the ways we intended it to be perceived.” – Lisa Cholodenko in a 2010 interview with “The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette”

“I wanted to make a film that was not sentimental, sanctimonious or apologetic; so did Annette and Julianne. So that's what we did. It is a political film, in the sense that it's saying: this marriage is as messy and flawed and complicated as any other marriage.”

~ Lisa Cholodenko in a 2010 interview with “The Observer”

For the second field experiment, I chose \textit{The Kids Are All Right} (2010) directed by Lisa Cholodenko as the treatment stimulus to induce empathy for lesbian individuals. The movie

\textsuperscript{23} Following recent calls for improving the “gold standard” of causal inference, the randomized experiment, I included the standard randomized component plus an additional self-selection component that allows for an estimation of the heterogeneous treatment effects on those who are likely to select into and out of the treatment in the real world (Gaines & Kuklinski 2011). A discussion of the selection analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter and remains a topic for future work.

\textsuperscript{24} Balance was achieved on sex, age, income, party, political ideology, race, marital status, parent's marital status, religious preference, religious importance, and state of origin. Other variables that might be important in this analysis were also balanced across the two conditions, including: knowing a friend or family member in a same-sex relationship, knowing a friend or family member who has adopted a child, and the traits of empathy and sympathy.
addresses universal challenges of marriage and parenting with a few unexpected twists. Nic and Jules are a middle-aged, upper-middle class lesbian couple raising two teenagers in southern California. Each woman conceived one of the children using the same sperm donor, and the family’s relatively ordinary life is shaken when the teens set out to find their “donor dad,” Paul, and bring him into the family fold. The plot thickens further when Jules and Paul have an affair and Nic and the kids find out. The entire family cuts ties with Paul, and Jules earnestly begs Nic and the children for forgiveness. The film ends on a hopeful but unresolved note: while driving home after the women have amicably and tearfully moved their oldest child into her dorm for her first year of college, the younger teen tells his parents that they should not break up because they are “too old,” and Nic and Jules touch hands and smile at each other. In contrast to the Study 1 films, the selection of a control film featuring heterosexual characters to mirror the treatment film was a bit more challenging. The plot in the Kids Are All Right is fairly specific to the particular situation of the main lesbian characters but it also involves several other primary characters. Thus, my goal was to find a control film with a similar plot and roughly the same number of characters, which would allow me to “match” the characters across the two movies according to the role they played. Therefore, I chose Rumor Has It (2005) as the control film in Study 2, which features Jeff and Sarah who are a 30-something heterosexual couple. The pair has just finally gotten engaged after many years together, although Sarah’s insecurities about her parents’ relationship before her mother tragically died when she was a child keep her uncertain about her commitment. On a trip home to southern California for her younger sister’s wedding, Sarah becomes convinced that she is not her father’s daughter and flies to San Francisco to confront the man she believes is her dad: an attractive and charming tech guru named Beau.
Things get complicated when she has a drunken one-night-stand with Beau and Jeff and her grandmother find out. In the end, Sarah learns that Beau is not her father, overcomes some of her insecurities from childhood, and begs Jeff for forgiveness. The film ends with scenes from Sarah and Jeff’s wedding. At first blush, this film is not an obvious counterpart to the treatment film. However, *Rumor Has It* shares many elements of control with *The Kids Are All Right*, including a similar strange love triangle among the three main adult characters, which allows for matching the characters across the films according to the role they played. In addition, both films revolve around a “finding the father” theme, and it is this finding of the father in both movies that leads to a seemingly unconventional affair, and thus, the strange love triangle. Both are also set in Southern California, feature upper-middle-class characters, and star actor Mark Ruffalo.

**Community Sample and Design**

Two-hundred sixty-three adult residents of an east coast county were recruited for a “study on relationships, sex, and movies” via multiple methods, including nearly 2000 personalized emails, a direct mailing of 2777 postcards to a random probability sample of registered voters in the county with follow-up automated calls to 1544 listed land lines associated with these voters, flyers posted in the communities surrounding the theatre, and online

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25 Two-hundred sixty-seven subjects consented to the online survey and answered the first question battery, providing pre-test data on trait empathy; however, four participants discontinued the survey before providing demographic information, resulting in a usable pre-test survey sample of 263 community subjects (109 men, 154 women; $M_{age} = 48.71$, $SD = 15.09$).

26 Personalized emails were sent to 1924 adults who had previously participated in a survey or laboratory experiment conducted by university researchers.

27 Three thousand voters residing in the four county townships closest to the theatre were randomly selected to receive postcards. Probability of selection was based upon township of residence, gender, and party identification. Voters in the township in which the theatre was located were selected with .40 probability under the assumption that people who had the least distance to travel would be the most likely to participate; however, voters with university/student zip codes were excluded in order to minimize student participants. Voters residing in each of the three townships adjacent to this one were selected with .20 probability. Within these geographic locations, in order to reduce female and liberal bias in the sample, men were selected with a probability of .60 (.40 for women) as were Republicans (.40 for all others). Once the sample was drawn and postcards were ready to mail, 223 of the addresses were determined to be invalid, and thus only 2777 postcards were sent.
Participants were invited to take a 10-minute survey online, to attend a free movie showing at a local theatre on a Saturday morning in March 2012, and to take another short paper survey at the theater after the movie. In addition to the free movie, participants were promised free popcorn, free soda, and four chances to win $100 or $50 gift cards in a raffle. Of the 263 community subjects who participated in the pre-test survey, 137 attended the movie showing and completed the post-test survey. To examine the effects of empathy across sexual difference, 10 subjects who self-identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual were excluded from the analysis. The final dataset includes 127 heterosexual adults (49 men, 78 women; $M_{age} = 51.85, SD = 13.97$).

Research assistants greeted subjects when they arrived at the theatre and encouraged them to get their free popcorn and soda before receiving their theatre assignment. Subjects were then randomly assigned to one of two theatres, either individually for those who attended the showing alone, or as a cluster, for those who attended with friends or family. This was done to replicate the context of typical movie-going as closely as possible, thereby maximizing external validity. Using this method of quasi-cluster random assignment, 60 heterosexual subjects were randomly assigned to the treatment condition, and 67 heterosexual subjects were randomly assigned to the control condition. Covariate balance checks indicate that the conditions were balanced on all standard observables as well as other relevant variables measured during the pre-

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28 Online advertising included a community events/classified website, Craigslist, and Facebook.
29 A study website with a link to the online pre-test survey allowed participants who were recruited with postcards and advertisements to volunteer for the study and also enabled all participants to recruit others into the study so that participants could attend the movie with friends or family if they wished, as is often typical of moviegoers.
30 Actually, 139 subjects attended the movie showing. One of these subjects did not complete the online pre-test survey, so his post-test data are excluded from the analysis. Another subject left in the first few minutes of the treatment film when he realized that he had already seen it, saying he would prefer to do something else with his Saturday morning. This subject declined to fill out a paper post-test because he said he did not remember the film well enough. Two additional subjects also left the treatment film during the opening scene, both saying they had already seen the film twice before; however, both of these subjects agreed to complete paper post-tests before they left, and their data are included in the analysis.
test, demonstrating that this method of random assignment was successful. In order to ensure that the films’ effects were not influenced by discussions among participants, research assistants administered the paper post-test in the theater immediately following the films, and I instructed subjects not to discuss the movie or surveys with others until they exited the theatre.

Using Films as Empathy Stimuli

The stimuli in these field experiments were intended to induce empathy for the films’ main characters. I chose real contemporary movies as stimuli, not because I am interested in the effects of films per se, but because this medium seemed to be the strongest stimuli for realistically inducing authentic empathy states among research subjects. I am interested in the effects of these films only insofar as their ability to induce empathy is concerned. The design enables me to hold the experiences of going to a movie and empathizing with the characters constant across conditions while manipulating the identity of the individuals for whom the subjects feel empathy. Thus, the field experiments were not designed to test the causal impact of media per se, but rather, were designed to test the influence of the theorized mechanism for opinion change: empathy for out-group individuals.

I hypothesize that, if the treatment films can foster states of empathy for the gay characters among heterosexuals, then the treatment films should produce egalitarian changes in these subjects’ opinions on gay rights (through the empathy they feel for the gay characters).

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31 Balance was achieved on sex, age, income, party, political ideology, race, marital status, parent's marital status, religious preference, religious importance, and state of origin. Other variables that might be important in this analysis were also balanced across the two conditions, including: knowing a friend or family member in a same-sex relationship, knowing a friend or family member who has adopted a child, and the traits of empathy and sympathy.
However, it is important to remember that states like empathy and sympathy for others cannot be assigned to subjects absolutely—only encouraged through direct or indirect (mediated) contact with others—and whether and which responses are actually elicited by exposure to others depends upon dispositional as well as contextual factors (as described in Chapter 2). As noted above, in these field experiments, there are some unbecoming behavioral elements in the treatment films that might make it difficult for some people—especially those with low empathic predispositions—to empathize with the gay main characters, namely an extramarital affair in the community study and hardcore recreational drug use in the student study. I expect highly empathic subjects to empathize with the gay characters despite these behaviors, but conversely expect low empathic subjects to penalize the gay characters for these behaviors with reduced empathy. Despite the inclusion of the aforementioned “bad” behaviors, the full-length films used in this research are likely among the strongest real-world empathy stimuli that can be employed in field experimental research of this type. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that these stimuli are best understood as providing realistic opportunities for empathy with gay (out-group) characters in the treatment film or to similar heterosexual (in-group) characters in the control film.

Measures

In both field experiments, the online pre-treatment instruments contained gay rights policy items and empathy and sympathy predisposition batteries (developed and used widely by

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32 Students took the online pre-test 0-8 days in advance of the movie showing. Community members took the online pre-test 0-29 days in advance of the movie showing. Although the vast majority of participants in both studies took the pre-test well more than a day or two before the showing they attended, a few students completed the pre-test immediately before the showing (in the hallway outside the theatres), and a few community participants completed the pre-test the day/night before the showing. I permitted these late pre-test-takers in order to maximize sample sizes in the experimental portion of the studies.
psychologists\(^{33}\) in order to assess baseline policy preferences and individual differences in tendencies to experience empathy and sympathy. The post-treatment surveys contained measures of subjects’ empathy and sympathy states as well as identical and novel gay rights policy items. Below I compare treatment and control subjects to one another in two ways: first, I compare individual changes in pre-post policy preferences on the identical items across the groups, and second, I compare the groups’ post-treatment preferences on the new items. Two measures of policy egalitarianism relative to gay and lesbian Americans were included on both the pre-tests and the post-tests in order to assess individual-level changes in gay rights policy preferences caused by the treatment films: 1) a measure of opposition to “Laws that do not allow gay and lesbian couples to adopt children” (ADOPTION) and 2) a measure of opposition to “Federal law that defines marriage as only between a man and a woman” (DOMA). The post-tests also included two additional policy items related to the legal recognition of gay marriages and families: 1) a question asking whether “marriages between same-sex couples” should or should not “be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages” (MARRY) and 2) an item asking how much subjects favor or oppose “Laws requiring kindergarten curricula to include picture books about families with two moms and two dads” (BOOKS).\(^{34}\)

In the analyses reported throughout this chapter, higher values on the policy items indicate greater gay rights egalitarianism. As mentioned above, the post-tests also measured subjects’ states of empathy and sympathy. In the student study, in order to measure states of

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\(^{33}\) The seven items used to measure empathic predispositions were selected from Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright’s (2004) 40-item Empathy Quotient scale of global empathy. To avoid acquiescence response bias in my reduced index, four positively worded items and three negatively worded items were chosen based upon those that had the strongest factor loadings in Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright’s (2004) instrument validation studies. The items used to measure sympathetic predispositions are items developed by Davis (1983a, 1983b) to measure what he calls the “empathic concern” dimension of empathy. However, Davis’ dimensions of empathy have been criticized for tapping into capacities that do not align conceptually with pure empathy (Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004), and I contend that these measures are more appropriately conceived as tapping the capacity for sympathy.

\(^{34}\) These policy items utilized a response scale with the following six points: Strongly In Favor, In Favor, Somewhat In Favor, Somewhat Against, Against, and Strongly Against.
empathy for the main characters in the films, subjects were asked how much they agreed or disagreed\textsuperscript{35} with the statements: 1) “I imagined myself in the characters’ situation” and 2) “I could feel what the characters were feeling.” These two measures were combined into an index measure of empathy states for the main characters in each film. In the community study, states of empathy were measured for each of the main characters individually (e.g. “I imagined myself in Nic’s situation” and “I could feel what Nic was feeling”), and then these measures were combined into an index measure of empathy states for each character. The state empathy indices for the two lesbian characters in the treatment film and the corresponding heterosexual characters in the control film were further combined to create overall state empathy scores for the main characters in each film, mirroring the student study measures. I used a similar method to create sympathy state scores for the main characters in each film. This allowed me to combine the datasets from the two field experiments, which has both practical and theoretical advantages. Practically, combining the two datasets increases the statistical power and diversity of the overall sample under analysis, beyond what could be achieved through analyzing either of the samples individually. Theoretically, combining the two datasets in this way improves the generalizability of the findings to experiencing empathy for gay and lesbian individuals, rather than individuals from just one group or the other. Further, it tests the generalizability of the theory using a broader (albeit slightly) set of gay and lesbian individuals as empathy targets, rather than focusing on the effects of experiencing empathy for one particular individual as has been done in past studies. See the Appendix to Chapter 3 for the question wording and descriptive statistics of all variables used in the analysis.

\textsuperscript{35} The empathy items utilized a response scale with the following six points: Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.
Data Analysis

First, I test whether the treatment stimuli create empathy for the gay characters as intended as well as the hypothesis that heterosexual subjects will empathize somewhat less with the gay characters than with the straight characters (H1). I also test the corollary hypothesis that this negative treatment effect on state empathy will be strongest among subjects with low levels of the empathic predisposition (H1-Mod). Table 3.1 shows that, overall, the treatment films were successful at inducing states of empathy and sympathy for the gay characters—at least as much empathy and sympathy as was elicited for the straight characters in the control films. The average reported levels of state empathy and state sympathy for the characters in the treatment and control films ranged between .66 and .68 (on a 0-1 scale). These means fall somewhere between the responses “Somewhat Agree” and “Agree” on the six-item response scales for the empathy and sympathy state items. In an absolute sense then, it appears that subjects, on average, felt moderate feelings of empathy and sympathy for the gay as well as the straight characters. However, as noted above, subjects in the community study rated the treatment film as more enjoyable than the control film (while student subjects rated the treatment and control films as equally enjoyable). The measure of enjoyment might be thought of as a proxy variable for film quality, and higher quality films are thought to better induce empathy for their characters. If this is true, one might expect community subjects viewing the higher quality treatment film to empathize more strongly with the lesbian characters that they encounter than subjects who encounter heterosexual characters in the perhaps lower quality control film. Yet, as shown in Table 3.1, subjects still emotionally engaged with the characters equally. If the quality of a film is part of what determines how much the audience will empathize and sympathize with the
characters, using higher quality control films might have lead subjects to experience more empathy and sympathy for the heterosexual characters. In other words, it is possible that the differing quality of the films is masking the expected in-group/out-group biases in experiencing empathy and sympathy states for the gay and straight main characters. This of course is an empirical question that I can address using simple OLS models that predict empathy and sympathy states by regressing each of these dependent variables on a treatment dummy variable and a control variable for movie enjoyment (See Table 3.2). The results are informative. When controlling for movie enjoyment, the treatment film actually has a significant, negative effect on empathy for the main characters. That is, holding movie enjoyment constant, heterosexual subjects experienced less empathy for the gay characters in the treatment film than they did for the straight characters in the control film. The treatment coefficient in the model predicting sympathy states is also negative but not statistically significant. These findings suggest that, all else equal, heterosexuals are more likely to empathize with other heterosexuals (in-group members or those perceived as similar in the domain of sexuality) than they are to empathize with gay individuals (out-group members or those perceived as different in the domain of sexuality). This finding comports with the other studies’ findings of “similarity bias” in empathizing (Harrison 2011; Batson et al. 2005; Hoffman 2000; Cialdini et al. 1997).

Table 3.1. Means and Differences in Means in Empathy and Sympathy States and Movie Enjoyment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Treatment Mean (n=76)</th>
<th>Control Mean (n=88)</th>
<th>Difference in Means</th>
<th>p-value (two-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy States</td>
<td>.66 (.23)</td>
<td>.68 (.21)</td>
<td>.02 (.03)</td>
<td>.5407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy States</td>
<td>.67 (.24)</td>
<td>.67 (.22)</td>
<td>-.00 (.04)</td>
<td>.8289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>.80 (.03)</td>
<td>.73 (.03)</td>
<td>.06 (.04)</td>
<td>.1374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the means for empathy and sympathy state measures as well as the movie enjoyment variable, all rescaled to range from 0 to 1. (Note: The control group in the Enjoyment analysis contained 77 subjects.)
### Table 3.2. Treatment Effects on Empathy and Sympathy States Controlling for Movie Enjoyment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EMPATHY STATES (N=163)</th>
<th>SYMPATHY STATES (N=163)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>-.05 (.03)*</td>
<td>-.02 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>.44 (.05)**</td>
<td>.35 (.06)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.36 (.04)**</td>
<td>.41 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of two separate OLS models. All variables are on a 0–1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses; p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, & ***p<.01.

However, introducing empathy and sympathy predispositions as moderators in the analysis demonstrates that not all individuals are susceptible to similarity bias. Using validated index measures of these predispositions that were included on an online pre-test, I twice split the sample into two subgroups: first, into a subgroup with high empathic predisposition levels and a subgroup with low empathic predisposition levels, and second, into a subgroup with high sympathetic predisposition levels and a subgroup with low sympathetic predisposition levels.36 Because the act of empathizing with another can simultaneously produce both empathy and sympathy states, I anticipated that the empathic predisposition would moderate both empathy and sympathy responses. Specifically, I expected that subjects highly predisposed to experiencing empathy would express statistically equivalent levels of empathy and sympathy states in response to the characters in both the treatment and control conditions. However, for subjects with low levels of the empathic predisposition, I anticipated that they would have a harder time empathizing and sympathizing with out-group individuals than with in-group individuals, and therefore, I predicted that they would report lower degrees of state empathy and sympathy in the treatment condition than in the control condition. My expectations regarding the influence of the trait of empathy were confirmed. I conducted the moderation analysis by

36 Subjects were coded as having high levels of the trait of empathy if their trait empathy index score was 0.6 or above, corresponding with the response options on the positive side of the response scale: “Somewhat agree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree.” Subjects were coded as having low levels of the trait of empathy if their trait empathy index score was below 0.6, corresponding to the negative response choices of “Somewhat disagree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly disagree.” The same coding scheme was utilized for the sympathy trait index variable.
sympathetic predisposition primarily as a placebo test to demonstrate differences between empathy and sympathy traits. Intuitively, one might expect the sympathy trait to be a stronger moderator of sympathy states than the empathy trait. However, I find that this is not the case. The empathic predisposition appears to be a stronger moderator than the sympathetic predisposition of the treatment films’ effects on both empathy and sympathy states.

The large, statistically significant, negative treatment coefficients in the second and final columns of Table 3.3, which include only subjects with low levels of trait empathy, show that these low empathic subjects experience significantly less empathy and sympathy for the gay main characters in the treatment film than their control counterparts did for the heterosexual main characters. In contrast, the models in the first and third columns of Table 3.3, which include only subjects highly predisposed to empathy, produce small, positive but statistically insignificant treatment coefficients, demonstrating that highly empathic subjects experienced equal degrees of state empathy and state sympathy for both the gay main characters in the treatment film and the straight main characters in the control film.

Table 3.3. Treatment Effects on Empathy and Sympathy States, Conditional on Empathic Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EMPATHY STATES</th>
<th>SYMPATHY STATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Trait Empathy (n=111)</td>
<td>Low Trait Empathy (n=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>.01 (.04)</td>
<td>-.18 (.05)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>.38 (.07)***</td>
<td>.54 (.09)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.39 (.06)***</td>
<td>.32 (.07)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of four separate OLS regression models of empathy and sympathy states for the films’ main characters. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, and ***p<.01.

37 The correlation between the traits of empathy and sympathy is moderately strong at r=.49. However, these variables clearly measure different dimensions of personality, which is further demonstrated by the moderation analyses throughout this chapter.
Table 3.4. Treatment Effects on Empathy and Sympathy States, Conditional on Sympathetic Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EMPATHY STATES</th>
<th>SYMPATHY STATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Trait Sympathy (n=107)</td>
<td>Low Trait Sympathy (n=55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>-0.02 (.04)</td>
<td>-0.11 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>0.39 (.07)****</td>
<td>0.46 (.08)****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.41 (.06)****</td>
<td>0.32 (.07)****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of four separate OLS regression models of empathy and sympathy states for the films’ main characters. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, and ***p<.01.

Together, these four models in Table 3.3 illustrate that the highly empathic do not exhibit similarity bias in experiencing the emotional states of empathy and sympathy, but people with low levels of the empathic predisposition do. This may have important implications for how these different types of people respond to marginal or minority “others” in the political realm. If experiencing empathy motivates preferences for equality like I theorize, then this analysis showing a greater tendency to empathize with out-group individuals among highly empathic subjects suggests that individual differences in empathic predispositions may also predict unique patterns of public opinion on a range of policies affecting marginal or minority out-groups. I will investigate this broader hypothesis in Chapter 5.

Turning now to the moderator analysis by sympathetic predisposition, the significant, negative treatment coefficient in the second column of Table 3.4 show that low trait sympathy subjects in the treatment conditions experienced significantly less empathy for the gay main characters than their control counterparts did for the heterosexual main characters. The model predicting sympathy states among the subgroup low in sympathy produces a negatively signed but statistically insignificant treatment coefficient, indicating that subjects low in sympathy did not significantly differ in their sympathy for the film characters depending upon the sexual identity of the characters. Similarly, the models in the first and third columns of Table 3.4, which
include only highly sympathetic subjects, demonstrate that highly sympathetic subjects experienced statistically equivalent (although differently signed) degrees of state empathy and state sympathy regardless of whether they were assigned to watch the treatment film portraying gay main characters or the control film depicting heterosexual main characters. Moreover, and somewhat surprisingly, the sympathetic predisposition also appears to be a less useful moderator of sympathy responses than the empathic predisposition. That is, the second conclusion that can be drawn from a comparison of Tables 3.3 and 3.4 is that the empathy predisposition measure appears to be a stronger moderator of empathy and sympathy states than the sympathy predisposition measure in that it discriminates better between subjects’ patterns of emotional responding to the characters. In other words, using the empathy predisposition as a moderator allows for the clear delineation between those who exhibit similarity bias in their states of empathy and sympathy and those who do not: highly empathic subjects exhibit no such bias while subjects with low levels of the empathic predisposition feel more empathy and sympathy toward heterosexuals (in-group members) than they do for gay and lesbian individuals (out-group members). Using the sympathy predisposition as a moderator makes the lines between these groups of responders less clear. In summary, it appears that subjects highly predisposed to experiencing empathy and sympathy will experience similar levels of these states for both similar in-group and dissimilar out-group members. These individuals do not demonstrate similarity bias in the distribution of their empathy and sympathy. However, as hypothesized, subjects with low levels of the empathy predisposition do exhibit similarity bias; they are less able to experience empathy and sympathy for dissimilar out-group members than for similar in-group members.
Next, I test the hypothesis that subjects in the gay treatment condition will exhibit significantly more egalitarian opinions (and opinion changes) on gay rights issues than subjects in the heterosexual control condition (H2). I also test the corollary hypothesis that this positive treatment effect on opinion will be strongest among highly empathic subjects (H2-Mod). Tables 3.5 and Table 3.6 display a mixed pattern of average treatment effects, shown in the first and fourth columns of the tables among the full sample. Note that, although the analyses reported below are conducted in an OLS regression framework, the raw means for all items for each condition and for each study separately can be found in the Appendix to Chapter 3.

Most notably, controlling for gay adoption opinion reported in the online pre-test, heterosexuals who were assigned to the treatment film became significantly less egalitarian in their attitudes about gay adoption than their control counterparts. The treatment film may have also made heterosexual subjects slightly more supportive of gay marriage as well as slightly less supportive of inclusive kindergarten curricula, but these average treatment effects do not reach statistical significance at conventional levels. Finally, the treatment film produced no significant change in heterosexual subjects’ views on the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) item: “National law that defines marriage as only between a man and a woman.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.5. Gay Rights Opinion Analysis Conditional on Empathic Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARRY OPINION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Sample (n=165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment .04 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant .85 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Trait Empathy (n=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment .05 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant .60 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Trait Empathy (n=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment - .04 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant -.54 (.06)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of six separate OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses; p-values are two-tailed, \( ^* p<.15, ^* ^* p<.10, ^* ^* ^* p<.05, ^* ^* ^* ^* p<.01 \).
Table 3.6. Gay Rights Opinion Change Analysis Conditional on Empathic Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA OPINION @ T2</th>
<th>ADOPTION OPINION @ T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Sample (n=164)</td>
<td>High Trait Empathy (n=113)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV @ T1</td>
<td>.87 (.04)**</td>
<td>.85 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.12 (.03)****</td>
<td>.13 (.04)****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of six separate OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses; p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

It is likely that the mixed effects on policy attitudes of the treatment on the full sample depicted in the first and fourth columns of Tables 3.5 and 3.6 are attributable to the differing emotional experiences subjects had based on their individual predispositions for experiencing empathy and sympathy. I predict that the lower levels of empathy states experienced for the gay characters in the treatment film among subjects’ low in the empathic predisposition can account for the statistically significant, negative, individual-level changes in adoption support observed in the fourth column of Table 3.6. If subjects with differing levels of the empathy and sympathy predispositions are, as a result of their distinct emotional responses to the films, responding differently in their opinions (and in opposite directions), interesting effects could be cancelling each other out in the analysis of the full sample. Conducting the analysis by empathic and sympathetic predisposition subgroups will unmask any such effects. I expect that highly empathic subjects should be positively influenced by the treatment films—provided their levels of support are not already so high as to preclude additional upward movement. Conversely, I expect that any negative effects of the treatment films will manifest primarily among subjects with low levels of the empathic predisposition, mirroring the effects found in Table 3.3. Subgroup analyses of treatment effects on gay rights opinions, by subjects’ empathic predispositions, are also displayed in Tables 3.5 and 3.6 (columns 2, 3, 5, and 6).
Tables 3.5 and 3.6 show that highly empathic subjects did not differ significantly in their attitudes on any of the gay rights items depending upon whether they were assigned to the treatment or the control group. I suspect that this lack of movement in the predicted egalitarian direction among the highly empathic is due to ceiling effects within these particularly liberal samples. The average levels of support for the two gay rights policy items measured in the online pre-test—opinions about the legal definition of marriage (DOMA at time 1, M=.79, SD=.28) and adoption by gay and lesbian couples (ADOPT at time 1, M=.85, SD=.24)—were already nearing the maximum support allowed by the scale prior to the field experiments. These means roughly correspond to the 5th point, “Agree,” on the 6-point response scale that was offered for each of these questions. Likewise, for the MARRY and BOOKS items that were asked only in the post-test, the mean values for the control groups provide estimates of the baseline preferences of the sample on these items: M=.85, SD=.36 and M=.58, SD=.28, respectively. The MARRY question asked whether same-sex marriages “Should” or “Should not” be considered legally valid, with those that answered in the affirmative coded 1 and those that did not coded 0. Clearly, the sample mean of .85 provides very little room for subjects to become even more supportive of same-sex marriage. The only dependent variable that does not seem susceptible to ceiling effects in this sample is the BOOKS variable. Although even in this case, a mean of .58 roughly corresponds to the 4th point, “Somewhat agree,” on this variable’s 6-point response scale, indicating that subjects in this sample are already generally egalitarian on this policy as well.

However, the conditional treatment effects on subjects with low levels of empathic predispositions in these tables are notable. It appears that the treatment film caused low empathy subjects to report significantly more egalitarianism in support for gay marriage than their control
counterparts, as predicted by the theory. However, low trait empathy subjects also became significantly less supportive of adoption by gay couples as a result of watching the treatment films. Recall that these same subjects experienced less empathy and sympathy for the gay characters in the treatment films than their low empathic counterparts assigned to the heterosexual control films (See Table 3.3). I conduct parallel placebo analysis using the moderator of sympathetic predispositions, and find that the trait of sympathy appears to moderate gay adoption opinions to about the same degree as trait empathy but is a much weaker moderator of opinions about gay marriage than trait empathy (See Tables 3.7 and 3.8). Although Tables 3.1 through 3.3 demonstrate that the treatment film did produce states of empathy and sympathy for the gay main characters, and Tables 3.5 and 3.6 show that the treatment films had some (mixed) effects on policy preferences related to gay marriage and family rights, further analysis is needed to determine the relationship between the states of empathy experienced for the gay characters and the treatment films’ effects on gay rights policy preferences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>MARRY OPINION</th>
<th>BOOKS OPINION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Sample (n=165)</td>
<td>High Trait Sympathy (n=109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>.04 (.05)</td>
<td>.08 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.85 (.04)**</td>
<td>.84 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7. Gay Rights Opinion Analysis Conditional on Sympathetic Traits

The table reports the results of six separate OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses; p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

Note that the pattern of negative effects on changes in adoption policy attitudes holds when I analyze each field experiment independently. The storyline in The Kids Are All Right specifically addresses the issue of parenting while the plot of Weekend does not, so one might expect that negative effects on changes in gay adoption opinion would occur as a result of watching the former but not the latter. However, this is not the case. Watching the movie Weekend also changed student subjects’ opinions on adoption policy in a negative direction, and this effect occurred primarily among subjects low in the trait of empathy.
Table 3.8. Gay Rights Opinion Change Analysis Conditional on Sympathetic Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA OPINION @ T2</th>
<th>ADOPTION OPINION @ T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Sample</td>
<td>High Trait Sympathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=164)</td>
<td>(n=109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>.01 (.03)</td>
<td>.02 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV @ T1</td>
<td>.85 (.05)**</td>
<td>.84 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.13 (.04)**</td>
<td>.14 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Full Sample (n=164) | High Trait Sympathy (n=109) | Low Trait Sympathy (n=55)

The table reports the results of six separate OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses; p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

As an initial test of the state empathy mechanism that I propose, I conduct moderation analyses similar to the trait moderation analyses presented above according to subjects’ reported levels of empathy and sympathy states. Recall that I hypothesize in H3 that states of empathy for the gay characters in the treatment films will strongly and positively affect gay rights policy egalitarianism. The findings reported in Tables 3.9 suggest that states of empathy may positively influence gay rights opinion as predicted; however, these results do not reach statistical significance at conventional levels.

Table 3.9. Gay Rights Opinion Analysis Conditional on Presence of Empathy States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MARRY OPINION</th>
<th>BOOKS OPINION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Sample</td>
<td>States of Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=165)</td>
<td>(n=110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>.04 (.05)</td>
<td>.08 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.85 (.04)**</td>
<td>.84 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of six separate OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses; p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, **p<.10, ***p<.05, ****p<.01.

39 Subjects were coded as experiencing empathy states if their state empathy index score was 0.6 or above, corresponding with the response options on the positive side of the response scale: “Somewhat agree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree.” Subjects were coded as not experiencing states of empathy if their state empathy index score was below 0.6, corresponding to the negative response choices of “Somewhat disagree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly disagree.” The same coding scheme was utilized for the sympathy state variable.
Table 3.10. Gay Rights Opinion Change Analysis Conditional on Presence of Empathy States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA OPINION @ T2</th>
<th>ADOPTION OPINION @ T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Sample (n=164)</td>
<td>States of Empathy (n=109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV @ T1</td>
<td>.87 (.04)**</td>
<td>.90 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.12 (.03)**</td>
<td>.08 (.04)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of six separate OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses; p-values are two-tailed, +p<.15, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

However, Tables 3.9 and 3.10 demonstrate that the negative effects of the treatment film occur exclusively among those subjects who did not experience states of empathy for the gay characters (as compared to their control counterparts who did not experience empathy for the straight characters they encountered). These effects are illustrated visually in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Treatment Effects by States of Empathy Experienced for the Characters

![Graph showing treatment effects by states of empathy](image-url)

P-values are two-tailed, +p<.15, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.
Like the trait sympathy placebo analysis above, the placebo moderation analysis by the presence or absence of states of sympathy does not moderate the effects of the treatment as well as states of empathy. However, unexpectedly, subjects who experienced sympathy for gay treatment film characters were significantly more supportive of gay marriage than their counterparts who experienced sympathy for the heterosexual control film characters.

Table 3.11. Gay Rights Opinion Analysis Conditional on Presence of Sympathy States

| | MARRY OPINION | BOOKS OPINION |
| | Full Sample (n=165) | States of Sympathy (n=119) | NO State Sympathy (n=45) |
| | Full Sample (n=165) | States of Sympathy (n=119) | NO State Sympathy (n=45) |
| Treatment | .04 (.05) | .12 (.06)** | -.11 (.10) | -.05 (.04) | -.02 (.05) | -.10 (.09) |
| Constant | .85 (.04)** | .83 (.04)** | .92 (.07)** | .58 (.03)** | .60 (.03)** | .53 (.06)** |

The table reports the results of six separate OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses; p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, **p<.10, ***p<.05.

Table 3.12. Gay Rights Opinion Change Analysis Conditional on Presence of Sympathy States

| | DOMA OPINION @ T2 | ADOPTION OPINION @ T2 |
| | Full Sample (n=164) | States of Sympathy (n=119) | NO State Sympathy (n=44) |
| | Full Sample (n=164) | States of Sympathy (n=119) | NO State Sympathy (n=44) |
| Treatment | .01 (.03) | .01 (.02) | -.07 (.05)** | -.07 (.03)** | -.04 (.03) | -.10 (.07)** |
| DV @ T1 | .85 (.05)** | .89 (.04)** | .79 (.07)** | .75 (.06)** | .64 (.07)** | .92 (.16)** |
| Constant | .13 (.04)** | .10 (.04)** | .20 (.06)** | .24 (.06)** | .35 (.06)** | .04 (.14) |

The table reports the results of six separate OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses; p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, **p<.10, ***p<.05.

Next, in order estimate the particular influence of empathy states for the gay treatment film characters on opinion (in comparison with sympathy states for the gay film characters), I model policy opinions (and opinion changes) as a product of film assignment and emotional states experienced in response to the characters. Recall again that I hypothesize that states of empathy for the gay characters in the treatment films will strongly and positively affect gay rights policy egalitarianism (H3), particularly among subjects high in the predisposition of
empathy (H3-Mod). Specifically, I regress each of the dependent variables on a treatment dummy variable (1=treatment film, 0=control film), state empathy, and the empathy state’s interaction with the treatment dummy. In the models predicting opinion change at time 2 (the DOMA and ADOPTION models), I also include a control variable for subjects’ opinion at time 1. Again, I also conduct these analyses by empathic predisposition subgroup to assess whether the influence of empathy states occurs primarily among highly empathic individuals as predicted.

In analyses of the full sample, in two of the four models, I find that states of empathy for the gay characters in the treatment films (Empathy*Treatment interaction terms) impact gay rights policy support in the predicted egalitarian direction (See Tables 3.14 and 3.16, column 1). States of empathy for the gay characters in the treatment film positively and significantly impact support the inclusive kindergarten books requirement and contribute to egalitarian individual-level changes in gay adoption attitudes. In the case of gay marriage, states of empathy for the gay characters did not significantly influence gay marriage opinion as expected, and instead, states of sympathy for the gay characters had a strong impact on support for gay marriage (See Table 3.1340). Neither states of empathy nor states of sympathy for the gay characters seemed to influence changes in opinions on the DOMA definition of marriage (See Table 3.1541).

40 When the Marry models are run with empathy and sympathy states for only the cuckold character in the community study, none of the coefficients are significant (Total N=127; Low Empathy N=36, High Empathy N=90). When the Marry model is run with states for the cheater character with the full sample, none of the coefficients are significant, although the sympathy*treatment term is positive and approaches significance. Among only low empathy subjects in models using states felt for the cheater character only, again, the treatment coefficient approaches significance and the un-interacted sympathy coefficient is positive, large, and highly significant, but neither of the emotion*treatment interaction terms are significant. Among high empathy subjects, however, sympathy for the cheater character in the treatment film is large, positive, and significant (beta=.68 (.30), p<.05). It appears that in the case of gay marriage attitudes, sympathy states felt for the cheater character in the treatment film (Jules in The Kids Are All Right) are driving the main results in Table 3.13.

41 When the DOMA models are run with just states for the cuckold character in the community study only, in the full sample, the empathy*treatment term is significant (p<.10, two-tailed) and positive (beta =.19, SE=.11). Among low trait subjects, the empathy*treatment interaction term is of the same magnitude, positively signed, and approaches significance. Among high trait subjects, none of the coefficients approach significance at conventional levels except for the Time 1 DOMA measure. When the DOMA models are run with states for the cheater, none of the variables are significant (except the Time 1 DOMA measure). The same is true regarding models with states for the cheater among low empathy subjects. However, the models that were run among only high empathy subjects including emotional states for the cheater only produce significant coefficients on the sympathy*treatment term (beta =.26, SE=(.12), p<.05) as well as on the Time 1 DOMA measure. In these models, the results on the
Next, I turn to the results of these analyses by trait empathy subgroup. In the case of the BOOKS policy, the results displayed in Table 3.14\textsuperscript{42} are as predicted by H3-Mod: empathy states for the gay characters in the treatment film positively impact the opinions of both high trait empathy and low trait empathy subjects, although this influence is strongest (and only statistically significant) among highly empathic subjects. However, among low trait empathy subjects, the influence of sympathy for the gay characters is negative, large, but only marginally significant (p<.15, two-tailed). In the case of individual changes in opinions about gay adoption, the results in Table 3.16\textsuperscript{43} show an opposite pattern: empathy states for the gay characters in the treatment film positively influence opinion changes about gay adoption only among those with low levels of the empathy trait. Similarly, the trait moderation analysis reveals that states of empathy do influence changes in opinions regarding the DOMA definition of marriage, but only among subjects low in the empathy trait. As in the analysis of the full sample, state empathy does not appear to be a mechanism of gay marriage opinion for subjects in these field experiments, regardless of their levels of trait empathy. However, as Table 3.13 shows, the effects of states of sympathy for the empathy*treatment interaction term seem to be driven by empathy states for the cuckold whereas the results on the sympathy*treatment term appear to be driven by sympathy states for the cheater.

\textsuperscript{42}When the Books models are run with states for the cuckold character in the community study only, the treatment and empathy*treatment coefficients in the full sample model are also significant, of roughly the same magnitude and direction. Among just low trait subjects, (n=36) no coefficients are significant. Among high trait subjects, again, the treatment and treatment*empathy coefficients are significant and of the same magnitude and direction. When the Books models are run with states for the cheater character, the empathy*treatment term is large, positive, and significant (beta = .50 (.25), p<.05). As in the main analysis, this effect appears to be driven by high trait empathy subjects, among whom the coefficient is of similar magnitude and significance. Among low trait empathy subjects, the term representing sympathy for the cheater character in the treatment film is negative, large, and significant (beta = -.97, SE=.40, p<.05). In the case of opinions about inclusive books policies, the impact of empathy appears to be in response to both lesbian characters whereas the influence of sympathy seems to be in response to primarily the cheater character.

\textsuperscript{43}When the Adoption models are run with just states for only the cuckold character in the community study, both emotion*treatment terms are positive but not statistically significant. In the model including only low empathy subjects, the empathy*treatment term is positive and of similar magnitude to the above but is not statistically significant; the sympathy*treatment term is negative but also not statistically significant. In the cuckold model limited to only high empathy subjects, however, the empathy*treatment interaction term is negatively signed (though not significant) and the sympathy*treatment interaction term is positively signed (but again, not statistically significant). The model including states for the cheater, when run on the full sample, produces a significant coefficient for the empathy*treatment term (beta = .39, SE=.17, p<.05). When the cheater states analysis is limited to low empathy subjects, both emotion interaction terms are significant (empathy*treatment beta = .68, SE=.35, p<.10; sympathy*treatment beta = -.70, SE=.39, p<.19). Neither of the cheater states interaction terms are significant (though both are positive) when the model is limited to subjects high in the trait of empathy. Thus, in the case of adoption, it appears that empathy for both the cuckold and cheater characters in the treatment film positively impact egalitarian adoption opinion change.

105
gay characters can be almost entirely attributed to subjects with high levels of the trait of empathy.

Table 3.13. Empathy & Sympathy Mechanisms Motivating Gay Marriage Opinion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MARRY Full Sample (n=164)</th>
<th>MARRY High Trait Empathy (n=112)</th>
<th>MARRY Low Trait Empathy (n=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment dummy</td>
<td>-.18 (.19)</td>
<td>-.43 (.25)*</td>
<td>.42 (.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy States</td>
<td>-.00 (.18)</td>
<td>-.17 (.21)</td>
<td>.28 (.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy*Treatment</td>
<td>-.20 (.27)</td>
<td>.06 (.35)</td>
<td>-.46 (.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy States</td>
<td>-.18 (.17)</td>
<td>-.29 (.20)</td>
<td>.28 (.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy*Treatment</td>
<td>.54 (.25)**</td>
<td>.60 (.31)*</td>
<td>.10 (.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.97 (.14)*****</td>
<td>1.17 (.17)*****</td>
<td>.40 (.28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of three OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, *p<.10, **p<.05, and ***p<.01.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BOOKS Full Sample (n=163)</th>
<th>BOOKS High Trait Empathy (n=112)</th>
<th>BOOKS Low Trait Empathy (n=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment dummy</td>
<td>-.35 (.16)**</td>
<td>-.52 (.20)****</td>
<td>.19 (.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy States</td>
<td>-.27 (.15)*</td>
<td>-.29 (.17)*</td>
<td>-.29 (.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy*Treatment</td>
<td>.51 (.22)**</td>
<td>.56 (.28)*</td>
<td>.50 (.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy States</td>
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<td>.20 (.16)</td>
<td>.87 (.34)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy*Treatment</td>
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<td>.12 (.25)</td>
<td>-.72 (.43)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.55 (.12)*****</td>
<td>.67 (.14)*****</td>
<td>.10 (.25)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of three OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, *p<.10, **p<.05, and ***p<.01.

Table 3.15. Empathy & Sympathy Mechanisms Motivating DOMA Opinion Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA @ T2 Full Sample (n=163)</th>
<th>DOMA @ T2 High Trait Empathy (n=112)</th>
<th>DOMA @ T2 Low Trait Empathy (n=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment dummy</td>
<td>-.12 (.08)*</td>
<td>-.11 (.10)</td>
<td>-.07 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy States</td>
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<td>-.03 (.08)</td>
<td>.00 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy*Treatment</td>
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<td>-.04 (.14)</td>
<td>.36 (.21)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy States</td>
<td>-.01 (.07)</td>
<td>-.05 (.08)</td>
<td>.08 (.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy*Treatment</td>
<td>.04 (.10)</td>
<td>.20 (.12)**</td>
<td>-.23 (.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMA @ T1</td>
<td>.85 (.04)*****</td>
<td>.82 (.05)*****</td>
<td>.90 (.07)*****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.14 (.07)**</td>
<td>.21 (.08)**</td>
<td>.03 (.12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of three OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, *p<.10, **p<.05, and ***p<.01.
To rule out the possibility that the emotional state mechanisms for the gay characters assessed in Tables 3.13 through Tables 3.16 are not simply standing in for other variables that scholars of political behavior typically observe, I rerun the above analysis using gender and whether subjects reported knowing a gay couple on the pre-treatment survey as potential proxies of the emotional state mechanisms (See Tables 3.17 through 3.20).

Table 3.16. Empathy & Sympathy Mechanisms Motivating Gay Adoption Opinion Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ADOPT @ T2 Full Sample (n=163)</th>
<th>ADOPT @ T2 High Trait Empathy (n=112)</th>
<th>ADOPT @ T2 Low Trait Empathy (n=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment dummy</td>
<td>-.27 (.11)**</td>
<td>-.18 (.14)</td>
<td>-.43 (.22)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy States</td>
<td>-.07 (.10)</td>
<td>-.05 (.12)</td>
<td>-.05 (.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy*Treatment</td>
<td>.24 (.16)</td>
<td>-.02 (.20)</td>
<td>.48 (.30)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy States</td>
<td>.05 (.10)</td>
<td>.06 (.11)</td>
<td>-.11 (.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy*Treatment</td>
<td>.06 (.15)</td>
<td>.23 (.18)</td>
<td>.01 (.31)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADOPT @ T1</td>
<td>.72 (.07)**</td>
<td>.61 (.08)**</td>
<td>.93 (.13)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.27 (.10)**</td>
<td>.35 (.12)**</td>
<td>.22 (.19)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of three OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, *p<.10, **p<.05, and ***p<.01.

Table 3.17. Potential Proxies for Emotional Mechanisms Motivating Gay Marriage Opinion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MARRY Full Sample (n=164)</th>
<th>MARRY High Trait Empathy (n=113)</th>
<th>MARRY Low Trait Empathy (n=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment dummy</td>
<td>.04 (.12)</td>
<td>-.20 (.16)</td>
<td>.29 (.16)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay couple</td>
<td>.10 (.08)</td>
<td>.02 (.10)</td>
<td>.25 (.14)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay*Treatment</td>
<td>.12 (.12)</td>
<td>.31 (.15)**</td>
<td>-.17 (.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.07 (.07)</td>
<td>.04 (.09)</td>
<td>.05 (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female*Treatment</td>
<td>-.10 (.11)</td>
<td>-.05 (.14)</td>
<td>-.00 (.18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.73 (.08)**</td>
<td>.82 (.12)**</td>
<td>.61 (.12)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of three OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, *p<.10, **p<.05, and ***p<.01.

Table 3.18. Potential Proxies for Emotional Mechanisms Motivating Books Policy Opinion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BOOKS Full Sample (n=164)</th>
<th>BOOKS High Trait Empathy (n=113)</th>
<th>BOOKS Low Trait Empathy (n=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment dummy</td>
<td>.04 (.10)</td>
<td>-.14 (.14)</td>
<td>.23 (.14)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay couple</td>
<td>.15 (.07)**</td>
<td>.08 (.09)</td>
<td>.25 (.13)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay*Treatment</td>
<td>-.09 (.10)</td>
<td>.03 (.13)</td>
<td>-.25 (.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.09 (.06)</td>
<td>.03 (.08)</td>
<td>.17 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female*Treatment</td>
<td>-.03 (.09)</td>
<td>.09 (.12)</td>
<td>-.18 (.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.42 (.07)**</td>
<td>.52 (.10)**</td>
<td>.29 (.11)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of three OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, *p<.10, **p<.05, and ***p<.01.
Table 3.19. Potential Proxies for Emotional Mechanisms Motivating DOMA Opinion Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA @ T2</th>
<th>DOMA @ T2</th>
<th>DOMA @ T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Sample (n=164)</td>
<td>High Trait Empathy (n=113)</td>
<td>Low Trait Empathy (n=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment dummy</td>
<td>-.02 (.05)</td>
<td>-.03 (.06)</td>
<td>.00 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay couple</td>
<td>.03 (.03)</td>
<td>-.01 (.04)</td>
<td>.10 (.07)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay*Treatment</td>
<td>.00 (.05)</td>
<td>.03 (.06)</td>
<td>-.05 (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.00 (.03)</td>
<td>.00 (.04)</td>
<td>-.02 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female*Treatment</td>
<td>.01 (.04)</td>
<td>.00 (.05)</td>
<td>.02 (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMA @ T1</td>
<td>.85 (.04)**</td>
<td>.85 (.05)**</td>
<td>.86 (.07)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of three OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, **p<.10, ***p<.01.

Table 3.20. Potential Proxies for Emotional Mechanisms Motivating Adoption Opinion Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>ADOPT @ T2</th>
<th>ADOPT @ T2</th>
<th>ADOPT @ T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Sample (n=164)</td>
<td>High Trait Empathy (n=113)</td>
<td>Low Trait Empathy (n=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment dummy</td>
<td>-.09 (.07)</td>
<td>-.06 (.09)</td>
<td>-.15 (.10)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay couple</td>
<td>.04 (.05)</td>
<td>.06 (.06)</td>
<td>-.03 (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay*Treatment</td>
<td>-.09 (.07)</td>
<td>-.05 (.09)</td>
<td>-.15 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.00 (.04)</td>
<td>.01 (.05)</td>
<td>.01 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female*Treatment</td>
<td>.14 (.06)**</td>
<td>.07 (.08)</td>
<td>.22 (.11)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADOPT @ T1</td>
<td>.75 (.07)**</td>
<td>.69 (.08)**</td>
<td>.85 (.12)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.21 (.07)**</td>
<td>.23 (.09)**</td>
<td>.17 (.11)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports the results of three OLS regression models of gay rights opinion. All variables are on a 0-1 scale. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, **p<.10, ***p<.01.

While knowing a gay couple and being exposed to the treatment films appears to positively affect high trait empathy subjects’ support for gay marriage, and being female and exposed to the treatment films appears to positively affect changes in low trait empathy subjects’ views on gay adoption, neither gender nor knowing a gay couple seems to be an adequate proxy for the propensity to respond with empathy and/or sympathy to gay individuals.
Summary and Conclusions

So are the kids all right? Before entering the theatres, most subjects in my liberal samples thought that the children of gay and lesbian parents were doing just fine. After watching the treatment films, however, some of them left the theaters less sure of this than they had previously been. These changed opinions about the suitability of gay and lesbian people for parenthood occurred among subjects with less empathic ability who did not empathize with the gay characters in the treatment films. In other words, the findings suggest that the treatment films’ negative effects on adoption policy opinion change (relative to the controls) can be attributed primarily to subjects with low empathic predispositions who did not experience states of empathy for the gay main characters. On the other hand, roughly half the audience of the treatment films in these field experiments left the theaters just as sure that the kids are all right as they had been beforehand. These highly empathic subjects empathized with the gay characters in the treatment films and remained as egalitarian in their opinions about gay adoption as they had been prior to watching the movies. Furthermore, the effects of the treatment films on subjects low in the trait of empathy were not entirely negative, as low trait empathy subjects in the treatment condition demonstrated significantly greater egalitarianism in their support for gay marriage than their low trait empathy counterparts in the control condition. In summary, the key findings are as follows:

1. Heterosexual subjects experienced slightly less empathy for the gay characters than the straight characters (H1 supported), although this bias was exhibited only among subjects with low levels of the empathic predisposition (H1-Mod supported). Heterosexual subjects high in the empathic predisposition experienced as much empathy for gay characters as they did for
straight characters, while subjects with low levels of the empathic predisposition experienced significantly less empathy for gay characters than they did for straight characters. These results echo previous findings of “similarity bias” in empathy states (Harrison 2011; Batson et al. 2005; Hoffman 2000; Cialdini et al. 1997), but also complicate them by suggesting that such bias may be concentrated exclusively among those with low levels of the empathy trait.

2. On average, subjects in the treatment condition did not exhibit significantly more egalitarian opinions (or opinion changes) on gay rights issues than subjects in the control condition (H2 not supported). In fact, subjects in the treatment condition actually changed their opinions about gay adoption rights in the opposite direction from what was expected (negative individual-level change), relative to control subjects. I had hypothesized positive, egalitarian changes and had expected them to occur most strongly among highly empathic subjects (H2-Mod not supported). However, although not quite in the manner that I hypothesized, empathic predispositions did moderate the treatment films’ effects on subsequent gay rights opinions. The negative effects on changes in adoption opinion occur exclusively among subjects with low levels of the empathic predisposition. Subjects high in the predisposition of empathy did not change their opinions on gay adoption rights as a result of watching the treatment films, while subjects with low levels of the empathic predisposition were moved negatively in their opinions on gay adoption. These findings deviate from my theoretical expectations, and I propose several explanations for them below. However, consistent with H2, subjects low in the trait of empathy did actually exhibit egalitarian treatment effects on their views about gay marriage. Low trait empathy subjects who were exposed to gay
characters in the treatment film became significantly more supportive of gay marriage than their low trait empathy counterparts who watched straight characters in the control films.

3. States of empathy for out-group individuals appeared to influence out-group policy opinions in an egalitarian direction (H3 supported). Experiencing states of empathy for the gay characters in the treatment film positively affected egalitarianism in heterosexual subjects’ gay rights opinions on two of the four dependent variables included in the overall (ATE) analysis: a measure of support for inclusive education policy and a measure of opposition to bans on gay adoption. The effects of empathy states for the gay characters on books policy support seemed to be driven by subjects high in the trait of empathy while the effects of empathy states for the gay characters on increasing support for gay adoption occurred primarily among subjects low in the trait of empathy. Subjects low in empathic predispositions were also moved in an egalitarian direction by states of empathy for the gay characters in their opinions about the DOMA definition of marriage. In addition, these positive effects of empathy for the gay characters appeared to act as buffers to the otherwise negative effects of the treatment films. Contrary to expectations, states of empathy for the gay characters seemed to have no effect on heterosexual subjects’ support for same-sex marriage. However, given that the mean support for gay marriage in the control group is .85 (on a dichotomous, 0 or 1, variable), it may be that there is little that could further liberalize gay marriage attitudes in this particular sample. Another possibility is that public opinion on gay marriage could be more entrenched and thus stable than the other gay rights opinions evaluated in these studies. The larger and more representative sample of heterosexual Americans that I recruited for the survey experiment I discuss in Chapter 4 will allow me to
further explore these issues. The corollary to this third hypothesis, that states of empathy will motivate policy egalitarianism most strongly among highly empathic subjects (H3-Mod), did not find conclusive support in the data.

Overall, I find that relative to control films that featured heterosexual main characters, the treatment films portraying gay and lesbian characters negatively changed heterosexual subjects’ opinions about gay adoption. However, the negative changes occurred primarily among subjects with low levels of the empathic predisposition, and it was these same subjects who experienced significantly weaker states of empathy for the gay and lesbian characters than for the heterosexual characters. However, it is important to note that low trait empathy subjects did experience some empathy for the gay characters despite their in-group empathy bias; and at the same time, these low trait empathy subjects were positively affected by the treatment films in their support for gay marriage. Subjects high in the empathic predisposition, on the other hand, experienced statistically equivalent states of empathy for the gay characters relative to controls and did not decline in their egalitarianism on gay adoption rights. On average, I find that weak states of empathy negatively influence opinions about a range of gay rights issues. Taken together, these findings suggest that empathy may be a necessary condition for achieving egalitarian outcomes for minority groups through encounters with out-group individuals.

Without empathy, intergroup contact—even vicarious contact through fictional media dramas—may have undesirable effects on public opinion. In a strictly experimental sense, then, one conclusion that could be drawn from these studies is that the “interventions” of vicarious contact with out-group others through these two particular movies did not “work” because some
of the effects were opposite of those intended. In these studies, when subjects could not or were unwilling to empathize with the gay characters, no contact may have been “better” for egalitarianism in policy attitudes than contact. But what are the practical and normative implications of this? It may be tempting to conclude that, if one’s goal is to change attitudes in an egalitarian direction, such media interventions should only provide entirely positive portrayals of gay and lesbian individuals and exclude “less respectable” but perhaps more complex, authentic, and entertaining gay characters who do drugs or have affairs, for example. However, holding gay and lesbian Americans—even if only in media—to a higher standard of moral judgment than their heterosexual counterparts might be normatively troubling to some. Of course, the relationship between politics of respectability strategies for minority groups and gaining rights from the majority is nothing new in American history. African American civil rights strategists capitalized on the politics of respectability consistently throughout the movement—and eventually won. From choosing only the most respectable representatives like Rosa Parks to asking protestors to wear their Sunday best and practice nonviolence in the face of abhorrent white brutality, the actions of movement leaders and members make it clear that they understood the benefits of always portraying the group in a flattering light. Today, members of the LGBT community are also sensitive to respectability rules. Indeed, some in the LGBT community were critical of The Kids Are All Right for representing lesbian sexuality as boring, for portraying an allegedly lesbian character having sex with a man, and for sending the message that lesbians actually need men (GLAAD website). Similarly, some who prescreened the film Weekend expressed concern over the recreational drug use and worried that the movie did not

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44 It is worth noting that the heterosexual control film in the community study also featured an affair, as do many movies about heterosexual relationships today.
make it clear that the characters were practicing safe sex.45 The results of these studies suggest that their concerns may have been warranted. Yet, *Weekend* director Andrew Haigh’s response to these concerns still rings true: “I can understand that the community is protective…But if you feel you’re going to be accepted by society, you can’t only be accepted for positive elements” (Lim 2011).

A more nuanced interpretation of the results of this study is that failures of empathy during media contact with out-group others can lead to negative, inegalitarian changes in out-group-affecting policy preferences. Empathy deficits seem to beget equality deficits. However, as President Barack Obama (2006) has argued, a greater sense of empathy seems to even out the balance of politics in favor of the marginalized. Specifically, the results of these studies demonstrate that when dominant group individuals *do* empathize with a minority out-group member, even if the out-group individual behaves in a way that dominant observers might judge to be undesirable, observers do not develop more negative political attitudes toward the entire out-group. When empathy is present, I argue that this sharing of emotion across group lines allows dominant observers to recognize the out-group member as a fellow individual—perhaps even as “just human”—with flaws just like everyone else. As Haigh notes, for marginalized minorities, real acceptance and equality entails freedom from harsh double standards, freedom to be human, and freedom to be themselves. By facilitating recognition of others’ individuality and humanity, empathy for out-group others—that is, sharing their emotions and adopting their perspectives—encourages egalitarian public opinion and equality more broadly.

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45 Still others in the LGBT community thought the film might have more positive effects as evidenced by the title of an article in the Summer 2010 edition of the Human Rights Campaign's (HRC) *Equality Magazine*: “Yes, the Two Moms and Their Kids are All Right: Lesbian director’s new film— with Julianne Moore and Annette Bening—may help change the conversation.”
As I noted earlier in this chapter, the effects of experiencing empathy for gay individuals on gay rights opinions depend, in part, on a heterosexual person’s initial positions on gay rights. These positions must be sufficiently inegalitarian, and therefore ripe for change, in order for states of empathy for gay individuals to have the hypothesized effects. Heterosexual individuals who already possess highly egalitarian views on policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans may have already undergone an empathic process of opinion change, and in any case, are a difficult group on which to test the theory because already-egalitarian opinions leave little room for upward movement. This is an important point because the liberal student and community samples recruited for these studies were much more egalitarian on matters of gay rights than the general population, which not only makes the analysis reported in this chapter a tough test for the theory but also raises the possibility that the effects I identify may not hold among a more diverse population of Americans. I address these challenges in the next chapter in which I report analyses of a natural experiment and a survey experiment conducted among a national sample of heterosexual Americans. Relative to the samples utilized in the field experiments, this sample is much larger and much more representative of the United States population, and thus, provides stronger statistical and conceptual bases for making claims about the effects of empathy on American public opinion.
Chapter 4

Love and Basketball: Estimating the Effects of Out-group Empathy Encounters on a National Sample of Americans

“I think Will and Grace probably did more to educate the American public than almost anybody’s ever done so far. People fear that which is different. Now they’re beginning to understand.”

~Vice President Joe Biden on public attitudes toward same-sex marriage, 2012

I began the previous chapter with the questions: Why does public opinion become more egalitarian regarding marginalized or stigmatized out-groups? And specifically, how does empathy for gay individuals influence heterosexuals’ opinions about policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans? I proposed the theory of empathy and equality as an answer to these questions, positing that empathy for gay individuals would produce greater egalitarianism among heterosexuals about policies affecting gay Americans as a group. The findings of Chapter 3, however, spoke more directly to the question of why public opinion becomes less egalitarian regarding marginalized or stigmatized out-groups. These findings suggest that empathy deficits—that is, failures to empathize with minority individuals, in this case, gay individuals—beget equality deficits. When heterosexual subjects in the field experiments described in Chapter 3 were exposed to gay film characters but did not feel empathy for them, perhaps due in part to perceptions of the characters as behaviorally and morally deviant, their opinions about adoption rights for gay Americans as a group became less egalitarian. Subjects who did empathize with the gay characters, on the other hand, remained steady in their opinions about gay adoption
rights. Furthermore, these opinions were already quite egalitarian in the disproportionately liberal convenience samples employed in the field experiments, limiting room for further egalitarian movement in opinion among the group that did empathize with the gay characters. Although the findings reported in Chapter 3 suggest an important role for empathy in group politics, the negative behavioral elements in the treatment stimuli and liberal samples prone to ceiling effects did not allow for a full and fair test of the theory of empathy and equality. Thus, I return to the original two questions in this chapter with the conviction that testing the theory using more positive stimuli among a larger, more representative sample of the U.S. population will yield additional insights into the role that empathy plays in American public opinion. Why does public opinion become more egalitarian regarding marginalized or stigmatized out-groups? And specifically, how does empathy for gay individuals influence heterosexuals’ opinions about policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans?

In this chapter, I again test the theory of empathy and equality in the context of two media experiments, both conducted online among a large national sample of heterosexual Americans. First, I discuss a natural experiment in which I leverage the fortuitous timing (during Wave 1 of the survey experiment described below) of NBA player Jason Collins’ public announcement that he is gay to assess whether the media coverage of his story affected public opinion on policies impacting gay Americans as the theory of empathy and equality predicts. The first wave of data collection began on April 26, 2013 and concluded May 1, 2013, while the news about Jason Collins broke mid-way through data collection on the morning of Monday, April 29th. That morning, Sports Illustrated posted a deeply personal article that Collins himself wrote about his journey to self-acceptance and his decision to come out to his family, friends, fellow players, and
the public. Numerous media outlets immediately picked up the story, and an exclusive interview with Collins aired on national television the next morning, Tuesday, April 30th, on ABC’s Good Morning America. Although the media coverage of the Collins’ story lasted for well over a week (e.g. Oprah Winfrey interviewed Collins and members of his family on Sunday, May 5th, and other news outlets subsequently reported on that interview as well as other elements of the story throughout the following week), it is safe to say that the media environment was most saturated with strong empathy stimuli for Collins himself during the three-day period from April 29th to May 1st that focused on his self-authored article and personal interview on ABC. Fortuitously, this strong empathy stimuli period coincided with the last three days of the six-day data collection I conducted for the Wave 1 survey. This timing allows me to evaluate the effects of exposure to real-world empathy stimuli for Jason Collins, under the assumption that many of the subjects who took my survey during that three-day period were very recently exposed to empathy stimuli for Jason Collins prior to taking the survey. I can then compare the gay rights opinions of this “treatment group” to the gay rights opinions of the “control” group: subjects who took the survey in the first three days of data collection before Collins’ announcement and thus were not yet exposed to empathy stimuli for Jason Collins.

Secondly, I report the results of a two-wave, three-cell survey experiment in which states of empathy are exogenously elevated using short, compelling videos of a man proceeding through the various stages of a romantic relationship. The video ends with the man proposing to his partner, whom is not revealed until the final moments of the clip. The theoretically motivated, two-wave panel design allows me to assess individual-level opinion change, and the three-cell experimental design enables me to measure the effects of the treatment—an empathic depiction
of a man revealed to be gay when he proposes at the end to another man—on heterosexual Americans’ gay rights opinions relative to two control conditions: 1) an empathic depiction of an otherwise identical man revealed to be straight when he proposes at the end to a woman and 2) an irrelevant “no empathy” video of inanimate objects of the same length with the same music. Consistent with the twin goals of stimulating emotional states of empathy as naturally as possible and testing empathy stimuli that could realistically appear in the public realm, the relationship video stimuli I use are only slightly edited versions of a real TV advertisement, “A Love Story,” created by the progressive Australian activist group “GetUp.” The original video was featured on GetUp’s website, aired on Australian television, and received some attention in the United States in certain media outlets (e.g. Huffington Post)\(^46\). As in the field experiments conducted with real movies, the use of real professionally produced media stimuli in a familiar YouTube video format enhances the external validity of the survey experiment. In addition, the original ad’s focus on one male character throughout until a male partner is revealed at the end allowed me to edit this video to create nearly identical gay and heterosexual versions (by replacing the revealed male partner with a female), contributing to the strong internal validity of the survey experiment as well.

Again, the primary hypothesis I aim to test in both of these experiments is that, when heterosexuals experience empathy for gay individuals, their opinions about policies affecting gay Americans as a group will change in an egalitarian direction. Encounters with gay individuals

\(^{46}\) On a manipulation check item at the end of the survey, 3% (20) of heterosexual subjects assigned to the gay version of this video reported having seen it before, and 2.6% (17) of heterosexual subjects assigned to the straight version of the video reported having seen it before. However, I expect that actual rates of prior exposure are even lower than these reports would suggest given that 2.5% (16) of heterosexual subjects assigned to the objects video reported seeing it before. I created the objects video myself, and the only way that subjects could have been previously exposed to it is if they had participated in an Amazon Mechanical Turk pre-test of the videos. While this is certainly possible, I would guess that at least some of the “yes” responses to all of these questions represent noise due to lazy responding at the end of the survey.
through positive, emotion-producing narratives in these experiments should stimulate empathy more strongly than the partially-negative movie stimuli used in Chapter 3. The “Jason Collins” and “Love Story” narratives should also produce empathy among a broader swath of subjects, not only those high in the trait of empathy as occurred in the field experiments. Because observing aggregate egalitarian opinion change requires that many individuals are initially inegalitarian in their opinions, I expect that testing the theory among a large, diverse sample of heterosexual Americans as I do in this chapter provides a better test of the processes of public opinion change proposed by the theory. As in Chapter 3, I theorize that experiencing states of empathy for gay individuals is the causal mechanism that motivates egalitarian shifts in opinion among heterosexuals on gay rights.

**Preview of Findings**

In the “Jason Collins” natural experiment, I identified significant egalitarian effects of the Jason Collins media coverage on public opinion about gay rights. Specifically, I found average treatment effects of the Jason Collins coverage on heterosexual Americans’ opinions about gay adoption and marriage rights, and these effects were driven primarily by subjects with low levels of the empathy trait. Low trait empathy subjects who were exposed to the Jason Collins media coverage were also significantly more egalitarian in their opinions about the legal definition of marriage and school bullying policies that include protections based on sexual orientation than their low empathy counterparts who were not exposed to the Jason Collins’ coverage. Analysis of specific measures of exposure to the Jason Collins’ story—including his *Sports Illustrated* article, his individual interview on *Good Morning America*, his interview with Oprah and
members of his family, as well as other media sources—provide additional support for the theory of empathy and equality, as I find that exposure to these “empathy encounters” with Jason Collins is related to egalitarian opinion and opinion change on a range of policies affecting gay Americans as a group.

The findings of the “Love Story” survey experiment also provide support for the theory of empathy and equality. Treated subjects who were randomly assigned to watch an empathic portrayal of a gay man became significantly more supportive of inclusive books policy and expressed greater support for benefits for gay partners than control subjects who were randomly assigned to the inanimate objects video. As predicted, these effects on books and benefits opinions occurred when subjects experienced states of empathy for the gay character; however, the positive effect on benefits support also occurred when subjects felt states of sympathy for the gay character. Furthermore, these treatment effects on books and benefits opinions appear to be driven by subjects who had previously reported high levels of the trait of empathy on the pre-treatment survey. In addition, high trait empathy subjects, relative to their highly empathic counterparts assigned to the objects condition, also became significantly more supportive of gay adoption and expressed greater opposition to the Boy Scouts’ ban on gay leaders, greater support for gay-inclusive school bullying policies, and greater support for legalizing gay marriage. Subjects who had previously reported low levels of the trait of empathy on the pre-treatment survey, however, actually became less supportive of gay adoption as a result of watching the gay treatment video relative to their low trait empathy counterparts who watched the objects control video. Low trait empathy subjects exposed to the treatment also reported less opposition to the Boy Scouts’ ban on gay leaders, less support for gay-inclusive school bullying policies, and less
support for legalizing gay marriage than their low trait empathy counterparts exposed to the objects control video.

**Methodology: A Natural Experiment and a Survey Experiment**

*Sample Characteristics*

I partnered with Qualtrics Labs (QL) and Survey Sampling International (SSI) to recruit a two-wave panel of heterosexual Americans from across the U.S. to complete two online surveys. Due in part to funding constraints, I was unable to partner with a sampling organization that could provide a nationally representative, random sample of heterosexual Americans. Thus, the sample utilized is national convenience sample, although it roughly approximates the demographic makeup of U.S. population (See the Appendix to Chapter 4 for this comparison). However, I imposed quotas for partisanship, gender, and age cohort so that the initial Wave 1 sample would be balanced on these variables. 47 Doing so improves the quality of the sample for these studies because previous research has found that these three variables are correlated with both empathy traits and gay rights attitudes. All participants were then contacted again between 7 and 13 days after completing the first survey to take the second survey that included the video experiment, and the balance achieved on gender, partisanship, and age in Wave 1 was roughly maintained in Wave 2. 48 In addition, at the beginning of Survey 2, subjects were block randomized on these variables into the three experimental conditions, strengthening the overall

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47 The recruiting quotas set for the Wave 1 survey are as follows: 100% heterosexuals; 50% men, 50% women; 33.3% Republicans, 33.3% Democrats, 33.3% Independents (before probed for party leaning); and 33.3% 18-34 years old, 33.3% 35-54 years old; and 33.3% 55+ years old. Non-heterosexuals were excluded from the surveys given that the theoretical motivations of this study are to assess the effects of empathy for marginal out-group individuals among members of the dominant majority group, in this case, heterosexual Americans.

48 The demographic distribution in Wave 2 on the original quota variables set for Wave 1 is as follows: 48% men, 52% women; 30.2% Republicans, 36.4% Democrats, 33.4% Independents (before probe); and 28.6% 18-34 years old, 34.7% 35-54 years old, and 36.7% 55+ years old.
experimental analysis. Participation in the surveys was incentivized with cash transfers into subjects’ PayPal accounts: $0.58 for completing the first survey and $1.15 for completing the second survey. In total, the Wave 1 survey sample included 3010 subjects, and the Wave 2 survey experiment sample included 1970 subjects (~65% recontact response rate).49

Natural Experiment Design and Hypotheses

As mentioned above, Jason Collins publicly announced that he is gay on April 29, 2013, midway through the first round of Wave 1 data collection (N=1894). I leverage the timing of his announcement to conduct a natural experiment in which I compare mean gay rights support among subjects who took Survey 1 in the three-day period before Collins’ announcement (N=1024) to mean gay rights support among subjects who took Survey 1 during three-day period beginning with the day of Collins’ announcement (N=870) in Sports Illustrated. The comparison is intuitive: in the first period before Collins’ announcement, there was no national news about Collins, and no one but his family knew he was gay; in the second period, the media environment was saturated with news about Collins as a gay individual and contained stimuli that I argue should have the effect of producing empathy for him. Subjects were recruited for the survey as if at random, so the assumption in this analysis is that the primary difference between subjects interviewed during the first three days of data collection and subjects interviewed during the last three days of data collection is whether they had the opportunity to be exposed to the

49 After Wave 1 data collection had already begun, I received generous additional funding from the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University. This allowed me to increase the sample sizes for both surveys and resulted in 2-stage data collection effort. All data collection occurred within a four week period, and the data are combined in the analysis. Specifically, in Round 1 Wave 1 from 4/26/13 to 5/1/13, N=1894 subjects were recruited to take Survey 1; in Round 1 Wave 2 from 5/8/13 to 5/12/13, N=1400 subjects were recontacted and took Survey 2; in Round 2 Wave 1 from 5/8/13 to 5/22/13, N=1116 additional subjects were recruited to take Survey 1; and in Round 2 Wave 2 from 5/15/13 to 5/22/13, N=570 subjects were recontacted and took Survey 2.
Jason Collins story and empathize with Jason Collins. The happy coincidence that I already had a survey in the field that included items assessing gay rights opinion when the Jason Collins story emerged allows me to test whether a completely natural “exogenous shock” encouraging the public to empathize with a gay individual can actually move aggregate public opinion in an egalitarian direction as I propose in the theory of empathy and equality. Theoretically, the Jason Collins’ *Sports Illustrated* article and *Good Morning America* interview fit the criteria for empathy stimuli as coming from an agentic actor displaying a range of emotions and perspectives with which the public can empathize. That is, these are the kinds of stimuli that should successfully induce empathy for Collins as a gay individual. If these empathy stimuli, along with re-coverage of them by various news organizations, were the primary difference in the national media environment between the first three days of survey data collection and the last three day of survey data collection, then I can leverage this difference to cleanly test for the effects of such naturally-occurring empathy stimuli on gay rights opinion at the national level. If my theory is correct, the empathy stimuli for Jason Collins present during the latter period should produce an egalitarian shift in public opinion on matters of policy pertaining to the rights of gay Americans as a group. Thus, I test for the effects of empathy for Jason Collins by assessing whether subjects interviewed in the three-day period beginning with Jason Collins’ announcement are significantly more egalitarian in their gay rights opinions than subjects interviewed in the three-day period prior to his announcement (H1). It is highly unlikely that systematic differences would exist between those who took the survey before Collins’ announcement and those who took the survey after his announcement that could explain any
differences in gay rights opinions that are found. However, to guard against this unlikely possibility, I conduct the analyses in an OLS regression framework, using an indicator variable for whether subjects were exposed to the “Jason Collins empathy treatment” as well as a host of control variables for all standard observable characteristics that could conceivably influence gay rights opinion. I also conduct these analyses by level of empathic predisposition to evaluate whether the Jason Collins empathy stimuli had differential effects on subjects high in the trait of empathy as compared to subjects with low levels of the trait (H2). In this natural experiment, I am unable to directly test the hypothesized mechanism of state empathy because I did not have prior knowledge of Jason Collins’ decision to come out publicly and thus did not include questions about states of empathy for Jason Collins on the Wave 1 survey. However, after the Jason Collins story emerged, I added questions to the very end of the Wave 2 survey to gauge subjects’ exposure to various empathy stimuli for Jason Collins, including the *Sports Illustrated* article, the *Good Morning America* interview, the Oprah interview, and other media sources. A link to the *Sports Illustrated* article as well as excerpted text of potentially empathy-inducing passages from the article are included in the Appendix to Chapter 4. Links to the GMA interview and segments of the Oprah interview with Collins and his family are also included in this appendix. Because of the close proximity of this national media story to my survey experiment,

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50 To ensure that there were no pre-existing systematic differences in these two groups, I checked the covariate balance across the groups on all standard observables and found that the groups were statistically indistinguishable on partisanship, ideology, gender, age, education, and knowing someone who is gay; racial identification as white, Latino, Asian, Indian, or Native American; religious preference, religious importance, state of origin, and state of residence; as well as the other-oriented traits of global empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective-taking. That is, I found no statistically significant differences on these variables at conventional significance levels (p<.10, two-tailed t-tests). However, the group that took the survey in the second three-day period (during the height of the Jason Collins coverage) reported slightly higher incomes (p<.05, two-tailed). This group also contained significantly fewer subjects who identified as black or African American (p<.01, two-tailed) and significantly higher levels of racial resentment (p<.10, two tailed). This latter difference could plausibly be a result of the former, or possibly a “treatment effect” of the media attention given to an African American man during the Jason Collins period. The balance checks show that the groups are reasonably well-balanced, however, in the main analyses of the effects of the Jason Collins empathy stimuli, I also control for all standard observables in order to isolate and estimate the effects as accurately as possible.
I include measures of Jason Collins exposure as competing explanatory variables in the analysis of the survey experiment described below. This enables me to evaluate whether these particular empathy stimuli for Collins actually have the positive effects on gay rights opinion that I propose. All else equal, I expect that reading the *Sports Illustrated* article that Jason Collins authored, watching the interviews of him, and hearing about his story through other media sources will move heterosexual subjects’ opinions in an egalitarian direction on gay rights (H3).

*Survey Experiment Design and Hypotheses*

In designing the two-wave, three-condition survey experiment used to test the *theory of empathy and equality* in this chapter, I built on and also improved upon the basic design of the field experiments described in Chapter 3. With the theoretically-driven goal of assessing opinion change, I utilized a two-wave, pre-post treatment design as I had in the field experiments. One to two weeks prior to the embedded video experiment, a pre-treatment instrument containing empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective-taking predisposition scales (developed and used widely by psychologists) as well as gay rights policy items was administered in order to assess individual differences in sensitivity to empathy cues and baseline policy preferences. A post-treatment survey containing measures of subjects’ emotional states as well as identical and novel gay rights policy items followed the experimental manipulations (See the Appendix to Chapter 4). To improve the design of the survey experiment relative to the Chapter 3 field experiments, subjects were randomly assigned to one of three (rather than two) video conditions.

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51 I will conduct individual-level analysis of opinion change using the identical policy items on Survey 1 and Survey 2. I will conduct additional between-subjects analysis of post-treatment differences with the novel policy items included on Survey 2 only.
of the same length (approx. one minute and forty seconds) that are set to the same music.52 The addition of the third “no-empathy” baseline condition allows me to control for the possibility that outside events (such as NBA player Jason Collins’ emotional coming out story in *Sports Illustrated* on 4/29/13, the effects of which I discuss and estimate below) changed people’s opinions over the course of the study. It will also allow me to assess whether empathy in the “gay man treatment” condition is doing the work of opinion change from the baseline, rather than something about watching the “straight man control” video imposing effects of its own. Links to each of these videos can be found in the Appendix to Chapter 4.

In the first “no-empathy” control condition, subjects were asked to watch “An Ordinary Story,” a video montage of inanimate objects (e.g. apple, chair, flowers) with the expectation that pictures of inanimate objects should induce no empathy and minimal other emotions.53 In the two “empathy” conditions, subjects were asked to watch “A Love Story,” a short video of a young man going through the various stages of a romantic relationship (e.g. dating, meeting parents, moving in together), culminating in a marriage proposal. The young man is either revealed at the end of the video to be proposing to another man (gay empathy treatment) or to be proposing to a woman (straight empathy control). The latter empathy stimuli are edited clips from a YouTube video, “A Love Story,” produced by “GetUp,” an Australian activist organization in support of gay marriage.54 Although the tone of the video stimuli are primarily positive and happy, and the intent of these stimuli are to induce empathy with a range of

52 To maximize statistical power, subjects were block randomized into these conditions by gender, partisanship, and age group.
53 Using Amazon Mechanical Turk, I pilot tested the “no empathy” objects control video against a group of subjects who received no video to test whether this control video exerted any effects on gay rights opinion. The mean gay rights opinions of these two pre-test groups were statistically indistinguishable. The “no empathy” objects control video thus allows me to estimate baseline policy opinions in Wave 2 while also providing subjects in this condition with the same experience of watching a video at the start of the survey.
54 In the “straight empathy control” condition, the video was edited by replacing the revealed male partner (originally shown in the video) with a female partner.
emotions, two particularly sad scenes are expected to induce sympathy among some subjects: first, the man is shown at the bedside of his mother who is wearing an oxygen mask (and seems to be dying in home hospice care); in the next scene, the man is in the bathroom breaking down in tears, presumably because of his mother’s condition (or death). Note that the difference between the first video and the latter two is whether states of empathy, and to a lesser extent sympathy, are induced (not induced in the inanimate objects video and induced in the two relationship videos). Comparing the latter two videos to one another, the manipulation is whether the man is gay (out-group treatment) or straight (in-group control). Thus, the primary manipulation in this comparison is not the experience of empathy per se, but whether heterosexual subjects are encouraged to feel empathy for an in-group member or an out-group member. According to the theory, empathy for in-group members should have no effects on out-group-relevant policy opinions. The experimental manipulations occurred at the beginning of Survey 2.

First, I test whether the empathy stimulus for the gay character elevated empathy for the character as intended by comparing levels of empathy reported by subjects assigned to the gay treatment condition to levels reported by subjects assigned to the heterosexual control condition. Although previous studies, including the movie field experiments study reported in Chapter 3, find similarity bias in empathic responding (Harrison 2011; Batson et al. 2005; Hoffman 2000; Cialdini et al. 1997), I do not expect to find any differences between the gay and straight versions of the video in the states of empathy and sympathy they induce because the videos are identical, and the sexual identity of the character is not revealed until the end (H4). Any differences would necessarily be the result of post-hoc rationalizing on the part of respondents,
but I do not expect respondents to be motivated to do this. Second, I test the overall causal effects of experiencing empathy for a gay individual on gay rights policy opinions relative to each of the control conditions. I hypothesize that subjects in the treatment condition will exhibit significantly more egalitarian opinions (and greater egalitarian opinion change) on gay rights issues than subjects in either of the two control conditions (H5). Next, I test whether the hypothesized mechanism—states of empathy for the gay character—is responsible for the treatment effects on opinion and opinion change. I separate those who experienced empathy states for the character in the relationship videos and those who did not, conducting subgroup analysis by empathy states to assess whether those who experienced empathy for the gay individual were affected in their gay rights opinions while those who did not experience empathy were not—as the theory of empathy and equality predicts (H6). I also conduct a placebo test mirroring the latter analysis using states of sympathy, expecting that sympathy states will not moderate the effects of the treatment as well as states of empathy (H6-P). To correct the obvious endogeneity problem of the tests of Hypothesis 6, I then use the empathy predisposition measures collected in Survey 1 as proxies for the empathy state measures. I split the sample into high and low empathic predisposition subgroups and test whether subjects highly predisposed to empathy will be positively affected in their gay rights opinions by the treatment, and more so than low trait empathy subjects, relative to their counterparts in either of the control conditions (H7).

55 Mirroring the dichotomization of the state variables described above, subjects were coded as having high levels of the trait of empathy if their trait empathy index score was 0.6 or above, corresponding with the response options on the positive side of the response scale: “Somewhat agree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree.” Subjects were coded as having low levels of the trait of empathy if their trait empathy index score was below 0.6, corresponding to the negative response choices of “Somewhat disagree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly disagree.” The same coding scheme was utilized for the sympathy trait index variable.
Measures

Survey 1 contained gay rights policy items and empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective-taking predisposition batteries (developed and used widely by psychologists56) in order to assess baseline policy preferences and individual differences in empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking abilities. Survey 2 contained measures of subjects’ empathy and sympathy states as well as identical and novel gay rights policy items. Thus, I use the identical policy items on Survey 1 and Survey 2 to conduct individual-level analyses of opinion change and the novel policy items that appeared only on Survey 2 to conduct analyses of differences in post-treatment preferences. Three measures of gay rights opinion were included on both Survey 1 and Survey 2 in order to assess individual-level changes in gay rights policy preferences caused by the treatment video: 1) a measure of opposition to “Federal law that defines marriage as only between a man and a woman” (DOMA) 2) a measure of support for “Adoption rights for gays and lesbians so they can legally adopt children” (ADOPT) and 3) a measure of support for “Laws requiring kindergarten curricula to include picture books about families with two moms and two dads” (BOOKS). The three gay rights policy items that were included only on Survey 2 and used in the between-subjects analysis were: 1) a measure of support for “Health insurance and other employee benefits for gay and lesbian domestic partners or spouses” (BENEFITS), 2) a measure of opposition to “The Boy Scouts of America’s policy of banning openly gay leaders”

56 The seven items used to measure empathic predispositions were selected from Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright’s (2004) 40-item Empathy Quotient scale of global empathy. To avoid acquiesence response bias in my reduced index, four positively worded items and three negatively worded items were chosen based upon those that had the strongest factor loadings in Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright’s (2004) instrument validation studies. The items used to measure sympathetic predispositions are items developed by Davis (1980, 1983b) to measure what he calls the ‘empathic concern’ dimension of empathy. However, Davis’ dimensions of empathy have been criticized for tapping into capacities that do not align conceptually with pure empathy (Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004), and I contend that these measures are more appropriately conceived as tapping the capacity for sympathy. Finally, perspective-taking capacity is assessed using four items chosen from Davis’ (1983a, 1983b) 7-item subscale developed to measure this purely cognitive dimension of empathy. This subscale was reduced from seven to four items in order to eliminate redundancy within the scale and in relation to the subscale measuring global empathy. In addition, one item from Davis’ (1983a, 1983b) perspective-taking scale was excluded because it referenced feelings, and the scale is intended according to Davis (1983a, 1983b), to measure a purely cognitive dimension of the empathy trait.
(SCOUTS), and 3) a measure of support for “Anti-bullying policies in elementary and high
schools that include protections based on sexual orientation” (BULLY).\(^57\) In addition, I used two
different questions to measure support for same-sex marriage. Survey 1 included a question
asking whether “marriages between same-sex couples” should or should not “be recognized by
the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages” (MARRY1). This item has been
used by the Gallup Organization to gauge gay marriage support since 1996, thus I included it
with the goal of benchmarking the results of my survey against recent national Gallup polls, and
indeed, I find that gay marriage support in my sample mirrors that found by Gallup in the most
recent nationally representative poll.\(^58\) Survey 2 contained an item asking subjects to rate how
much they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “I am in favor of legalizing same sex
marriages” (MARRY2). The 6-point response scale\(^59\) of this item allows for greater variation in
responses according to subjects’ certainty and intensity of opinion, and I reasoned would thus be
better for detecting between-subjects differences in opinion that might result from exposure to
the treatment video. When necessary, the variables were recoded such that higher values reported
throughout this chapter represent greater egalitarianism on the gay rights opinion items.

As mentioned above, Survey 2 also measured subjects’ states of empathy and sympathy.
Empathy states for the main character in the relationship videos (the “gay man treatment” and
“straight man control”) were measured with an index that combined subjects’ responses to the

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\(^57\) These policy items utilized a response scale with the following six points: Strongly In Favor, In Favor, Somewhat In Favor,
Somewhat Against, Against, and Strongly Against.

\(^58\) According to a random national sample of 1535 American adults conducted by Gallup May 2nd to May 7, 2013, 53\% of Americans
support gay marriage (margin of sampling error is +/- 3 percentage points). This level of support is identical to the level reported by
Gallup after its previous poll on same-sex marriage six months earlier in November 2012 (Jones 2013). Fifty-five percent of my
Survey 1 sample (N=3010) indicated their support for same-sex marriage in response to this Gallup question. This gives me
confidence that the sample employed in these experiments is roughly representative of the national population on matters of gay
rights, and thus, also gives me greater confidence in my ability to generalize the findings of this study to the wider population.

\(^59\) The response scale for MARRY2 was: Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Disagree, Strongly
disagree.
following three statements: 1) “I could feel what the main character was feeling,” 2) “I had a hard time understanding the main character's emotions” (reverse coded) and 3) “I imagined myself in the main character's shoes.” Sympathy states for the main character in the relationship videos were measured with the item: “I felt sorry for the main character.” See the Appendix to Chapter 4 for the question wording and descriptive statistics of all variables used in the analysis.

Data Analysis

Jason Collins Natural Experiment

In the analysis of the Jason Collins story natural experiment, I identify small but significant average treatment effects on heterosexuals’ gay adoption and gay marriage opinions (See Table 4.1). That is, in line with H1, I find that Jason Collins empathy encounters increase public egalitarianism in opinions about adoption and marriage rights for gay and lesbian Americans. In addition, when I split the sample by trait empathy into those high in the trait and those low in the trait in order to test H2, I find that the Jason Collins effect is concentrated solely among subjects with low levels of the trait of empathy. Furthermore, as shown in Table 4.2, a significant positive effect of the Jason Collins media coverage is identified on all four of the dependent variables in the analysis among subjects with low levels of the trait of empathy.

To maintain consistency of survey experiences across all conditions, subjects assigned to the “no-empathy objects control” condition were also asked to rate their agreement with highly similar statements that referenced feelings, understanding, emotion, and imagination. However, when possible, references to the main character were replaced with references to the self, resulting in the following placebo items: “I could feel what I was feeling,” “I had a hard time understanding the story,” “I imagined myself in the story,” and “I felt sorry for myself.”
### Table 4.1. Jason Collins “Treatment” Effects on Full Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA</th>
<th>ADOPT</th>
<th>BOOKS</th>
<th>MARRY1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jason Collins</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.01)**</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.11 (.02)**</td>
<td>.09 (.02)**</td>
<td>.06 (.02)**</td>
<td>.15 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.09 (.01)**</td>
<td>.11 (.01)**</td>
<td>.09 (.01)**</td>
<td>.12 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.10 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.09 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.06 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.16 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.46 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.38 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.35 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.47 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.05 (.03)*</td>
<td>.02 (.03)</td>
<td>-.05 (.03)**</td>
<td>.04 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>-.27 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.19 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.09 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.27 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.15 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.11 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.18 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.14 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.81 (.05)**</td>
<td>.84 (.05)**</td>
<td>.68 (.05)**</td>
<td>.95 (.07)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models of gay rights opinion also contain control variables for age, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for “Jason Collins,” “Female,” and “Marry1,” which are dichotomous variables) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are one-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

### Table 4.2. Jason Collins “Treatment” Effects on Subjects with Low Levels of Empathic Ability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA</th>
<th>ADOPT</th>
<th>BOOKS</th>
<th>MARRY1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jason Collins</td>
<td>.03 (.02)*</td>
<td>.04 (.02)**</td>
<td>.02 (.02)*</td>
<td>.05 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.10 (.04)**</td>
<td>.09 (.03)**</td>
<td>.04 (.03)</td>
<td>.21 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.06 (.02)**</td>
<td>.12 (.02)**</td>
<td>.09 (.02)**</td>
<td>.11 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.08 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.11 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.03 (.04)</td>
<td>-.15 (.06)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.44 (.06)**</td>
<td>-.28 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.26 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.47 (.08)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.04 (.05)</td>
<td>.04 (.04)</td>
<td>-.10 (.04)**</td>
<td>.07 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>-.24 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.21 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.07 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.23 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.19 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.16 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.18 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.23 (.07)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.78 (.08)**</td>
<td>.78 (.08)**</td>
<td>.64 (.07)**</td>
<td>.93 (.12)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models of gay rights opinion also contain control variables for age, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for “Jason Collins,” “Female,” and “Marry1,” which are dichotomous variables) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are one-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

### Table 4.3. Jason Collins “Treatment” Effects on Subjects with High Levels of Empathic Ability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA</th>
<th>ADOPT</th>
<th>BOOKS</th>
<th>MARRY1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jason Collins</td>
<td>-.00 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.11 (.03)**</td>
<td>.08 (.03)**</td>
<td>.07 (.03)**</td>
<td>.12 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.10 (.02)**</td>
<td>.10 (.02)**</td>
<td>.08 (.02)**</td>
<td>.14 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.11 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.06 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.08 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.17 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.47 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.44 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.39 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.47 (.07)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.03 (.04)</td>
<td>.00 (.04)</td>
<td>-.00 (.04)</td>
<td>.00 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>-.31 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.18 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.11 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.30 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.13 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.08 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.15 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.09 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.85 (.07)**</td>
<td>.90 (.07)**</td>
<td>.68 (.07)**</td>
<td>.97 (.10)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models of gay rights opinion also contain control variables for age, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for “Jason Collins,” “Female,” and “Marry1,” which are dichotomous variables) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are one-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.
Interestingly, no such effects are identified among subjects high in the trait of empathy (see Table 4.3). Why? I conduct a series of alternative moderation analyses to assess whether the moderator of trait empathy could be standing in as a proxy for another relevant variable. Moderation analyses by the related traits of sympathy and perspective-taking, by gender, and by whether or not subjects know someone who is gay all demonstrate that this is not the case (the results of these analyses are reported in the Appendix to Chapter 4). Relative to the traits of sympathy and perspective-taking, trait empathy appears to be the best moderator of the effects of the Jason Collins story; it discriminates between who will exhibit shifts in opinion and who will not on all of the gay rights variables under study, whereas the other traits do not. Although women are more empathic than men on average (Baron-Cohen 2003), the alternative moderation analysis by gender shows that trait empathy is not merely standing in for gender. One could hypothesize that men, who generally watch more sports than women, would be more likely to hear about the Jason Collins story and thus also more likely to be affected by it. However, the moderation analyses by gender show that this is clearly not the case. Similarly, the alternative moderation analysis by whether or not subjects know a gay person rules out the hypothesis that high and low trait empathy is simply serving as a proxy for this variable. A person’s level of trait empathy appears to influence whom is affected by the Jason Collins story most strongly.

But the question remains: why might we see effects among low empathy people only? Are highly empathic people already egalitarian? As shown in Table 4.4 below, prior to the Jason Collins coverage, people with high levels of the trait of empathy were an average of 9 points more supportive of gay rights than low empathy people. Thus, people with low levels of the empathy trait seem to have more room for movement in their opinions. In the period during the
intense media coverage of the Jason Collins story, the gap between the groups high and low in the trait of empathy narrows to about 4 points—with high trait empathy people only about 4 points more egalitarian on gay rights than low trait empathy people, on average. Thus, one possible explanation for the differing effects of Jason Collins empathy encounters among subjects with different levels of the empathy trait is that subjects low in the trait have greater room for movement in their gay rights opinions than subjects high in the trait.

Table 4.4. Support for Gay Rights Variables by Trait Empathy, Before and During JC Coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA</th>
<th>ADOPT</th>
<th>BOOKS</th>
<th>MARRY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before JC Coverage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Trait Empathy S's</td>
<td>.38 (.36)</td>
<td>.53 (.34)</td>
<td>.36 (.29)</td>
<td>.50 (.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Support</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Trait Empathy S's</td>
<td>.49 (.41)</td>
<td>.62 (.37)</td>
<td>.42 (.33)</td>
<td>.59 (.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Support</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference in means</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>During JC Coverage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Trait Empathy S's</td>
<td>.41 (.38)</td>
<td>.56 (.34)</td>
<td>.38 (.30)</td>
<td>.55 (.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Support</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Trait Empathy S's</td>
<td>.48 (.41)</td>
<td>.62 (.36)</td>
<td>.39 (.34)</td>
<td>.58 (.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Support</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference in means</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports means (and standard deviations) for the gay rights items measured on Survey 1 by level of trait empathy for subjects surveyed before the Jason Collins coverage began and those surveyed during the coverage.

Recall that the theorized process of egalitarian opinion change is that empathy for an out-group individual affects the preferences for equality that dominant group members have for the out-group as a whole. In this case, I hypothesize that states of empathy for Jason Collins as a gay individual will affect egalitarianism on policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans. Recall also that I cannot test the proposed mechanism of empathy states for Jason Collins directly in this analysis because I did not have advance knowledge of Jason Collins announcement and thus did
not include questions about him on the surveys that were administered before and during the Jason Collins period. However, using questions that I added to Survey 2 after the announcement was made and measures of empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective-taking traits that were included on Survey 1, I am able to get some leverage on this question of mechanism.

The analyses reported in Table 4.5 of models predicting levels of agreement or disagreement with the statement: “I support Jason Collins’ decision to tell the public that he is gay,” indirectly suggest that empathy for Jason Collins’ is the underlying mechanism of egalitarian opinion change. Agreement with this statement is predicted by trait empathy and trait perspective-taking but not sympathy, providing suggestive evidence that the mechanism I propose—empathy for Jason Collins as a gay individual—is at least partially behind the “Jason Collins” effects observed earlier in the analysis. Furthermore, subgroup analysis by whether subjects know someone who is gay suggests that personally knowing a gay person influences the emotional predispositions that people exercise in the political realm. For subjects who do not personally know anyone who is gay, the purely cognitive trait of perspective-taking (but not the other two traits) is significantly associated with support for Jason Collins. For subjects who do personally know someone who is gay, on the other hand, global empathic ability (encompassing both emotional and cognitive elements) and perspective-taking play roughly equal roles in determining support for Jason Collins’ decision to “come out” to the public.
Table 4.5. Influence of Other-Oriented Traits on Heterosexuals’ Support for Jason Collins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Collins Support - Full Sample</th>
<th>Collins Support - Ss who do not know someone who is gay</th>
<th>Collins Support - Ss who know someone who is gay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowing a gay person</td>
<td>.09 (.01)***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>.09 (.05)∗</td>
<td>.07 (.07)</td>
<td>.11 (.06)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>.01 (.05)</td>
<td>-.03 (.08)</td>
<td>.02 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking Trait</td>
<td>.13 (.05)***</td>
<td>.17 (.08)**</td>
<td>.12 (.06)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Man Condition</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>-.01 (.03)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Het. Man Condition</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.05 (.04)</td>
<td>-.00 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.04 (.01)***</td>
<td>.03 (.02)</td>
<td>.05 (.02)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.09 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.07 (.04)</td>
<td>-.10 (.03)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.32 (.03)***</td>
<td>-.35 (.05)***</td>
<td>-.31 (.04)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.05 (.03)∗</td>
<td>.01 (.04)</td>
<td>.09 (.03)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>-.10 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.08 (.03)***</td>
<td>-.12 (.02)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.08 (.03)***</td>
<td>-.09 (.04)***</td>
<td>-.08 (.03)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.91 (.07)***</td>
<td>.91 (.12)***</td>
<td>1.01 (.09)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N                           1960                     814                                         1146

The above OLS models also contains control variables for age, age squared, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 (except for “Knowing a gay person,” “Female,” and the video dummies, which are dichotomous). Standard errors are in parentheses, and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

As described above, after the Jason Collins story emerged, I also added questions to the very end of the Wave 2 survey to gauge subjects’ exposure to various empathy stimuli for Jason Collins, including the *Sports Illustrated* article, the *Good Morning America* interview, the Oprah interview, and other media sources. Due to the close proximity of this national media story to my survey experiment, I include these measures as competing explanatory variables in the analysis of the survey experiment described in the next section. In addition to controlling for Jason Collins empathy encounters in the survey experiment analysis, this enables me to evaluate whether the Jason Collins empathy stimuli actually have the egalitarian effects on gay rights opinion that I propose. All else equal, I expect that reading the *Sports Illustrated* article that Jason Collins’ authored, watching the interviews of him, and hearing about his story through other media sources will move heterosexual subjects’ opinions in an egalitarian direction on gay rights (H3). I test H3 along with the survey experiment hypotheses in the next section of the
analysis, however, in preparation for that analyses, I want to give readers a better sense of the truly national reach of the Jason Collins story as well as the extent of exposure to the particular media events that I argue had the potential to produce empathy for Collins as a gay individual.

Table 4.6 shows each of the questions about Jason Collins media exposure that I asked subjects at the end of Survey 2 along with the percentages of subjects who answered “Yes” and “No” to these questions. A full 87% of the Wave 2 sample reported hearing about the Jason Collins story. Lower but not insubstantial percentages reported exposure to the three specific empathy-inducing stimuli that I investigate in this study: 200 subjects (10%) read the *Sports Illustrated* article that Collins authored, 317 subjects (16%) watched Collins’ individual *GMA* interview, and 136 (7%) watched Collins’ family interview with Oprah. Fifty-four percent of subjects learned about Jason Collins’ story through other media sources.

Table 4.6. Percentages of Subjects Experiencing Specific Jason Collins Empathy Encounters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heard About: Have you heard about the NBA player, Jason Collins, who came out as gay in the last week or two?</th>
<th>SI Article: Did you happen to read the “Sports Illustrated” story Jason Collins wrote about his life, either in the magazine or online?</th>
<th>GMA Interview: Did you happen to see the interview with Jason Collins on ABC’s “Good Morning America”?</th>
<th>Oprah Interview: Did you happen to see Oprah’s interview with Jason Collins and his family on “Oprah’s Next Chapter”?</th>
<th>Other Media: Have you learned about Jason Collins’ story through any other media sources that were not already mentioned?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1708 (87%)</td>
<td>200 (10%)</td>
<td>317 (16%)</td>
<td>136 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>263 (13%)</td>
<td>1769 (90%)</td>
<td>1652 (84%)</td>
<td>1833 (93%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obviously, selection into each of the possible empathy encounters with Jason Collins is not random. Unlike the treatment effects of the overall Jason Collins coverage estimated in the analyses of the natural experiment above, the “effects” of each empathy stimulus reported below represent the effects of each stimulus on those who select into exposure in the first place. And
while there may be unobserved differences between selectors and non-selectors that cannot be controlled for in the analyses, the effects of these kinds of stimuli on people who actually choose exposure to those stimuli in real life are at least as relevant to our understanding of the effects of these stimuli as the average treatment effects (which include effects on both likely selectors and nonselectors) estimated by traditional randomized experiments (Gaines and Kuklinski 2011). However, before looking at the impact of the Jason Collins stimuli reported in the next section, it will be useful to better understand the characteristics of people that influence whether they select into exposure to each stimuli. Of particular interest are subjects’ other-oriented traits of global empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective-taking.

As shown in Table 4.7, it appears that varying levels of none of these traits significantly influences whether people heard about the Jason Collins story. However, people with high levels of the empathy trait were significantly more likely to select into the three specific stimuli that provided direct encounters with Jason Collins himself. The highest levels of empathy (on a 0-1 scale) were significantly associated with reading Collins’ SI article, watching Collins’ GMA interview, and watching Collins’ Oprah interview with his family. The purely cognitive trait of perspective-taking was significantly but negatively associated with exposure to these three media stimuli. Neither empathy nor perspective-taking was significantly associated with learning about the Collins’ story through other media sources, and trait sympathy was not significantly associated with any of the exposure measures.
Table 4.7. Trait and Demographic Predictors of Specific Jason Collins Empathy Encounters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Heard About: Have you heard about the NBA player, Jason Collins, who came out as gay in the last week or two?</th>
<th>SI Article: Did you happen to read the &quot;Sports Illustrated&quot; story Jason Collins wrote about his life, either in the magazine or online?</th>
<th>GMA Interview: Did you happen to see the interview with Jason Collins on ABC's &quot;Good Morning America&quot;?</th>
<th>Oprah Interview: Did you happen to see Oprah's interview with Jason Collins and his family on &quot;Oprah's Next Chapter&quot;?</th>
<th>Other Media: Have you learned about Jason Collins' story through any other media sources that were not already mentioned?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know gay</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.04 (.01)***</td>
<td>.03 (.02)*</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.06 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>.05 (.06)</td>
<td>.11 (.06)**</td>
<td>.20 (.07)**</td>
<td>.13 (.05)**</td>
<td>- .06 (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>.07 (.06)</td>
<td>.01 (.05)</td>
<td>-.00 (.07)</td>
<td>-.04 (.05)</td>
<td>-.06 (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persp-Taking</td>
<td>-.03 (.06)</td>
<td>-.17 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.11 (.07)*</td>
<td>-.09 (.05)*</td>
<td>.10 (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.09 (.03)**</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.04 (.03)*</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.18 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)*</td>
<td>-.03 (.01)**</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.02 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D-R)</td>
<td>-.03 (.03)</td>
<td>.01 (.03)</td>
<td>.01 (.03)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.07 (.04)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L-C)</td>
<td>.06 (.04)*</td>
<td>-.05 (.03)</td>
<td>-.08 (.04)*</td>
<td>-.00 (.03)</td>
<td>-.02 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.08 (.03)**</td>
<td>.04 (.03)</td>
<td>.04 (.04)</td>
<td>-.00 (.03)</td>
<td>.04 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>.05 (.04)</td>
<td>-.05 (.03)*</td>
<td>-.10 (.04)**</td>
<td>.03 (.03)</td>
<td>.15 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>.12 (.04)**</td>
<td>.01 (.04)</td>
<td>.00 (.04)</td>
<td>.08 (.03)**</td>
<td>.05 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>-.00 (.04)</td>
<td>-.04 (.03)</td>
<td>-.03 (.04)</td>
<td>.02 (.03)</td>
<td>.08 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>.07 (.05)*</td>
<td>-.00 (.04)</td>
<td>-.06 (.05)</td>
<td>.05 (.04)</td>
<td>.02 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>.02 (.07)</td>
<td>.17 (.06)**</td>
<td>.23 (.08)**</td>
<td>.39 (.05)**</td>
<td>.15 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Am.</td>
<td>-.06 (.06)</td>
<td>-.12 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.10 (.06)*</td>
<td>-.04 (.04)</td>
<td>-.08 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig. Import.</td>
<td>-.04 (.02)*</td>
<td>.08 (.02)**</td>
<td>.05 (.02)*</td>
<td>.04 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.01 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment</td>
<td>-.06 (.03)*</td>
<td>-.09 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.04 (.04)</td>
<td>-.07 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.06 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol. Interest</td>
<td>.15 (.03)**</td>
<td>.10 (.03)**</td>
<td>.18 (.03)**</td>
<td>.08 (.02)**</td>
<td>.25 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.55 (.09)**</td>
<td>.38 (.08)**</td>
<td>.26 (.10)**</td>
<td>.19 (.07)**</td>
<td>.17 (.14)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models also contain control variables for age, age squared, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 (except for “Know gay,” “Female,” the race indicator variables, and the dependent variables, which are dichotomous). OLS is used rather than logit for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are in parentheses, and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.15, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

These findings suggest that the trait of empathy may motivate people to seek out empathy encounters in a way that the other two traits under consideration do not. This may also help to further explain why the effects of the Jason Collins’ coverage on gay rights were identified in the natural experiment exclusively among subjects low in the trait of empathy. If low trait individuals are less likely to seek out and select empathy encounters, it may be that they are particularly affected when the national media is saturated with an empathic portrayal for an individual because such saturation makes it both easier to access empathy encounters and also more difficult to avoid them. These findings about the way that empathy traits may contribute to
individuals’ propensity to select into empathy encounters, as well as my suggestion that particularly strong or widespread empathy stimuli in the environment may have the power to overcome trait-based selection biases, represent tentative hypotheses for now and point to fruitful avenues for future research in this area.

*Love Story Survey Experiment*

Although subjects were block randomized into the experimental manipulation conditions by party identification, age cohort, and gender as mentioned above, and despite sound arguments against this practice (Mutz 2011), I checked for covariate balance across the conditions on these variables as well as a host of other observables that were measured in Survey 1 prior to the treatment. Block randomization was successful, and there were no statistical differences (p<.10, two-tailed) in partisanship, age, or gender. I also found no statistical differences among the conditions in ideology, income, education level, religious preference, racial resentment, global empathy predisposition, sympathy predisposition, or perspective-taking predisposition. No significant racial differences were found across the conditions, except that significantly more subjects who identified themselves as Latino were assigned to the heterosexual man condition than to the objects condition (p<.10, two-tailed). In addition, those assigned to the gay man condition rated religion as significantly less important in their lives relative to the heterosexual man condition (p<.10, two-tailed). Potentially more problematic are several imbalances on variables related to the subject matter of the study, including knowing someone who is gay, state of origin, and state of current residence—the latter two of which may impact the former as well as exposure to different legal environments vis-à-vis the differing rights of gay and lesbian
Americans in different states. Subjects randomly assigned to the objects control condition were significantly more likely than subjects assigned to the heterosexual control condition to know someone who is gay (difference in means=.05, SE=.03, p<.10, two-tailed t-test).

Further investigation revealed that the experimental conditions demonstrated significant between-group differences in their gay rights attitudes reported in Survey 1, before the treatment. Specifically, subjects subsequently assigned to the objects control condition were significantly more egalitarian in their DOMA opinions at Time 1 than subjects assigned to the heterosexual control condition (difference in means=.05, SE=.02, p<.05, two-tailed t-test) and marginally significantly more egalitarian than subjects assigned to the gay treatment condition (difference in means=.03, SE=.02, p<.12, two-tailed t-test). Subjects assigned to the objects condition (difference in means=.05, SE=.02, p<.01, two-tailed t-test) as well as subjects assigned to the gay treatment condition (difference in means=.03, SE=.02, p<.10, two-tailed t-test) were significantly more likely to support gay adoption than subjects assigned to the heterosexual control condition. Likewise, subjects in the objects control condition were significantly more likely than subjects in the heterosexual control condition to support gay inclusive books at Time 1 (difference in means=.03, SE=.02, p<.10, two-tailed t-test). Finally, although the Jason Collins exposure variables were not measured among the full sample until after the treatment on Survey 2, any instances of exposure would have occurred pre-treatment, so it is worth noting that subjects in the gay condition were more likely to report that they watched Jason Collins’ interview on Good Morning America than subjects in the objects condition (difference in means=.07, SE=.02, p<.01, two-tailed t-test) and subjects in the heterosexual condition (difference in means=.06, SE=.02, p<.01, two-tailed t-test). After the news about Jason Collins broke, I added these same
exposure questions to the end of Survey 1, and these same differences are significantly reflected among the small subset of subjects who were asked the questions pre-treatment. This increases my confidence that greater exposure to the *GMA* interview in the gay treatment condition than in the other two conditions represents a true pre-existing difference between the gay condition and the other two conditions rather than an effect of the gay video treatment itself. In sum, on three gay rights measures included on Survey 1, subjects assigned to the objects condition at the beginning of Survey 2 were the most egalitarian, followed by subjects assigned to the gay treatment condition, with subjects assigned to the heterosexual condition measuring the least egalitarian on gay rights at Time 1. On all three measures, subjects in the heterosexual condition were statistically significantly less supportive of gay rights than subjects in the objects condition.

In addition to the unfortunate accident of randomization described above, manipulation check items at the end of Survey 2 indicate that the national sample I used was not a particularly attentive one. Reduced attention to stimuli is a common problem of online survey experiments, relative to the greater attention that researchers can encourage in laboratory settings. However, by including manipulation check items at the end of the post-treatment survey (after all dependent variable measures had been collected), I am able to determine which subjects actually received the intended manipulations and limit the analyses to those subjects in order to determine the effects of the treatment on the treated only. One manipulation check indicates that only about 70% of subjects assigned to one of the relationship videos correctly answered that there was an engagement proposal at the end of the video (this rate was the same for the gay and the heterosexual video conditions). However, of those who saw the engagement, 84% of subjects assigned to the heterosexual condition, but only 57% of subjects assigned to the gay condition,
correctly reported the character’s sexual identity as heterosexual or gay, respectively. Among those who did not report seeing the engagement, about 80% of subjects in the heterosexual condition and 70% of subjects in the gay condition assumed that the character was heterosexual.

I attempted to prevent anticipated lack of attention using several measures: first, I instructed subjects to minimize other distractions, pay close attention, and watch the “entire” video. I also emphasized that it was important that they pay full attention because they would be asked questions about the video afterwards. In addition, I placed timers on the video screens that would not allow subjects to advance to the next survey question until the video had fully finished playing; however, nothing can be done about subjects who choose to engage in other tasks or become distracted while the video is playing. Still, despite these efforts, the majority of heterosexual subjects assigned to the gay empathy condition did not realize the out-group sexual identity of the main character. Because my theory is specifically about the empathy of dominant group members for out-group individuals, the theoretically relevant analyses below includes only those individuals in each of the empathy conditions who reported seeing the engagement and correctly identified the sexual identity of the character in their assigned video; all subjects assigned to the objects condition are included in the analysis. These analyses thus represent the effects of the treatment on the treated (the parallel “intent to treat” analyses can be found in the Appendix to Chapter 4).

To summarize the data collection challenges detailed above, the randomization did not produce equivalent experimental conditions on the key dimension of pre-treatment gay rights.

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61 When I conduct this study again, I plan to end the video with a freeze frame of the couple. In the current version, the shot of the couple appeared on the screen for approximately one second, and then the video faded to black before ending. Even mostly attentive subjects who looked away for a moment might have missed the male identity of the partner in the gay condition, possibly explaining why 70% of subjects in both conditions correctly reported that the character got engaged at the end (although, this could also be good guessing for a video entitled “A Love Story”) while far fewer correctly identified the sexual orientation of the character in their assigned condition.
opinions, and many subjects failed to receive (or register) the manipulations (i.e. failed to attend to the relationship videos until the end when the engagement occurred and the sexual identity of the main character was revealed). I exclude these inattentive subjects from the main analyses reported below for theoretical reasons, however, doing so produces additional deviations from equivalence on the key dimension of pre-treatment gay rights opinions. To address both of these sources of pre-treatment differences among the experimental conditions, all of the cross-sectional analyses of Wave 2 outcomes include control variables for Wave 1 gay rights attitudes. The pre-post opinion change analyses do not need additional pre-treatment gay rights controls because these analyses compare over-time changes within each experimental group, and thus, modest differences across groups at Time 1 are of little concern.62 All analyses also include a host of standard observables measured on Survey 1 and all measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli included at the end of Survey 2.

As a preliminary step, while limiting the sample to attentive subjects who reported seeing the engagement and correctly identified the sexual identity of the character in their assigned condition, I conduct basic crosstabs on the raw means of the DOMA, ADOPT, and BOOKS variables measured at Time 2, conditioning on the responses to each of these at Time 1. Consistent with the average treatment effects on individual-level opinion changes reported below, I find statistically significant egalitarian movement in opinion on the books variable at Time 2 among subjects in the treatment condition (relative to each of the control conditions) who had previously answered “Disagree” or “Somewhat agree” to the books item at Time 1.

62 The models of BENEFITS, SCOUTS, BULLY, and MARRY2 include all pre-treatment measures of gay rights opinion (DOMA, BOOKS, ADOPT, and MARRY1). The opinion change models of DOMA, BOOKS, and ADOPT opinions at Time 2 each include a control variable for the identical item measured at Time 1.
Proceeding with the main analysis, I first confirm that the treatment video induced states of empathy for the gay character as intended. I expect that the gay video and the heterosexual video will induce equivalent degrees of state empathy and state sympathy for their characters (H4). The estimated effects of the treatment relative to the heterosexual control condition shown in Table 4.8 demonstrate that subjects experienced equal degrees of empathy and sympathy for the character, regardless of whether they were randomly assigned to the gay or straight version of the video. I did not expect to find any differences between the gay and straight versions of the video in the states of empathy and sympathy experienced for the character because the videos are identical, and the sexual identity of the character is not revealed until the end, meaning that any differences found would necessarily be the result of post-hoc rationalizing on the part of respondents. As shown in Table 4.8, my expectations were confirmed.63

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.8. States of Empathy and Sympathy for Characters predicted by Video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment Effects Relative to Heterosexual Control (G=1, H=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know a gay person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients of treatment dummy variables (1 if the subject was assigned to the gay treatment condition, 0 if the subject was assigned to the heterosexual control condition) predicting states of empathy and sympathy, each rescaled 0-1. The models also include control variables for MARRY1, pre-treatment measures of DOMA, BOOKS, and ADOPT variables, knowing someone who is gay, four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses, and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

Second, I test the overall causal effects of experiencing empathy for a gay individual on gay rights policy opinions relative to each of the control conditions. As hypothesized, subjects in

63 In contrast to the findings of the field experiments described in Chapter 3, when I split the sample into high and low trait empathy subgroups, I still did not find any differences in the degree of emotional states that subjects experienced in response to the gay character and the straight character. That is, neither subjects high in the trait of empathy nor subjects low in the trait of empathy showed similarity bias in their responses to the man in the video.
the “gay empathy” treatment condition exhibit significantly more egalitarian opinions (and in one case, greater egalitarian opinion change) on gay rights issues than subjects in either of the two control conditions (H5). Relative to the objects control condition, subjects in the gay man treatment condition show significant, positive change in their opinions about “Laws requiring kindergarten curricula to include picture books about families with two moms and two dads” (Table 4.9). Also, relative to control subjects assigned to the objects condition, subjects in the gay man treatment condition expressed significantly more support for benefits for gay and lesbian domestic partners and spouses (Table 4.11).

In addition to evaluating the effects of each of the empathy-inducing relationship videos relative to the “no-empathy” objects video, I also directly test the effects of the empathy encounter with the gay man relative to the empathy encounter with the heterosexual man. These results are shown in Tables 4.10 and 4.12 and yield one additional interesting result. Relative to subjects who viewed the heterosexual portrayal of a relationship, subjects exposed to the gay relationship portrayal were significantly less opposed to the Boy Scouts’ ban on gay leaders (See Table 4.12). However, Table 4.11 shows that this difference is due to a positive effect of the heterosexual video on opposition to the Boy Scouts’ ban rather than a negative effect of the gay video.

Next, I revisit H3, which recall is the hypothesis that specific empathy encounters with Jason Collins – reading the *Sports Illustrated* article that Jason Collins’ authored, watching the interviews of him, and hearing about his story through other media sources – will move heterosexual subjects’ opinions in an egalitarian direction on gay rights. This hypothesis finds strong support in the results presented in Tables 4.9 through 4.12. Reading Collins’ *Sports
Illustrated article is significantly associated with egalitarian change in subjects’ opinions about gay adoption rights, as shown in both Tables 4.9 and 4.10. Similarly, reading the SI article and watching the Oprah interview are also associated with positive changes in subjects’ opinions about laws requiring inclusive books in kindergarten classrooms (again see Tables 4.9 and 4.10). In addition, exposure to the SI article is related to greater opposition to the Boy Scouts’ ban on gay leaders and greater support for gay marriage. The Oprah and GMA interviews are also associated with greater support for same-sex marriage, as shown in Tables 4.11 and 4.12. These tables also illustrate that exposure to Jason Collins’ story through other media sources is a positive predictor of gay rights egalitarianism on benefits and gay marriage. The positive influence of the specific empathy stimuli included in the analysis as well as the more diffuse measure of “other media sources” potentially speak to the ability of a story to capture media and public attention and to exert far-reaching influence on the public. The positive relationship between other media sources and arguably the two most basic measures of gay rights policy egalitarianism, support for partner/spousal benefits, and gay marriage, suggests that “exogenous empathy shocks” for out-group individuals can affect even those members of the public who are not particularly motivated to seek out and select into specific media encounters with out-group individuals. The saturation of the media environment with empathy-producing stories (as was the case with the Jason Collins story—recall that 87% of subjects had heard about the story) may create incidental empathy encounters with out-group individuals that move public opinion in an egalitarian direction as the theory of empathy and equality predicts.
### Table 4.9. Love Story & Jason Collins Effects on Gay Rights Opinion Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA Change</th>
<th>ADOPT Change</th>
<th>BOOKS Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay Man</td>
<td>-.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Man</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.01)*</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC SI Article</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)*</td>
<td>.04 (.02)**</td>
<td>.06 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC GMA Interview</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>-.00 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC Oprah Interview</td>
<td>-.02 (.03)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.05 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC Other Media</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>-.00 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing a gay person</td>
<td>.02 (.01)**</td>
<td>.02 (.01)**</td>
<td>.02 (.01)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting Time 2 opinions in three models of gay rights support, controlling for opinions at Time 1. The models also include control variables for education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.

### Table 4.10. Love Story (Man Conditions Only) & Jason Collins Effects on Opinion Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA Change</th>
<th>ADOPT Change</th>
<th>BOOKS Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay Man relative to Het. Man</td>
<td>-.00 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC SI Article</td>
<td>-.04 (.03)</td>
<td>.05 (.03)*</td>
<td>.07 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC GMA Interview</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC Oprah Interview</td>
<td>-.01 (.04)</td>
<td>.03 (.04)</td>
<td>.07 (.04)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC Other Media</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing a gay person</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting Time 2 opinions in three models of gay rights support, controlling for opinions at Time 1. The models also include control variables for education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.

### Table 4.11. Love Story & Jason Collins Effects on Gay Rights Opinions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>SCOUTS</th>
<th>BULLY</th>
<th>MARRY2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay Man</td>
<td>.02 (.02)*</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Man</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.01)**</td>
<td>-.00 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC SI Article</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)*</td>
<td>.03 (.03)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC GMA Interview</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.02 (.01)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC Oprah Interview</td>
<td>.01 (.03)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.03)</td>
<td>.04 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC Other Media</td>
<td>.02 (.01)**</td>
<td>-.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing a gay person</td>
<td>.03 (.01)**</td>
<td>.02 (.01)**</td>
<td>.02 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients. The models also include control variables for MARRY1, pre-treatment measures of DOMA, BOOKS, and ADOPT variables, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.
Surprisingly, Table 4.9 shows a relationship between reading the SI article and negative changes in opinion regarding the DOMA definition of marriage. I have no theoretical explanation for this finding; however, it is worth noting that I find very little movement on the DOMA dependent variable throughout this analysis (and also found little movement on an identically-worded item used in the field experiments reported in Chapter 3). This item, unlike the majority of the other items, was not based upon previously validated question wording. Rather, I created the item wording myself, and it could be that asking subjects how much they agree or disagree with “Federal law that defines marriage as only between a man and a woman”—without contextualizing it in terms of the Defense of Marriage Act or spelling out the consequences of the law for gay and lesbian Americans—is confusing to subjects, creating a noisy measure. There are two other surprising findings displayed in Table 4.12: the negative relationship between reading the SI article and benefits support and the negative relationship between watching the Oprah interview and support for gay-inclusive bullying policies. These negative relationships emerge only in the analysis that is limited to the relationship video
subjects (Table 4.12) and do not appear in the larger analysis of all three conditions (Table 4.11), whereas most of the positive relationships noted above are evident in both sets of analysis. Although I am less confident of the results based only on the smaller subsample of subjects assigned to the relationship videos than I am in the larger analysis, these negative relationships highlight that encounters with out-group individuals can sometimes have negative consequences among certain subpopulations, as demonstrated in Chapter 3.

Returning now exclusively to the analysis of the randomized survey experiment, I test whether the hypothesized mechanism—states of empathy for the gay character—is responsible for the treatment effects on opinion and opinion change. I separate those who experienced empathy states for the character in the relationship videos and those who did not, conducting subgroup analysis by empathy states to assess whether those who experienced empathy for the gay individual were affected in their gay rights opinions while those who did not experience empathy were not—as the theory of empathy and equality predicts (H6). The results of this analysis are displayed in Tables 4.13 and 4.14 and show that states of empathy have a significant positive influence on books opinion change and benefits support. Recall that average treatment effects were identified on these same variables in the analysis above. When subjects experienced states of empathy for the gay character (relative to subjects who experienced empathy for the straight character), they became significantly more egalitarian in their opinions about inclusive books policy and showed greater support for benefits for gay and lesbian partners and spouses. However, the analysis presented in Tables 4.13 and 4.14 also shows that the treatment had no

---

64 Subjects were coded as experiencing empathy states if their state empathy index score was 0.6 or above, corresponding with the response options on the positive side of the response scale: “Somewhat agree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree.” Subjects were coded as not experiencing states of empathy if their state empathy index score was below 0.6, corresponding to the negative response choices of “Somewhat disagree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly disagree.” The same coding scheme was utilized for the sympathy state variable.
effects on subjects when they did not experience states of empathy for the gay character. I also conduct placebo tests mirroring this analysis using states of sympathy, expecting that sympathy states will not moderate the effects of the treatment (H6-P), and these results can be found in Tables 4.15 and 4.16. The findings of the sympathy state placebo tests were as expected with one exception: subjects who felt sympathy for the gay character were significantly more supportive of benefits for gay partners and spouses than subjects in the control condition who felt empathy for the heterosexual character.

Table 4.13. Love Story Effects on Gay Rights Opinion Change by State Empathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Empathy?</th>
<th>DOMA Change</th>
<th>ADOPT Change</th>
<th>BOOKS Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-.00 (.02)</td>
<td>-.00 (.03)</td>
<td>-.00 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(G=1, H=0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting Time 2 opinions, controlling for opinions at Time 1. The models also include control variables for knowing someone who is gay, four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.

Table 4.14. Love Story Effects on Gay Rights Opinions by State Empathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Empathy?</th>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>SCOUTS</th>
<th>BULLY</th>
<th>MARRY2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(G=1, H=0)</td>
<td>.06 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.03 (.03)</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients. The models also include control variables for MARRY1, pre-treatment measures of DOMA, BOOKS, and ADOPT variables, knowing someone who is gay, four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.
Table 4.15. Love Story Effects on Gay Rights Opinion Change by State Sympathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Sympathy?</th>
<th>DOMA Change</th>
<th>ADOPT Change</th>
<th>BOOKS Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition (G=1, H=0)</td>
<td>-.02 (.03)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting Time 2 opinions in models of gay rights support, controlling for opinions at Time 1. The models also include control variables for knowing someone who is gay, four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.

Table 4.16. Love Story Effects on Gay Rights Opinions by State Sympathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Sympathy?</th>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>SCOUTS</th>
<th>BULLY</th>
<th>MARRY2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition (G=1, H=0)</td>
<td>.04 (.03)*</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.02 (.03)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting opinions (measured in Survey 2 only) in models of gay rights support. The models also include control variables for MARRY1, pre-treatment measures of DOMA, BOOKS, and ADOPT variables, knowing someone who is gay, four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.

I correct for endogeneity in the direct test of the theory employed in testing Hypothesis 6 above, and I use the empathy predisposition measures collected in Survey 1 as proxies for the empathy state measures. I split the sample into high and low empathic predisposition subgroups and test whether subjects highly predisposed to empathy are positively affected in their gay rights opinions by the treatment, and moreso than low trait empathy subjects, relative to their counterparts in either of the control conditions (H7). Relative to their high trait empathy counterparts in the objects condition, subjects in the gay man treatment condition became significantly more egalitarian in their gay adoption opinions as a result of watching the treatment video; interestingly, so did high trait empathy subjects in the heterosexual man condition relative

---

65 Mirroring the dichotomization of the state variables described above, subjects were coded as having high levels of the trait of empathy if their trait empathy index score was 0.6 or above, corresponding with the response options on the positive side of the response scale: “Somewhat agree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree.” Subjects were coded as having low levels of the trait of empathy if their trait empathy index score was below 0.6, corresponding to the negative response choices of “Somewhat disagree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly disagree.” The same coding scheme was utilized for the sympathy trait index variable.
to those in the objects condition (See Table 4.17), resulting in no significant differences in adoption opinion change between high trait empathy subjects assigned to the gay man condition and high trait empathy subjects assigned to the straight man condition (See Table 4.18).

As shown in Table 4.19, subjects high in the trait of empathy who viewed the gay man video were statistically significantly more supportive of benefits for gay partners, more opposed to the Boy Scouts’ ban on gay leaders, more supportive of school bullying policies that include protections based on sexual orientation, and more supportive of gay marriage than their high trait empathy counterparts who viewed the objects video. However, when the effects of the gay treatment video are evaluated relative to the heterosexual control video, all but one of these significant positive effects disappears (See Table 4.20). Strangely, the heterosexual control video seems to have affected high trait empathy subjects’ gay rights opinions in the same direction and to roughly the same degree (relative to the objects video) as the gay treatment video on all the gay rights variables modeled in Table 4.19 except the benefits variable. Thus, the significant positive effect of the treatment on high trait empathy subjects’ opinions about benefits for gay partners is the only egalitarian effect that remains in the comparison of the two relationship videos (as shown in Table 4.20). Contrary to my expectations that this entirely positive empathy encounter with a gay individual would also produce some positive egalitarian effects among subjects low in the trait of empathy (though these effects were expected to be weaker than those found about high trait empathy subjects report above), I found no significant positive effects of the treatment on low trait empathy subjects. In fact, subjects low in the trait of empathy who were exposed to the gay treatment video became less egalitarian in their opinions about gay adoption than their low empathy counterparts who were exposed to the objects video, as shown
in Table 4.17, although this negative effect loses significance in the comparison of the relationship videos shown in Table 4.18. Low trait subjects were also negatively affected by the treatment in their opinions on SCOUTS, BULLY, and MARRY2, relative to subjects exposed to the objects control video (See Table 4.19). Interestingly, low trait empathy subjects who viewed the heterosexual control video also exhibited less support for gay-inclusive bullying policies than low trait empathy subjects assigned to the objects control video, so there is no significant difference between the relationship videos on this variable as shown in Table 4.20. However, relative to their low trait empathy counterparts in the heterosexual control condition, low trait empathy subjects in the gay treatment condition demonstrated negative, inegalitarian effects in their opinions about the Boy Scouts’ ban on gay leaders and the legalization of gay marriage.

| Table 4.17. Love Story Effects on Gay Rights Opinion Change by Trait Empathy |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                          | DOMA Change              | ADOPT Change             | BOOKS Change             |
|                          | High                     | Low                      | High                     | Low                      | High                     | Low                      |
| Trait Empathy            |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
| Gay Man                  | .00 (.02)                | -.02 (.02)               | .02 (.02)                | -.03 (.02)               | .04 (.02)                | .01 (.03)                |
| Het. Man                 | -.01 (.02)               | .01 (.02)                | .03 (.01)                | -.00 (.02)               | .01 (.02)                | .00 (.02)                |
| Know gay                 | .03 (.02)**              | .00 (.02)                | .02 (.01)                | .03 (.02)**              | .01 (.02)                | .04 (.02)**              |
| N                        | 774                      | 522                      | 774                      | 522                      | 774                      | 522                      |

The table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting Time 2 opinions in six separate models of gay rights support, controlling for opinions at Time 1. The models also include control variables for four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.

| Table 4.18. Love Story Effects (Man Conditions only) on Opinion Change by Trait Empathy |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                          | DOMA Change              | ADOPT Change             | BOOKS Change             |
|                          | High                     | Low                      | High                     | Low                      | High                     | Low                      |
| Trait Empathy            |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
| Gay Man relative to Het. Man | .01 (.02)               | -.02 (.03)               | -.00 (.02)               | -.03 (.03)               | .03 (.02)                | .01 (.03)                |
| Know gay                 | .03 (.02)**              | -.01 (.02)               | .00 (.02)                | .02 (.02)                | .01 (.02)                | .01 (.03)                |
| N                        | 406                      | 250                      | 406                      | 250                      | 406                      | 250                      |

The table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting Time 2 opinions, controlling for opinions at Time 1. The models also include control variables for four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.
Table 4.19. Love Story Effects on Gay Rights Opinions by Trait Empathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait Empathy</th>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>SCOUTS</th>
<th>BULLY</th>
<th>MARRY2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Man</td>
<td>.04 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.02 (.03)</td>
<td>.03 (.01)**</td>
<td>-.04 (.02)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Het. Man</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.04 (.01)**</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay</td>
<td>.03 (.02)**</td>
<td>.04 (.02)**</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients. The models also include control variables for MARRY1, pre-treatment measures of DOMA, BOOKS, and ADOPT variables, four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.

Table 4.20. Love Story Effects (Man Conditions Only) on Gay Rights Opinions by Trait Empathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait Empathy</th>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>SCOUTS</th>
<th>BULLY</th>
<th>MARRY2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Man relative to Het. Man</td>
<td>.03 (.02)*</td>
<td>-.02 (.03)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.04 (.02)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay</td>
<td>.03 (.03)</td>
<td>-.00 (.03)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients. The models also include control variables for MARRY1, pre-treatment measures of DOMA, BOOKS, and ADOPT variables, four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.

Summary and Conclusions

The natural experiment in which media saturation with NBA player Jason Collins’ “coming out” story served as the “treatment” revealed significant egalitarian effects on public opinion about the rights of gay and lesbian Americans. Average treatment effects of the Jason Collins coverage were identified on heterosexual Americans’ opinions about gay adoption and marriage rights, and these effects seemed to be driven exclusively by subjects with low levels of the empathy trait. Furthermore, low trait empathy subjects who received the Jason Collins’ treatment were also significantly more egalitarian in their opinions about the DOMA definition.
of marriage and school bullying policies that include protections based on sexual orientation than their low trait empathy counterparts who were not exposed to the Jason Collins’ treatment.

Supplemental analysis of specific measures of exposure to the Jason Collins’ story—including his *Sports Illustrated* article, his individual interview on *Good Morning America*, his interview with Oprah and members of his family, as well as other media sources—further support my claim that empathy encounters with Jason Collins, a gay individual, contributed to egalitarian public opinion change regarding the rights of gay and lesbian Americans as a group.

The results of the randomized “Love Story” survey experiment also provide evidence to support the *theory of empathy and equality*. Treated subjects who were randomly assigned to watch an empathic portrayal of a gay man became significantly more supportive of the inclusive books policy and expressed greater support for benefits for gay partners than control subjects who were randomly assigned to watch a video of inanimate objects. These effects on books and benefits opinions occurred when subjects experienced states of empathy for the gay character, in line with my theoretical predictions; however, the positive effect on benefits support also occurred when subjects felt states of sympathy for the gay character. Each of these effects seems to be driven by highly (trait) empathic subjects. In addition, high trait empathy subjects, relative to their highly empathic counterparts assigned to the objects condition, also became significantly more supportive of gay adoption and expressed greater opposition to the Boy Scouts’ ban on gay leaders, greater support for gay-inclusive school bullying policies, and greater support for legalizing gay marriage. In contrast to the effects of the Jason Collins natural experiment but echoing the results of the field experiments reported in Chapter 3, subjects low in the trait of empathy actually became less supportive of gay adoption as a result of watching the gay
treatment video relative to their low trait empathy counterparts who watched the objects control video. Low trait empathy subjects in the gay treatment condition also reported less opposition to the Boy Scouts’ ban on gay leaders, less support for school bullying policies protecting gay students, and less support for legalizing gay marriage than their low trait empathy counterparts in the objects control condition.

The findings of these experiments suggest that the recent increases in media representations of gay individuals could be at least partially responsible for the public’s increasing egalitarianism on gay rights. In 1980, not a single gay or lesbian character appeared on any of the three major American networks (ABC, NBC, CBS), and all relationships portrayed on television were heterosexual (Tropiano 2002). In my lifetime, that television landscape has changed drastically. TV shows today not only include gay and lesbian characters, but these characters are the central foci of several popular shows, which all else equal, should increase viewers likelihood of empathizing with these gay characters. Moreover, the natural and survey experiments described in this chapter demonstrate that providing opportunities for empathy encounters with gay individuals—as the American television and film industries have done, particularly within the last decade—can increase heterosexual Americans’ egalitarianism on matters of gay rights.

The results of these experiments also demonstrate, as theorized, that the subgroup of Americans that is likely to be affected by any particular media portrayal of a gay individual depends upon the character (or traits) of the observing individuals as well as the strength and attention-getting power of the portrayal. In the natural experiment and the survey experiment presented in this chapter, the treatment stimuli had opposite effects on subjects depending upon
their levels of trait empathy, and the stimuli themselves also differed on numerous, potentially important dimensions. The Jason Collins media coverage had positive effects on the gay rights opinions of low trait empathy subjects but no effects on the opinions of high trait empathy subjects, whereas the gay version (and often also the heterosexual version) of the “Love Story” YouTube video had negative effects on the gay rights opinions of low trait empathy subjects and positive effects on the gay rights opinions of high trait empathy subjects. The Jason Collins media coverage, however, might be a stronger encourager of empathy than the “Love Story” given that Jason Collins is a real person rather than a fictional character. In addition, the Jason Collins coverage lasted for weeks rather than minutes, provided people with a diverse menu of opportunities to encounter the Jason Collins story (reading the article, watching the interviews, watching reports on various news outlets, etc.), and possibly also exposed people to repeated empathy encounters with Jason Collins.

It may be that only strong, positive stimuli like the Jason Collins media coverage are able to induce empathy and egalitarian opinion change among people with low levels of the trait of empathy and that weak and/or partially negative empathy stimuli (like those employed in the field and survey experiments) are unable to generate empathy among people with low empathic abilities, resulting in inegalitarian effects on opinion. Future experiments in which similar treatments of varying strength are employed are needed to empirically test this hypothesis directly. It is unclear why subjects high in the trait of empathy were positively affected by the “Love Story” treatment video but were mostly unaffected by the Jason Collins coverage, however. Note that the latter null effect mirrors the results among high trait empathy subjects in the movie theater field experiments. This contrast in findings between the survey experiment on
the one hand and the natural and field experiments on the other hand can perhaps speak to an ongoing methodological debate in the social sciences regarding the external validity of survey experiments (Mutz 2010; Barabas and Jerit 2010). Barabas and Jerit (2010) conducted concurrent survey and natural experiments to examine the effects of media information about Medicare and immigration policies on knowledge and opinions about these policies. They found stronger effects in the survey experiments than in the natural experiments, concluding that “people in the natural experiments do not integrate new information and adjust their political beliefs to the degree that they do in survey experiments” (Barabas and Jerit 2010, 227).

However, the natural and field experiments described in this dissertation yielded effects on par with those identified in the survey experiments (albeit among different subgroups of subjects), which suggests that the answer to the question “Are survey experiments externally valid?” may be “It depends” – on whether the phenomena under study is purely informational and cognitive as in Barabas and Jerit’s (2010) studies or primarily emotion-based as in the studies reported here. Future methodological comparison studies that examine emotional phenomena like the Jason Collins media coverage will contribute to a more complete answer to this question.
Chapter 5

Feeling with, Feeling for, & Not Feeling at All: How the Traits of Empathy, Sympathy, and Perspective-taking Influence Politics

“I feel your pain.”
~President Bill Clinton

The main foci of the preceding two chapters have been the causal effects of empathy encounters with gay individuals on heterosexuals’ opinions about gay rights via the hypothesized emotional mechanism of empathy states. However, in the last two chapters, I have also demonstrated that individual differences in empathic predispositions, or empathy traits, matter powerfully for how and under what circumstances heterosexuals respond to empathy encounters with gay individuals. Highly empathic subjects in the movie theater field experiments described in Chapter 3 exhibited the same levels of state empathy for the movie characters regardless of whether they viewed gay characters or heterosexual characters. Subjects with lower levels of trait empathy, on the other hand, showed bias in their feelings of empathy, empathizing less strongly when viewing gay characters than when viewing heterosexual characters. These empathy deficits for the gay characters were accompanied by reduced support for gay adoption rights among subjects with lower levels of trait empathy, but highly empathic subjects showed no changes in their already egalitarian opinions on gay rights. In contrast, in the natural experiment described in Chapter 4, I found that the media coverage of Jason Collins’ “coming out” story moved the gay rights opinions of subjects with low levels of trait empathy in the predicted egalitarian
direction. Again, as in the movie field experiments, highly empathic survey participants in the Jason Collins natural experiment were not significantly influenced in their gay rights opinions by empathy stimuli for Jason Collins in the media environment. In the natural experiment, the gay rights opinions of subjects low in the trait of empathy were considerably less egalitarian, on average, than subjects with high levels of the trait. I suggested in the previous chapter that this gives low trait empathy subjects greater room to move, relative to the highly empathic, in their gay rights opinions as a result of empathy encounters with Jason Collins. These two studies, then, find effects almost exclusively among subjects low in the trait of empathy: negative effects in the case of the movie field experiments and positive effects in the case of the Jason Collins natural experiment. However, in the “Love Story” survey experiment also described in Chapter 4, egalitarian treatment effects on a range of gay rights opinions were found among highly empathic subjects, while subjects low in the trait of empathy were affected negatively by the treatment.

The goal of this chapter is further explore the role that the trait of empathy plays in determining when and how individuals with different levels of the trait will respond to empathy encounters in their environments. I theorize in Chapter 2 that highly empathic individuals should be, on average, more egalitarian in their out-group policy preferences than individuals with low levels of the empathy trait. These differences should result from the cumulative effects of the opportunities to empathize with out-group others that dominant individuals have in their daily lives. Holding exposure to out-group others constant (whether direct or mediated), if highly empathic people empathize more with out-group individuals whom they encounter while those with low empathic capacity empathize little with the out-group individuals whom they
encounter, these differing emotional responses to out-group individuals should lead to distinct patterns of opinion about out-group-affecting policies among these two groups. In other words, when given the same opportunities to empathize with out-group others, highly empathic individuals will become more egalitarian in opinions about policies affecting out-groups while less empathic individuals will not. This should apply not only to heterosexuals’ opinions about policies affecting gay and lesbian Americans, but also to a range of opinions held by majority or dominant individuals with regard to policies affecting minority or marginal groups, for example, whites’ opinions regarding policies affecting African Americans and men’s opinions regarding policies affecting women. I test these assertions in the analysis presented in this chapter. Specifically, I evaluate the relationships between each of the other-oriented traits of global empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective-taking with heterosexuals’ opinions about gay rights. I also examine the influence of whites’ empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking abilities on their support for government help to the poor and African Americans and their support for affirmative action policies that benefit African Americans. Finally, I investigate the relationships between men’s empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking predispositions and their opinions about affirmative action for women and abortion.

However, as we have already seen in the Jason Collins natural experiment presented in Chapter 4, under certain circumstances, people with low levels of empathy can be moved in their opinions about out-group rights by empathy encounters with out-group individuals. Thus, the expectations outlined above about the role that the empathy trait plays in politics are intended to capture the typical and “on average” influence of the empathy trait. Individuals’ levels of trait

66 If highly empathic people also seek out more opportunities to encounter out-group others, as a result of their high level of the empathic predisposition, than low empathic people, then the relationship between trait empathy and out-group policy egalitarianism should be even stronger.
empathy may matter more or less depending upon the situation—for example, whether or not there has been an “exogenous empathy shock” such as the Jason Collins media story—and also on the particular characteristics of the out-group stimuli in the environment—whether these stimuli portray individuals or masses and whether the people portrayed are depicted positively or negatively, and as agents or victims (as outlined in Chapter 2).

In addition, the trait-empathy-based differences that I expect to result from empathy encounters with out-group others require that dominant individuals have sufficient opportunities to encounter out-group others in the first place. Bracketing for a moment exogenous empathy shocks like the Jason Collins story that can saturate the media environment with cues to empathize with out-group individuals, variation in dominant individuals’ degree of exposure to minority or marginal individuals during ordinary times ought to influence the role that trait empathy can play in particular political moments and in particular cases of inequality. In the contemporary period, the United States remains highly segregated by both race and class (Massey and Denton 1993) and mainstream popular culture provides few empathic portrayals of African Americans in film and television, calling into question the number of opportunities for empathy encounters between whites and African Americans today (in contrast, perhaps, to empathic news portrayals of African Americans during the Civil Rights Era). In contrast, gay and lesbian Americans are much more integrated with the heterosexual majority, both residentially (which is even more consequential today than in the past, given the greater proportion of gay and lesbian individuals who feel at liberty to publicly be themselves) and in popular culture as well. Arguably, heterosexuals in the contemporary period have more opportunities than at any other time in U.S. history to empathize with gay and lesbian individuals. Finally, women have always
been half the population and intimately integrated with men in the United States—at least in the private sphere (Pateman 1988). Despite women’s numbers and men’s many opportunities for cross-gender empathy, as in the cases of racial and sexual inequality mentioned above, gender inequality has persisted at least partially because of the cultural stereotypes and misrecognitions that have clouded both genders’ understandings of who women really are as individuals (Harris-Perry 2011). Even still, given men’s greater opportunities for empathy encounters with women relative to the other two cases of intergroup inequality, I expect men’s trait empathy to be more influential in their attitudes about women’s rights, than for example, whites’ attitudes about the rights of African Americans. Likewise, I predict that the impact of heterosexuals’ empathy traits on their gay rights attitudes will be mediated by their opportunities to empathize with gay and lesbian individuals—for example, through knowing a gay friend or family member or encountering gay individuals in the media.

Furthermore, according to the *theory of empathy and equality*, empathy is a unique emotion that motivates not only egalitarian policy preferences, but political actions for equality as well. The emotional force of empathy across lines of inequality—of feeling the emotions of marginalized individuals—motivates dominant group members to take political action to expand the rights of marginal or minority groups. Conversely, the *theory of sympathy and charity* predicts that the emotive thrust of sympathy—of feeling sorry for marginal individuals—moves dominant group members to personally address the plights of these individuals with needs-based public remedies or private, charitable solutions. In this way, being motivated to act by sympathy for others can actually perpetuate inequality by reproducing existing power dynamics while at the same time creating preferences for individual helping instead of political remedies to social
problems, thereby leading to political apathy. Insofar as trait measures can be used as a proxy measures for the emotional states people are likely to experience in response to environmental stimuli as described above, I use trait measures to test these proposed relationships in the analysis below. I explore whether differences in empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking capacities influence the ways in which people operate within the public sphere by examining the relationship of each of these traits with political interest and efficacy, self-reported political and charitable actions, and the values of egalitarianism and humanitarianism.

I hypothesize that greater tendencies toward empathy—feeling (any range of emotions) with others—motivates interest in politics and an efficacious attitude that things can be accomplished through politics; while greater tendencies toward sympathy—feeling (sorry) for others—motivates desires to individually address problems, thereby demotivating interest in politics and reducing political efficacy. The purely cognitive trait of perspective-taking is included in the analysis to show that it is global empathy—feeling and understanding others’ emotions, rather than just rationally taking another’s perspective—the affective component of which motivates political attitudes and action. Both empathy and sympathy have affective and cognitive elements, but it is the affective element that has the motivating power, as will be seen in the analysis of political and charitable action. The purely cognitive ability to take another’s perspective can inform one’s policy opinions but does not lead people to act in the way that empathy and sympathy do. I hypothesize that empathy and sympathy traits motivate people toward distinct types of action: empathy motivates political action, while sympathy motivates private or charitable action. Finally, I expect the trait of empathy to be positively and more
strongly associated with egalitarianism than the other two traits, and I expect the trait of sympathy to be positively and more strongly related to humanitarianism than the other two traits.

**Methodology: A National Two-Wave Panel Survey**

**Sample Characteristics**

I partnered with Qualtrics Labs (QL) and Survey Sampling International (SSI) to administer two online surveys to a large national sample of heterosexual Americans as part of the *Empathy and Equality Study* (hereafter, EES). Survey 1 (N=3010) was administered between 7 and 13 days before Survey 2 (N=1970 subjects), and a 65% between-survey response rate was achieved. Participation in the surveys was incentivized with cash transfers into subjects’ PayPal accounts: 58 cents for completing the first survey and $1.15 for completing the second survey. At the beginning of the first survey, subjects were asked their gender, partisanship, and age so that the Wave 1 sample could be balanced on these variables, and the balance achieved in Wave 1 was roughly maintained in Wave 2. The analyses below are supplemented with national data from the 2002 and 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, which included an identical battery of seven items for measuring the tendency to feel sympathy and compassion (Davis 1983a) as well as a subset of comparable

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67 After Wave 1 data collection had already begun, I received generous additional funding for the survey experimental portion of the project detailed in Chapter 4 from the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University. This allowed me to increase the sample sizes for both surveys and resulted in a two-stage data collection effort. All data collection occurred within a four week period, and the data are combined in the analysis. Specifically, in Round 1 Wave 1 from 4/26/13 to 5/1/13, N=1894 subjects were recruited to take Survey 1; in Round 1 Wave 2 from 5/8/13 to 5/12/13, N=1400 subjects were recontacted and took Survey 2; in Round 2 Wave 1 from 5/8/13 to 5/22/13, N=1116 additional subjects were recruited to take Survey 1; and in Round 2 Wave 2 from 5/15/13 to 5/22/13, N=570 subjects were recontacted and took Survey 2.

68 The recruiting quotas set for the Wave 1 survey are as follows: 100% heterosexuals; 50% men, 50% women; 33.3% Republicans, 33.3% Democrats, 33.3% Independents (before probed for party leaning); and 33.3% 18-34 years old, 33.3% 35-54 years old; and 33.3% 55+ years old. Non-heterosexuals were excluded from the surveys given that the theoretical motivations of this study are to assess the effects of empathy for marginal out-group individuals among members of the dominant majority group, in this case, heterosexual Americans. The demographic distribution in Wave 2 is as follows: 48% men, 52% women; 30.2% Republicans, 36.4% Democrats, 33.4% Independents (before probe); and 28.6% 18-34 years old, 34.7% 35-54 years old, and 36.7% 55+ years old.
dependent variables.\textsuperscript{69} I also supplement these analyses with data from the 2001 Lifestyle Study, which is the only other national survey of Americans that I am aware of that includes Davis’ (1983a) validated measures of cognitive perspective-taking along with political variables.\textsuperscript{70} The Lifestyle Study survey also contained a subset of the dependent variables of interest, allowing for comparisons of results across the three datasets.\textsuperscript{71} To my knowledge, the EES survey is the first and only national survey of Americans that includes validated measures of global empathy (Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004) as well as the only national U.S. survey to contain measures of all three other-oriented traits.

Measures

*Other-Oriented Personality Traits or Predispositions*

The main independent variables of interest in the analysis reported below are the personality traits or predispositions of global empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective-taking. To measure these traits, I use questions developed and tested by psychologists to form index variables for each trait. Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright’s (2004) 40-item battery of questions designed to assess the trait of global empathy was reduced to seven of the most strongly predictive items to form the index measure for trait empathy used here. To assess their

\textsuperscript{69} The political efficacy measure used in the GSS model is a 1 item measure of efficacy that was asked in 2002 only (“Suppose you wanted the local government to bring about some improvement in your local community. How likely is it that you would be able to do something about it?”) rather than a 2-item index used in the EES models.

\textsuperscript{70} I thank political communications researchers Chip Eveland (Ohio State University), Dhavan Shah (University of Wisconsin, Madison), and Nojin Kwak (University of Michigan) for generously sharing their data.

\textsuperscript{71} Due to differences in data/variable availability, there are slight differences among the EES, GSS, and LS models that are compared in the analyses below. For example, the GSS and LS models contain an indicator variable for living in the South rather than variables for state of residence and origin; also, the measure of religious importance in the GSS models is frequency of worship attendance rather than subjective reports of importance used in the EES and LS models. In addition, the EES models that are not conditioned on white or African American racial identity contain control indicator variables for the following racial identities: white, black, latino, Asian, Asian Indian, and Native American; whereas the LS models only include racial controls for black and white. Finally, the LS models do not contain control variables for racial resentment. The GSS models use a one-item measure of racial resentment while the EES models use a two-item index measure of resentment (including the GSS item).
levels of empathic predisposition, subjects were asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with statements like, “Friends usually talk to me about their problems as they say that I am very understanding” and “I can tune into how someone else feels rapidly and intuitively.” As measures of global empathy, note that these items assess both the cognitive and affective dimensions of empathy. Davis’ (1983a, 1983b) 7-item subscale designed to assess the tendency to feel sympathy and compassion for others was used to create an index measure for trait sympathy. To assess their levels of sympathetic predisposition, subjects were asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with statements like, “I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me” and “When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.” These sympathy items also measure both affective and cognitive components in that they address both acknowledgement of others’ misfortune, suffering, or disadvantage and feelings of concern for others’ plight. Finally, four items from Davis’ (1983a, 1983b) 7-item subscale designed to measure perspective-taking were used to create an index measure of the ability to take on another’s point of view.72 Davis (1983a, 1983b) describes perspective-taking as a purely cognitive capacity, and as such, the items used to measure this trait focus entirely on cognitive processes and avoid reference to feelings or emotion. For example, “I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective” and “I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision” are two of the statements with which subjects are asked to agree or disagree. In contrast to the measure of global empathy, which measures feeling others’ emotions as well as seeing others’ perspectives, the measure of the perspective-taking trait taps into the completely

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72 This subscale was reduced from seven to four items in order to eliminate redundancy within the scale and in relation to the “Empathy Quotient” subscale; in addition, one item was excluded because it referenced feelings, and the scale is intended, according to Davis (1983a, 1983b), to measure a purely cognitive dimension of the empathy trait.
cognitive, rational, dispassionate capacity for attempting to see others’ viewpoints. I include these items in the analysis reported in this chapter in order to adjudicate whether it is the purely cognitive dimension of the trait of empathy that influences political orientations, attitudes, and behavior, or whether as my theory suggests, it is the global ability to empathize with others’ feelings as well as their thoughts that matters politically. See the Appendix to Chapter 5 for the question wording of all items used in these index variables.

The theories proposed in this dissertation are not simply about the role of empathy and sympathy in American politics, but specifically about the role that these traits and emotional states play in the reduction or reproduction of inequality via the kinds of attitudes and actions each motivates among dominant group members relative to marginalized or minority out-groups. Therefore, in addition to the case of sexuality, I test the theory in two additional domains of inequality: race/class and gender. In each domain, I assess the impact of the three traits described above on dominant group members’ opinions about policies that benefit marginal or minority out-groups. In the area of sexual inequality, I assess the influence of heterosexuals’ traits of empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking on the gay rights opinions they reported on Survey 1, prior to the experiment. In the realm of racial inequality, I evaluate the influence of whites’ traits of empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking on policies that benefit African Americans and the poor. In the area of gender inequality, I evaluate the impact of men’s empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking abilities on their opinions about abortion and affirmative action policies for women. In addition to assessing the impact of the personality variables of empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking on dominant group members’ opinions about specific policies affecting marginal or minority groups, I also examine the influence of these traits on individuals’ general
orientations toward politics (political interest and efficacy), their behavior (political and charitable action), and values relating to others in society (humanitarianism and egalitarianism).

**Heterosexuals’ Opinions on Gay Rights Policies**

I return to the gay rights opinions explored in the previous chapter and assess whether heterosexuals’ predispositions for empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking are predictive of the gay rights attitudes that subjects reported in Survey 1 (pre-treatment). Recall that the gay rights measures included on Survey 1 were as follows: a measure of opposition to “Federal law that defines marriage as only between a man and a woman” (DOMA); a measure of support for “Adoption rights for gays and lesbians so they can legally adopt children” (ADOPT); and a measure of support for “Laws requiring kindergarten curricula to include picture books about families with two moms and two dads” (BOOKS). Survey 1 also included a question asking whether “marriages between same-sex couples” should or should not “be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages” (MARRY1).

**Whites’ Opinions on Racialized Policies**

In this section of the analysis, I focus on the personality predictors of whites’ opinions regarding policies that benefit (or are perceived to benefit) African Americans, including government responsibility for the well-being of the poor and African Americans as well as workplace affirmative action benefiting African Americans. First, subjects were asked about government responsibility for the well-being of the poor and African Americans. Subjects were asked to place themselves along a 5-point scale according to whether they think it is the
government’s responsibility “to improve the standard of living of all poor Americans,” or at the opposite end of the spectrum, that this “is not the government’s responsibility, and that each person should take care of himself.” Similarly, subjects were asked to place themselves on a 5-point scale with the following two poles: “Some people think that African-Americans have been discriminated against for so long that the government has a special obligation to help improve their living standards” and “Others believe that the government should not be giving special treatment to African-Americans.” For both government responsibility questions, the midpoint of the scale represented agreement with both statements anchoring the scale. Finally, a measure of affirmative action opinion asked subjects to rate their agreement with the statement, “I am against workplace affirmative action policies that benefit African Americans.”

Men’s Opinions on Policies that Affect Women

In this part of the analysis, I focus on the personality predictors of men’s opinions about policies that impact women, including their opinions on abortion and workplace affirmative action for women. The measure of abortion opinion asked subjects how much they agree or disagree with the statement, “I am in favor of legalized abortions.” Secondly, the measure of affirmative action opinion asked subjects to rate their agreement with the statement, “I am against workplace affirmative action policies that benefit women.”

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73 The question wording for the government responsibility questions was taken directly from the GSS, so identical measures are used in the GSS analysis.

74 This is an original item. The comparable item used from the GSS asks respondents: “Some people say that because of past discrimination, blacks should be given preference in hiring and promotion. Others say that such preference in hiring and promotion of blacks is wrong because it discriminates against whites. What about your opinion -- are you for or against preferential hiring and promotion of blacks?”

75 This question wording was taken directly from the Lifestyle Study, so an identical measure is used in the LS analysis of abortion opinion. The measure used in the GSS analysis of abortion opinion combines into a single index the answers to seven different questions posed to respondents regarding the reasons for which they think a woman should be able to obtain a legal abortion.

76 This is an original item. Two comparable items asked of different subsamples of the GSS in 2002 and 2004 were collapsed into a single variable in order to increase the available sample size for this analysis. The first asks respondents to rate their agreement or
Political Orientations: Interest and Efficacy

This analysis begins to address the question of whether and how the personality traits of empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking influence the ways in which Americans interact with the political world. I include two measures of broad political orientations in the analysis, an index measure of political interest and an index measure of political efficacy. The interest index combines subjects’ agreement ratings with the statements: “I am interested in politics” and “I like to avoid politics as much as possible” (reverse coded). Likewise, the efficacy index combines subjects’ agreement ratings with the statements: “People like me can solve community problems” and “People like me don’t have a say in government decisions” (reverse coded).

Behavior: Political and Charitable Action

I continue to explore in this section the influence of the traits of empathy, sympathy, and perspective-taking on Americans’ interactions with the political world, specifically by examining reports of two types of behavior: political action and charitable action. I created an index measure of political action by combining subjects responses to questions asking how often they had done each of the following things during the last 12 months: “Wrote a letter to an editor of a magazine or newspaper,” “Worked on a community project,” “Went to a community meeting,” “Contacted, or attempted to contact, a politician or civil servant to express your views,” “Took part in a demonstration or protest,” and “Signed a petition.” Similarly, I asked subjects how often they disagreed with the following: “Because of past discrimination, employers should make special efforts to hire and promote qualified women.” The second item is as follows: “Some people say that because of past discrimination, women should be given preference in hiring and promotion. Others say that such preference in hiring and promotion of women is wrong because it discriminates against men. What about your opinion - are you for or against preferential hiring and promotion of women?”

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77 The response scales utilized for the interest and efficacy measures contained the following six response options: Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Disagree, and Strongly disagree.
78 This item alone was used at the measure of political interest in the analysis of the LS data.
79 These same two items were combined into an index of political efficacy for the LS analysis.
80 These first three items only were combined into an index of political action for the LS analysis.
they had done each of the following things during the last 12 months: “Given money to a
charity,” “Given food or money to a homeless person,” “Done volunteer work for a charity”81
and “Donated food to a food bank or soup kitchen.” I then combined the reported frequencies92
of each of these actions into an index measure of charitable action.

Values: Egalitarianism and Humanitarianism

Finally, I round out the exploration of the influence of the impact of empathic,
sympathetic, and perspective-taking predispositions on politics by evaluating the relationship of
each trait with the broad values of egalitarianism and humanitarianism. Again, I create an index
of egalitarianism by combining responses to the items: “The country would be better off if we
worried less about how equal people are;” “If people were treated more equally in this country
we would have many fewer problems;” and “We have gone too far in pushing equality in this
country.” I create an index of humanitarianism by combining responses to these items: “People
tend to pay more attention to the well-being of others than they should;” “A person should
always be concerned about the well-being of others;” and “It is best not to get too involved in
taking care of other people’s needs.”83

Data Analysis

I first test the hypothesis that the empathy trait will be positively associated with rights-
based policy egalitarianism while the sympathy trait will not in the context of heterosexuals’
opinions about gay rights. The results of the DOMA and ADOPT models in the Table 5.1 below

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81 These first three items only were combined into an index of charitable action for the GSS analysis.
82 The response options for the behavior items were: More than once a week, Once a week, Once a month, At least 2 or 3 times in
the past year, Once in the past year, and Not at all in the past year.
83 The response options utilized for the values measures contained the following six response options: Strongly agree, Agree,
Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Disagree, and Strongly disagree.
provide support for this hypothesis. The trait of empathy demonstrates a significant positive relationship with egalitarian attitudes regarding the definition of marriage and gay adoption rights. The trait of sympathy is not significantly associated with any of the gay rights measures.

Table 5.1. Trait Influence on Heterosexuals' Gay Rights Opinions without “Know Gay” control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>DOMA</th>
<th>ADOPT</th>
<th>BOOKS</th>
<th>MARRY1</th>
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<td>.07 (.04)*</td>
<td>- .01 (.04)</td>
<td>.01 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
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<td>.02 (.04)</td>
<td>.05 (.04)</td>
<td>.03 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking Trait</td>
<td>.19 (.04)***</td>
<td>.13 (.04)***</td>
<td>.03 (.04)</td>
<td>.17 (.06)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveyed During JC</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.01)*</td>
<td>- .00 (.01)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.10 (.02)***</td>
<td>.08 (.02)***</td>
<td>.05 (.02)***</td>
<td>.13 (.03)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.08 (.01)***</td>
<td>.10 (.01)***</td>
<td>.08 (.01)***</td>
<td>.09 (.02)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>- .12 (.02)***</td>
<td>- .09 (.02)***</td>
<td>- .07 (.02)***</td>
<td>- .18 (.03)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>- .44 (.03)***</td>
<td>- .38 (.03)***</td>
<td>- .36 (.03)***</td>
<td>- .47 (.04)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.06 (.02)***</td>
<td>.05 (.02)***</td>
<td>- .02 (.02)</td>
<td>.08 (.04)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>- .28 (.02)***</td>
<td>- .20 (.02)***</td>
<td>- .09 (.02)***</td>
<td>- .27 (.02)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>- .12 (.02)***</td>
<td>- .08 (.02)***</td>
<td>- .14 (.02)***</td>
<td>- .12 (.03)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.83 (.07)***</td>
<td>.93 (.06)***</td>
<td>.75 (.06)***</td>
<td>1.07 (.09)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models also contain control variables for age, age squared, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for “Surveyed During JC,” “Female,” and “Marry1” which are dichotomous variables) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

In addition, the results in Table 5.1 also suggest a large role in this domain for the purely cognitive capacity of perspective-taking. However, note that the models shown in Table 5.1 do not include a control variable for knowing someone who is gay, a variable that previous research has found to be highly influential in predicting individuals’ support for gay rights (Herek & Glunt 1993; Lewis & Gosset 2008; Barth & Parry 2009). Although it is probably true that gay people are more likely to come out to friends and family members who are already at least somewhat supportive of gay rights, the theory of empathy and equality would suggest that the empathy that people experience for the gay individuals in their lives also causes them to become more egalitarian on matters of policy affecting gay and lesbian Americans. Therefore, I was curious whether adding an indicator variable to the models for knowing someone who is gay.
would change the observed relationships between the other-oriented traits and gay rights opinion. Specifically, if knowing someone who is gay is the mechanism through which the trait of empathy is able to operate, then according to the principles of standard mediation analysis, the predictive power of the trait empathy variable should decrease in magnitude and significance when the “know gay” indicator is added to the models. Indeed, it does, as shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Influence of Other-Oriented Traits on Heterosexuals’ Gay Rights Opinions with “Know Gay” variable added to the models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA</th>
<th>ADOPT</th>
<th>BOOKS</th>
<th>MARRY1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>.06 (.05)</td>
<td>.04 (.04)</td>
<td>-.03 (.04)</td>
<td>-.02 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>-.01 (.04)</td>
<td>.02 (.04)</td>
<td>.05 (.04)</td>
<td>.04 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking Trait</td>
<td>.17 (.04)**</td>
<td>.11 (.04)**</td>
<td>.02 (.04)</td>
<td>.14 (.06)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay</td>
<td>.09 (.01)***</td>
<td>.10 (.01)***</td>
<td>.06 (.01)***</td>
<td>.11 (.02)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveyed During JC</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.01)*</td>
<td>-.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.09 (.02)**</td>
<td>.07 (.02)**</td>
<td>.05 (.02)**</td>
<td>.12 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.08 (.01)**</td>
<td>.09 (.01)**</td>
<td>.08 (.01)**</td>
<td>.08 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.13 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.09 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.07 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.18 (.03)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.42 (.03)***</td>
<td>-.36 (.03)***</td>
<td>-.35 (.03)***</td>
<td>-.45 (.04)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.05 (.03)**</td>
<td>.04 (.02)*</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)</td>
<td>.07 (.03)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>-.28 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.20 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.09 (.01)***</td>
<td>-.27 (.02)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.12 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.08 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.15 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.12 (.03)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.82 (.07)***</td>
<td>.92 (.06)***</td>
<td>.74 (.06)***</td>
<td>1.05 (.09)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models also contain control variables for age, age squared, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for “Surveyed During JC,” “Female,” and “Marry1” which are dichotomous variables) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

The influence of trait empathy appears to work through the variable of knowing someone who is gay. This supports my theoretical claim that levels of the empathy trait influence how dominant individuals respond to empathy encounters with out-group others – including real out-group others that they know personally. That is, when a person encounters an out-group individual, the person’s level of empathic ability, in part, affects whether he will respond with states of empathy for that out-group individual. Theoretically, states of empathy are the most proximal causal mechanism for motivating attitudes and behavior, however, trait empathy necessarily precedes empathy states and interacts with empathy stimuli in the environment to
influence whether and the degree to which state empathy is experienced in response to stimuli. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the influence of the cognitive perspective taking trait on gay rights opinions only drops slightly in magnitude and remains significant when the “know gay” indicator is added to the models, suggesting that this purely cognitive capacity is largely unrelated to the typically strong, positive relationship between knowing someone who is gay and egalitarianism on gay rights.

Next, I test the hypothesis that the sympathy trait will be positively associated with needs-based policy preferences while the empathy trait will not in the context of whites’ opinions about the government’s responsibility to help the poor and African Americans. As demonstrated in Table 5.3, this hypothesis receives support in the EES and GSS data with regard to whites’ opinions about government responsibility to help poor Americans. In both datasets, the sympathy trait has a statistically significant and strong positive relationship with whites’ endorsement of the idea that it is the government’s responsibility to improve the living standards of poor Americans. In fact, in both datasets, sympathy is the strongest variable in the model and exerts even stronger influence than political ideology in both cases. As shown in Table 5.4, the sympathy trait also has a statistically significant positive, although weaker, relationship with whites’ support for the idea that it is the government’s responsibility to help improve the living standards of African Americans, and this relationship only emerges in the EES data, not the GSS data. Despite the weaker relationship with whites’ beliefs about the government helping African Americans, sympathy again nearly matches the magnitude of ideology, and all variables in this model are dwarfed by the enormous impact of racial resentment. Looking at the first column of

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84 Note that video assignment is not of particular interest in the subsequent analyses but is controlled for in order to appropriately specify models of variables that were measured after the survey experiment video treatments.
Tables 5.3 and 5.4, it appears from the EES data that neither global empathic ability nor perspective-taking ability is associated with whites’ beliefs about the government’s responsibility to help the poor or African Americans. Although the sample sizes of African Americans in the EES and the GSS are quite small, I include identical models run among only African Americans in the second and fourth columns of Tables 5.3 and 5.4 in order to illustrate and explore the potentially differential impacts of other-oriented traits depending upon whether the policies in question benefit in-group members or out-group members.

Table 5.3. Trait Influence on Opinions on Government Responsibility to Help the Poor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>-.03 (.04)</td>
<td>.13 (.12)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>.37 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.04 (.12)</td>
<td>.19 (.07)**</td>
<td>-.03 (.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking</td>
<td>-.00 (.04)</td>
<td>.10 (.12)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.05 (.05)</td>
<td>-.07 (.04)*</td>
<td>-.07 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.11 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.05 (.03)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.08 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.32 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.18 (.07)***</td>
<td>-.18 (.06)***</td>
<td>-.06 (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.18 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.01 (.06)</td>
<td>-.03 (.05)</td>
<td>-.12 (.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.02 (.01)</td>
<td>.04 (.05)</td>
<td>-.03 (.04)</td>
<td>.13 (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>-.20 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.22 (.06)***</td>
<td>-.07 (.04)</td>
<td>-.33 (.10)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.67 (.05)***</td>
<td>.65 (.15)***</td>
<td>.61 (.11)***</td>
<td>1.50 (.32)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2406</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models also contain control variables for age, age squared, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for “Female,” which is a dichotomous indicator variable) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

Table 5.4. Trait Influence on Opinions on Government Responsibility to Help African Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>.00 (.03)</td>
<td>-.05 (.12)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>.11 (.03)***</td>
<td>-.26 (.12)**</td>
<td>.03 (.07)</td>
<td>-.02 (.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking</td>
<td>-.01 (.03)</td>
<td>.12 (.12)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.03 (.01)**</td>
<td>-.09 (.05)*</td>
<td>.01 (.04)</td>
<td>.29 (.15)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.02 (.01)**</td>
<td>-.05 (.03)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.05 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.20 (.06)***</td>
<td>-.07 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.11 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.13 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.06 (.07)</td>
<td>-.16 (.05)***</td>
<td>-.10 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.08 (.02)***</td>
<td>.12 (.06)*</td>
<td>-.03 (.05)</td>
<td>-.11 (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>.05 (.01)***</td>
<td>.09 (.05)**</td>
<td>.01 (.03)</td>
<td>-.08 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.67 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.56 (.06)***</td>
<td>-.37 (.04)***</td>
<td>-.41 (.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.76 (.05)***</td>
<td>.89 (.15)***</td>
<td>.52 (.10)***</td>
<td>1.02 (.32)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2406</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models also contain control variables for age, age squared, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for “Female,” which is a dichotomous indicator variable) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.
Next, I test the hypothesis that the empathy trait will be positively associated with rights-based policy preferences for out-groups while the sympathy trait will not in the context of whites’ and men’s opinions about workplace affirmative action policies benefiting African Americans and women, respectively. As demonstrated in the first and fourth columns of Table 5.5 and 5.6, this hypothesis does not find support in either of the datasets overall. Contrary to expectations, whites’ trait empathy exhibits a negative relationship with support for affirmative action for African Americans, and men’s trait empathy is not significantly associated with their opinions about workplace affirmative action for women, although the coefficient is negative. Against my expectations, in the EES data, sympathetic predispositions are positively associated with both whites’ affirmative action opinions relative to African Americans and men’s affirmative action opinions relative to women. However, in the GSS data, white sympathy is significantly and negatively associated with affirmative action support for African Americans while male sympathy has no association with affirmative action support for women. Again, I include models run among African Americans only and women only in the second and fourth columns of Tables 5.5 and 5.6 in order to explore whether the influence of other-oriented traits depends upon whether the policy under consideration benefits an in-group or an out-group.
Table 5.5. Trait Influence on Support for Affirmative Action for African Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>-.13 (.06)**</td>
<td>.30 (.16)*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>.18 (.06)**</td>
<td>.28 (.16)*</td>
<td>-.08 (.05)*</td>
<td>.19 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking</td>
<td>.11 (.06)*</td>
<td>-.18 (.16)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Condition</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.05)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>知同条件</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.04 (.05)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
<td>-.08 (.04)*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.02 (.03)</td>
<td>.00 (.07)</td>
<td>-.02 (.03)</td>
<td>.01 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.05 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.01 (.04)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>-.01 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>.01 (.03)</td>
<td>-.12 (.09)</td>
<td>-.09 (.02)**</td>
<td>.12 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.14 (.04)**</td>
<td>.07 (.09)</td>
<td>-.05 (.04)</td>
<td>-.18 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.08 (.03)**</td>
<td>.04 (.09)</td>
<td>-.11 (.04)**</td>
<td>.02 (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>.04 (.02)*</td>
<td>-.12 (.06)**</td>
<td>.05 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.13 (.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
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<td>-.43 (.08)**</td>
<td>-.35 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.29 (.08)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>.45 (.21)**</td>
<td>.72 (.07)**</td>
<td>.99 (.26)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1582</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1196</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models also contain control variables for age, age squared, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. The models in the last two columns also contain control variables for race. All variables (except for “Female,” which is a dichotomous indicator variable) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

Table 5.6. Trait Influence on Support for Affirmative Action for Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>-.03 (.08)</td>
<td>.03 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>.19 (.07)**</td>
<td>.27 (.08)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking</td>
<td>.03 (.08)</td>
<td>.04 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Condition</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.04 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hetero Condition</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.08 (.03)**</td>
<td>.00 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.08 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.12 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.12 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.03 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.02 (.04)</td>
<td>-.05 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>-.03 (.03)</td>
<td>-.03 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.25 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.06 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.83 (.12)**</td>
<td>.50 (.11)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>1022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models also contain control variables for age, age squared, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.
Again, I test the hypothesis that the empathy trait will be positively associated with rights-based policy preferences for out-groups while the sympathy trait will not in the context of men’s opinions about abortion rights for women. As shown in Table 5.7, this hypothesis finds support across all three datasets. In the first column of Table 5.7, male empathy is positively and significantly associated with support for abortion rights for women while male sympathy is negatively associated with support for abortion rights. A nearly identical, strong negative relationship between men’s traits of sympathy and abortion support is found in the GSS data. In the LS data, which only included trait measures of purely cognitive perspective-taking, this trait is significantly and positively associated with men’s support for abortion rights. For the sake of comparison, Table 5.8 shows similar patterns of trait influence among female respondents.

Table 5.7. Trait Influence on Support for Legalized Abortion among Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EES 2013</th>
<th>LS 2001</th>
<th>GSS 2002-2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>.14 (.08)*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>-.29 (.08)***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.28 (.09)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking</td>
<td>.03 (.08)</td>
<td>.23 (.13)*</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Condition</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hetero Condition</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay</td>
<td>.05 (.02)***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.00 (.04)</td>
<td>.21 (.10)**</td>
<td>.18 (.05)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.12 (.04)***</td>
<td>-.10 (.07)</td>
<td>.05 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.34 (.05)***</td>
<td>-.21 (.09)**</td>
<td>-.29 (.08)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.11 (.05)**</td>
<td>.13 (.10)</td>
<td>.19 (.11)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>-.25 (.03)***</td>
<td>-.40 (.06)***</td>
<td>-.44 (.05)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.01 (.04)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.16 (.06)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.85 (.12)***</td>
<td>.48 (.28)*</td>
<td>.76 (.17)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models also contain control variables for age, age squared, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.
Table 5.8. Trait Influence on Support for Legalized Abortion among Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait Influence</th>
<th>EES 2013</th>
<th>LS 2001</th>
<th>GSS 2002-2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>.13 (.08)*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>-.23 (.09)**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.01 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking</td>
<td>.04 (.08)</td>
<td>.20 (.11)*</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Condition</td>
<td>.04 (.02)*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hetero Condition</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay</td>
<td>.04 (.02)*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.06 (.03)*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.32 (.06)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.15 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.09 (.05)*</td>
<td>-.17 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.38 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.26 (.07)**</td>
<td>-.37 (.08)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.07 (.04)*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.07 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>-.25 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.50 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.35 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.01 (.04)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.05 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.71 (.12)**</td>
<td>.63 (.03)**</td>
<td>.56 (.16)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models also contain control variables for age, age squared, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

Moving on to the political orientation and behavior variables, I test the hypotheses that empathy but not sympathy motivates political interest and political efficacy. I find strong support for these theoretical predictions, as shown in Tables 5.9 and 5.10.

Table 5.9. Trait Influence on Political Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait Influence</th>
<th>Political Interest (EES 2013)</th>
<th>Political Interest (LS 2001)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>.32 (.04)**</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>.01 (.04)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking</td>
<td>.10 (.04)**</td>
<td>.21 (.07)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.10 (.01)**</td>
<td>.21 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.11 (.01)**</td>
<td>-.10 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)</td>
<td>.07 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)</td>
<td>-.04 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.12 (.02)**</td>
<td>.10 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>.04 (.01)**</td>
<td>.05 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.15 (.06)**</td>
<td>.01 (.14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models also contain control variables for age, age squared, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for "Female," which is a dichotomous indicator variable) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.
Table 5.10. Trait Influence on Political Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>.23 (.03)**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>.04 (.03)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.03 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking Trait</td>
<td>.16 (.03)**</td>
<td>.28 (.05)**</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.07 (.01)**</td>
<td>.18 (.04)**</td>
<td>.11 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.02 (.01)**</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>.02 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.00 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.05 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.00 (.03)</td>
<td>.02 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.06 (.02)**</td>
<td>.03 (.03)</td>
<td>.01 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>.04 (.01)**</td>
<td>.04 (.02)**</td>
<td>.05 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.01 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.26 (.04)**</td>
<td>.07 (.10)</td>
<td>.39 (.12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The OLS models also contain control variables for age, age squared, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except “Female,” which is a dichotomous indicator variable) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1. Standard errors are reported in parentheses; *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01 (two-tailed).

In the EES data, the empathy trait is strongly and significantly associated with both political interest and political efficacy, while the sympathy trait has no relationship to either of these variables. A null relationship between the sympathy trait and political efficacy is also identified in the GSS data. Furthermore, purely cognitive perspective-taking also demonstrates a significant relationship with political interest and political efficacy in both the EES and LS datasets. However, the EES data that includes measures of both empathy and perspective-taking provides evidence that the influence of the global empathy trait (which recall involves both affective and cognitive elements) on political interest and efficacy is stronger than the influence of the purely cognitive perspective-taking trait.

Turning to the models of behavior, I test the predictions that the ability to empathize contributes to political action, and the ability to sympathize contributes to charitable action. The first column of Table 5.11 demonstrates that the empathy trait has a statistically significant, strong positive relationship with political action in the EES data. Sympathy has no significant association with political action in the EES data while perspective-taking ability is negatively

183
related to political action in the EES data but positively related to political action in the LS data.

As predicted, sympathetic predisposition is a strong positive predictor of charitable action in both the EES and GSS datasets, as shown in the second and fourth columns of Table 5.11. However, the second column of Table 5.11 shows that the empathy trait is nearly as strongly associated with charitable action as the sympathy trait in the EES data. In addition, the purely cognitive trait of perspective-taking seems to have no relationship with charitable action in the EES data. These results suggest that the emotional elements of empathy and sympathy facilitate stronger motivations for action—whether political or charitable—than the capacity to perspective-take in a purely cognitive fashion. Furthermore, the ability to empathize—to feel the emotions of the other, rather than simply feeling sorry for the other as in sympathy—seems to uniquely facilitate political action, whereas the capacities for both empathy and sympathy seem to play a role in motivating charitable action.

Table 5.11. Trait Influence on Political & Charitable Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>.09 (.02)**</td>
<td>.08 (.03)**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.11 (.03)**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.19 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking</td>
<td>-.04 (.02)*</td>
<td>.03 (.03)</td>
<td>.05 (.03)**</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.05 (.01)**</td>
<td>.07 (.01)**</td>
<td>.05 (.02)**</td>
<td>.13 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.03 (.01)**</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)*</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>-.00 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.04 (.01)**</td>
<td>.02 (.01)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.04 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.05 (.01)**</td>
<td>.13 (.02)**</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.10 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>.08 (.01)**</td>
<td>.13 (.01)**</td>
<td>.04 (.01)**</td>
<td>.17 (.01)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.06 (.01)**</td>
<td>-.06 (.02)**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.04 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.28 (.04)**</td>
<td>.13 (.04)**</td>
<td>-.14 (.06)**</td>
<td>-.10 (.04)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2995</td>
<td>2995</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>1521</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models of political and charitable action also contain control variables for age, age squared, race (indicators for each identity checked in check all that apply format; indicators for black and white only in GSS data), religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for “Female,” which is a dichotomous indicator variable) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.
Finally, I test the hypotheses that the trait of empathy is associated with egalitarian values, and the trait of sympathy is associated with humanitarian values. The analyses of these relationships, presented in Table 5.12 below, confirm my expectations in the case of the latter hypothesis but not in the case of the former. I expected the trait of empathy to be positively associated with egalitarian values, however, the EES data show no significant relationship between the empathy trait and egalitarianism. Cognitive perspective-taking ability does positively impact egalitarian values, however. Surprisingly, the sympathy trait also positively predicts egalitarianism. Moreover, sympathy is an even stronger predictor of humanitarian values, as theorized. Perspective-taking also exhibits a somewhat stronger relationship with humanitarianism than with egalitarianism, and again, the capacity for global empathy exhibits no relationship with humanitarian values.

Table 5.12. Trait Influence on Other-Regarding Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Egalitarian Values</th>
<th>Humanitarian Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Trait</td>
<td>-.04 (.04)</td>
<td>.02 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy Trait</td>
<td>.27 (.04)***</td>
<td>.41 (.03)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking Trait</td>
<td>.09 (.04)**</td>
<td>.16 (.03)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Video Condition</td>
<td>.02 (.01)*</td>
<td>.02 (.01)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hetero Video Condition</td>
<td>-.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>-.02 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D to R)</td>
<td>-.13 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.08 (.01)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (L to C)</td>
<td>-.22 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.05 (.02)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.07 (.02)***</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Importance</td>
<td>-.03 (.01)**</td>
<td>.03 (.01)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.29 (.02)***</td>
<td>-.12 (.02)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.76 (.05)***</td>
<td>.23 (.05)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models of egalitarian and humanitarian values also contain control variables for age, age squared, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for “Female,” which is a dichotomous indicator variable) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.
I further investigate the counter-theoretical findings related to empathy and egalitarianism by disaggregating the index measure of egalitarianism that I constructed into its three component parts. I then model each of the individual egalitarianism items using the same predictors as in the previous analysis (results shown in Table 5.13). Here, I am attempting to understand whether the traits might have different impacts on ideas about equality depending upon whether those ideas are focused primarily on equality of outcomes or equality of opportunity. I had expected to find relationships between empathy and broad preferences for equality—regardless of whether the focus was on outcomes or opportunity—however, this distinction seemed an appropriate avenue for further exploration that might point me in new directions for future research.

Table 5.13. Trait Influence on Individual Egalitarian Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(Not) better if worried less about how equal</th>
<th>If treated more equally, fewer problems</th>
<th>Have (not) gone too far in pushing equality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathy Trait</strong></td>
<td>-.04 (.05)</td>
<td>-.09 (.05)*</td>
<td>.02 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sympathy Trait</strong></td>
<td>.24 (.05)**</td>
<td>.33 (.05)**</td>
<td>.25 (.05)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perspective-Taking Trait</strong></td>
<td>.15 (.05)**</td>
<td>.05 (.04)</td>
<td>.08 (.05)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gay Video Condition</strong></td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.03 (.01)**</td>
<td>.02 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hetero Video Condition</strong></td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>-.00 (.01)</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Know gay</strong></td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>-.06 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.00 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party (D to R)</strong></td>
<td>-.11 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.12 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.16 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology (L to C)</strong></td>
<td>-.20 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.21 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.25 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td>-.05 (.03)*</td>
<td>-.10 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.06 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Importance</strong></td>
<td>-.06 (.02)**</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.04 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial Resentment</strong></td>
<td>-.31 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.23 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.34 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>.59 (.07)**</td>
<td>.96 (.07)**</td>
<td>.74 (.07)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS models of each egalitarianism index item also contain control variables for age, age squared, race, religious preference, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for “Female,” which is a dichotomous indicator variable) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. The dependent variables are coded, like all variables in these analyses, such that higher values equals greater egalitarianism. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.
When the egalitarianism index items are modeled separately, trait empathy is shown to be significantly but negatively associated with the one opportunity- or process-focused item: “If people were treated more equally in this country, we would have many fewer problems.” There appears to be no statistically significant relationship between the trait of empathy and the other two egalitarian values items. Interestingly, the capacity for cognitive perspective-taking is not associated with the process-oriented item but is significantly and positively related to the other two primarily outcomes-oriented items. Again contrary to expectations, the trait of sympathy is strongly and significantly associated with all of the egalitarianism items. Still, this analysis provides no support for my initial hypothesis that the trait of empathy would be positively associated with egalitarianism. These findings suggest a need for theoretical refinement and additional hypothesis testing.

Summary and Conclusions

In the realm of social policy, the theory of empathy and equality and the theory of sympathy and charity found support in three of four policy areas. Heterosexuals’ capacity for empathy was significantly and positively associated with opposition to the exclusionary DOMA definition of marriage and with support for gay adoption rights. Basic mediation analysis suggests that the influence of heterosexuals’ trait empathy operates through personally knowing someone who is gay, however, additional research is needed in order to further explore this relationship. In addition, men’s capacity for empathy was significantly related to support for abortion rights for women. Interestingly and in line with the theory that sympathy may sometimes serve to perpetuate inequality, men’s trait sympathy was significantly but negatively
associated with support for women’s right to abortion. The policy area in which the theory of
empathy and equality did not find support was workplace affirmative action. Contrary to
expectations, whites’ trait empathy was actually negatively associated with support for
affirmative action benefiting African Americans. Furthermore, the relationship between whites’
trait sympathy and affirmative action attitudes remains unclear, as a positive relationship was
found in the 2013 EES data while a negative relationship was found in the 2002-2004 GSS data.
Similarly, men’s trait sympathy demonstrated a significant positive relationship with support for
affirmative action for women in the EES dataset but no relationship in the GSS data. Against my
expectations, I found no relationship between men’s trait empathy and their support for
affirmative action for women. These counter-theoretical findings in the area of affirmative action
may suggest a need for further theory development. In addition or alternatively, it may be that
dominant individuals—in these cases, whites and men, respectively—do not view affirmative
action as a rights-based policy as I had conceived of it in these tests. Indeed, the wording of the
GSS questions refers to affirmative action as “preferences in hiring and promotion” intended to
compensate for “past discrimination.” One way to interpret this framing is as additional help for
previous victimization, which is more about meeting a need than ensuring the right to
nondiscrimination. The GSS questions also make reference to the policies’ potential
discriminatory effects in the present on whites and men, respectively, which presents respondents
with competing targets for their empathy and sympathy. Although my original question wording
on the EES survey referred to the policies simply as “workplace affirmative action,” the debate
surrounding affirmative action has likely imbued this term with the meanings and frames
explicitly stated in the GSS questions. Taking these considerations into account, affirmative
action does not seem to be an ideal domain in which to test the relationship between empathy and egalitarianism in rights-based policy preferences. In fact, it seems plausible that dominant members of the public view affirmative action as a needs-based policy to “help” African Americans and women, in which case, the positive relationships between support for these policies and trait sympathy found in the ESS data might instead be interpreted as supportive of the predictions of the *theory of sympathy and charity*. I tested this theory directly in the context of whites’ beliefs about the responsibility of the federal government to “help” poor Americans and African Americans. In the case of the latter group, the question was again framed in terms of compensation for past discrimination—that is, in terms of meeting a need created by victimization. On these government responsibility questions, I find support for the *theory of sympathy and charity*. Whites’ trait sympathy exhibited significant positive associations with beliefs that it is government’s responsibility to help both poor Americans and African Americans. Neither empathy nor perspective-taking exhibited significant relationships with these beliefs.

In relation to political interest, political efficacy, and behavior, I found strong support for the theories. The empathy trait, but not the sympathy trait, was strongly and positively associated with interest in politics as well as political efficacy. The empathy trait and political participation were also strongly and significantly related, whereas the trait of sympathy had no relationship to political action, as predicted. The trait of sympathy was however significantly related to charitable action, as predicted by the *theory of sympathy and charity*. At the same time, the trait of empathy was nearly as strongly related to charitable action as the trait of sympathy. Finally, the relationships between the empathy and sympathy traits and the other-oriented values of
humanitarianism and egalitarianism were not as expected. Although I predicted the relationship found between trait sympathy and humanitarianism, trait sympathy was also associated with egalitarianism in the EES data while the capacity for global empathy was not. However, I found that the trait of perspective-taking was positively associated with both humanitarian and egalitarian values, suggesting perhaps that the purely cognitive dimension of empathy influences these abstract values. These relationships require further investigation in future research.
Chapter 6

Recognition and Revolution

“I see you.”
~Na’vi greeting, Avatar

Empathy is a valuable political emotion and democratic capacity. The emotional identification with out-group others that the experience of empathy provides enables dominant group members to truly see, or recognize, marginal or minority group members as individuals – and as true equals, deserving of the same rights and privileges enjoyed by the dominant group. The emotive power of empathy encounters with out-group others can actually cause dominant individuals to change their opinions about out-group rights in an egalitarian direction and provide the interest, efficacy, and motivation to participate in politics. These empathy effects stand in contrast to those of sympathy, which does not motivate egalitarian opinion change relative to out-groups, and in fact, may serve to perpetuate inequality by motivating preferences for addressing the immediate needs of others – rather than ensuring rights – either through support for needs-based policies or charitable actions. The experimental and observational studies of empathy and sympathy states and traits employed in the previous three chapters have, on the whole, supported these conclusions.

In the movie theater field experiments described in Chapter 3, empathy encounters with gay and lesbian film characters produced greater support for gay marriage but declining support
for gay adoption rights. These effects occurred primarily among subjects low in the trait of empathy who did not strongly empathize with the gay characters. This suggests that while experiencing some empathy may increase certain egalitarian preferences, weak states of empathy may actually discourage egalitarianism in other policy areas. In other words, empathy deficits may beget equality deficits. However, further investigation is required to better understand the relationship between the strength of empathy states, levels of empathic predispositions, and opinions about policies affecting out-groups.

It was also subjects low in the trait of empathy who were most affected by the Jason Collins coverage analyzed in Chapter 4. These subjects, when exposed to the “Jason Collins treatment,” expressed significantly more policy egalitarianism in their opinions about gay marriage, gay adoption, the DOMA definition of marriage, and protecting gay students from bullies than their low trait empathy counterparts who were not exposed to the Jason Collins media coverage. Additional observational analyses demonstrate that empathy encounters with the gay individual Jason Collins – including reading his *Sports Illustrated* article, watching his individual interview on *Good Morning America* and his family interview with Oprah, and learning about his story from other media sources – had positive, egalitarian effects on heterosexuals’ gay rights opinions.

The “Love Story” survey experiment described in Chapter 4 also provides support for the theoretical claims made in this dissertation. Overall, treated subjects who viewed an empathic depiction of a gay individual became significantly more supportive of inclusive books policy and expressed greater support for benefits for gay partners than control subjects who viewed a control video of inanimate objects. In line with the *theory of empathy and equality*, these effects
occurred when subjects experienced states of empathy for the gay character. However, the egalitarian effect on benefits support also occurred when subjects felt sympathy for the gay character. Moreover, these treatment effects on books and benefits opinions occurred primarily among subjects with high levels of the trait of empathy. High trait empathy subjects, relative to their highly empathic counterparts in the objects control condition, also became significantly more supportive of gay adoption and expressed greater opposition to the Boy Scouts’ ban on gay leaders, greater support for gay-inclusive school bullying policies, and greater support for legalizing gay marriage. Subjects with low levels of the empathy trait, however, actually became less supportive of gay adoption as a result of watching the gay treatment video relative to their low trait empathy counterparts who watched the objects control video. Low trait empathy subjects exposed to the treatment also reported less opposition to the Boy Scouts’ ban on gay leaders, less support for gay-inclusive school bullying policies, and less support for legalizing gay marriage than their low trait empathy counterparts exposed to the objects control video. 

Taken together, the results of the field, natural, and survey experiments described in Chapters 3 and 4, which uncovered varying patterns of effects on subjects’ gay rights opinions according to their levels of empathic predispositions, point to the need for additional research that directly tests the effects of particular stimuli characteristics (e.g. the behavior and identity of the target, including the target’s portrayed respectability and agency; and the duration and frequency of exposure) on dominant individuals with differing degrees of empathic ability.

Finally, the observational analyses employed in Chapter 5 provide additional insight into the operation of the other-oriented traits of empathy and sympathy as well as the purely cognitive capacity of perspective-taking. These analyses support the proposition that empathy traits and
states inform public support for rights-based policies that affect out-groups, while sympathy traits and states contribute to support for needs-based policies affecting out-groups. The analyses in Chapter 5 also provide evidence that empathy but not sympathy motivates political interest, efficacy, and participation, and that both empathy and sympathy contribute to charitable action. Contrary to my theoretical predictions, however, the trait of empathy appears to have no significant impact on egalitarian values; rather sympathy and cognitive perspective-taking demonstrate significant relationships with both egalitarianism and humanitarianism. Future theoretical and empirical work is necessary in order to better understand these results.

Many questions remain, and this dissertation is certainly not the final word on the role of empathy in American politics. My hope is quite the opposite. With this dissertation research, I wish to begin a conversation within the social sciences and within society more broadly about the place of empathy in politics. Building upon previous research on the influence of media on prejudice reduction (for a review, see Paluck and Green 2009), this dissertation research is, in part, an argument for moving beyond a cognitive prejudice reduction framework to consider changes in policy preferences that media might facilitate—not only through specific informational messages about beliefs, norms, and behavior (Paluck 2009)—but also or even primarily through the emotional experiences with marginalized individuals it can provide. Behavioral social scientists would also benefit from a greater understanding of empathy, appeals to which can counter interest- and animus-based motives. Future research should bring empirical evidence to the following questions: How has empathy functioned in the past? What role does empathy play in our current politics? What role might empathy play in the future?
Moving beyond the academy, the broader implications of this research for society might also be substantial. Theoretical insights from this research could be applied by media professionals, interest groups, policy makers, and other political actors seeking to change public opinion in favor of marginal or disadvantaged groups. These actors might use empathic depictions to increase public understanding of marginalized individuals and thereby erode discrimination against and policy opposition related to marginalized groups. Indeed, President Obama once argued that correcting America’s “empathy deficit” may be the first step toward addressing the persistent inequalities that continue to plague American democracy (Obama 2006, 67). Yet, this dissertation research suggests that empathy deficits cannot be corrected without real opportunities for empathy across group lines of difference and inequality. Future work on empathy in American politics should explore the characteristics of intergroup empathy encounters that make them more or less successful at motivating egalitarian opinion change and behavior among members of the dominant public.

In closing, I have hoped to show in this dissertation that empathy is a revolutionary emotion, that it has the power to change people’s hearts and minds about out-group individuals, and thus, change society. Empathy does this, not only by educating dominant members about out-group others’ viewpoints, but by giving them an emotional glimpse into the experiences of marginal or minority individuals. This empathic, emotional identification across group lines is what enables dominant members to truthfully greet their fellow citizens with, “I see you.”
Appendix A: Appendix to Chapter 3

Field Experiment Design and Recruitment

In Study 1, I recruited a volunteer student sample and conducted the randomized movie showing at the Princeton University Frist Campus Center on a Friday night in early March 2012 (blue-print depiction of the side-by-side theatres below). In Study 2, I recruited adults residing in Princeton and the surrounding communities and conducted the randomized movie showing at a small two-screen theatre on a Saturday morning in late March 2012 (photo below). In both studies, the basic field experiment design was the same. Subjects were recruited into a three-part study that involved, first, an online pretest, second, attending a showing of an unknown movie to which they would be randomly assigned upon arrival, and third, completing a second survey on paper in the theater after the movie was over. I could not afford to pay subjects to participate, so in addition to the free movie, participants were compensated for their time with free refreshments and entries into a raffle for one $100 and three $50 gift cards.
I invited, via email, 2,666 students to participate in the randomized student showing, which is roughly half of the Princeton undergraduate population. Ultimately, this method of email recruitment resulted in a sample of 37 heterosexual students completing all three parts of the study. Although it rained on the night of the movie showing, I learned from the student study that I needed to ramp up my recruiting strategies for the community study in order to ensure a larger sample with greater statistical power. Thus, for Study 2, I used multiple recruitment strategies, including personalized emails to nearly 2000 previous research participants from lists held at the Princeton Survey Research Center and the PLESS lab. I also sent nearly 3000 personalized postcards to a random probability sample of voters from the four Mercer County townships closest to the community theater under the assumption that people living closer would be more likely to participate. At the same time, I also oversampled men and Republicans in an attempt to reduce the female and liberal bias (and possible associated ceiling effects) that I expected to have in a study of this kind in the Princeton area. About half of these postcard
households—those with listed landlines—also received automated telephone calls with a recording in my voice reminding them of the bright orange postcard they should have received in the mail and directing them to the study website. The study website provided a full explanation of the study and included a link that would allow people to sign up and take the first survey online. I also posted bright orange paper flyers in these same areas, and like the postcards, the flyers also directed people to the study website. In addition, I employed multiple forms of online advertising, including Craigslist, Facebook, and a local events website called Princeton Online. Finally, I asked friends with community ties to email the link to the study website to their friends. As detailed above, a significant effort went into recruiting what ended up being a fairly modest sample size in Study 2. To summarize, I made personalized contact with nearly 5000 individuals and advertised widely through flyers, the internet, and my social network, and this ultimately resulted in 127 heterosexual adults completing all three parts of the community study.

A note on Film Choice

The films in each study were selected for their authentic, multi-dimensional portrayals of gay individuals. I also chose different films for the student and community films so that the characters in the films would be roughly the same age as the subjects I planned to recruit in each study. I did this to maximize the likelihood of empathy, since findings of “similarity bias” in empathic responding would predict that people would empathize more easily with others of similar age, all else equal (Harrison 2011; Batson et al. 2005; Hoffman 2000; Cialdini et al. 1997).
A note on Measuring Empathy States

In the measurement of empathy states for Study 2, I measured empathy for each character individually. Thus, in order to estimate the treatment effects, the lesbian characters in the treatment film needed to have plausible matches in the control film. As mentioned in Chapter 3, infidelity results in a strange “love triangle” in both films, which allowed me to match the “cheater characters” (Jules and Sarah) and the “cuckold characters” (Nic and Jeff) across the films. The “lover characters” (Paul and Beau, shown below) are not included in the Chapter 3 analyses.
Study 1: Student Field Experiment

Treatment condition:
Empathy cues for gay main characters

Weekend (2011), Unrated
Characters: Russell and Glen

Control condition:
Empathy cues for straight main characters

Before Sunrise (1995), Rated R
Characters: Celine and Jesse

Study 2: Community Field Experiment

Treatment condition:
Empathy cues for gay main characters

The Kids Are All Right
Rated R (2010)

Control condition:
Empathy cues for straight main characters

Rumor Has It
Rated PG-13 (2005)
Variable Question Wording and Descriptive Statistics

Empathy Predisposition Index Items

Please read each statement carefully and rate how much you agree or disagree with it.
[Responses: Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree]

It is hard for me to see why some things upset people so much. (-)
Friends usually talk to me about their problems as they say that I am very understanding.
I can tune into how someone else feels rapidly and intuitively.
Other people often say that I am insensitive, though I don't always see why. (-)
I am good at predicting how someone will feel.
I often find it difficult to judge if something is rude or polite. (-)
Other people tell me I am good at understanding how they are feeling and what they are thinking. (randomized item order)

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Sympathy Predisposition Index Items

Please read each statement carefully and rate how much you agree or disagree with it.
[Responses: Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree]

I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (-)
Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (-)
I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.
When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (-)
I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person. (randomized item order)

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EMPATHY STATES:
I could feel what {the main characters were feeling} / {character name was feeling}.
I imagined myself in {the main characters’ situation} / {character name’s situation}.

(Index of agreement with these two statements; for both of the main characters in the community study)
Stem: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about {character name}?
Response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree (coded 0-5 such that higher values = greater empathy; rescaled 0-1)

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<td>Student Control (N=21)</td>
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SYMPATHY STATES:
I felt sorry for {character name}. (Index of agreement with this statement for both of the main characters in the community study)

Stem: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about {character name}?
Response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree (coded 0-5 such that higher values = greater sympathy; rescaled 0-1)

Compassion; Pity (Index measure of the degree to which respondents in the student study said they experienced these emotions while watching the films)

Stem: While you were watching the movie, how strongly did YOU experience the following emotions? I felt…Response options: Very Strongly, Strongly, Somewhat Strongly, Moderately, Somewhat Weakly, Weakly, Very Weakly (coded 1-7 / recoded 0-5 such that higher values = greater sympathy; rescaled 0-1)

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MARRIAGE:
Do you think marriages between same-sex couples should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages?

Response options= Should (1), Should not (0)

**Time 2 Only:**

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BOOKS:
Laws requiring kindergarten curricula to include picture books about families with two moms and two dads.

**Stem:** For each policy mentioned below, please indicate how much you are in favor of or against the policy. Response options= Strongly In Favor, In Favor, Somewhat In Favor, Somewhat Against, Against, Strongly Against (coded 1-6 such that higher values = greater egalitarianism on gay rights; rescaled 0-1)

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DOMA:
Federal law that defines marriage as being only between a man and a woman.

Stem: For each policy mentioned below, please indicate how much you are in favor of or against the policy. Response options= Strongly In Favor, In Favor, Somewhat In Favor, Somewhat Against, Against, Strongly Against (coded 1-6 such that higher values = greater egalitarianism on gay rights; rescaled 0-1)

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ADOPTION:
Laws that do not allow gay and lesbian couples to adopt children.

*Stem:* For each policy mentioned below, please indicate how much you are in favor of or against the policy. *Response options:* Strongly In Favor, In Favor, Somewhat In Favor, Somewhat Against, Against, Strongly Against (coded 1-6 such that higher values = greater egalitarianism on gay rights; rescaled 0-1)

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<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Treatment (N=16)</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Control (N=21)</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Appendix to Chapter 4

Demographics of Empathy and Equality Study Sample compared to the U.S. population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>EES Sample (N=3010)</th>
<th>U.S. Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>50.1% Female</td>
<td>50.8% Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>46 = Median</td>
<td>37 = Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1% 18 to 24 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.1% 18 to 24 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.3% 25 to 44 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.0% 25 to 44 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.7% 45 to 64 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td>34.7% 45 to 64 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.9% 65 years or older</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.2% 65 years or older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*subjects required to be 18 or older</td>
<td></td>
<td>*of U.S. residents 18 and over</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race or Ethnicity</th>
<th>Alone or in combination with other races:</th>
<th>Alone or in combination with other races:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80.3% White</td>
<td>74.8% White</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3% Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>16.3% Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5% Black or African American</td>
<td>13.6% Black or African American</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6% Asian (incl. Asian Indian, Asian, Asian American, note: some people may be counted twice)</td>
<td>5.6% Asian (incl. Asian Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, and Other Asian)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0% American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td>1.7% American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2% Some Other Race</td>
<td>7.0% Some Other Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>$50,000 to $59,000 Median household income range</th>
<th>$50,221 Median household income (in 2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Percent of age 25 and older:</th>
<th>Percent of age 25 and older:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98.3% w/High school diploma</td>
<td>84.6% w/High school diploma</td>
<td>27.5% w/Bachelor's or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.8% w/Bachelor's or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau website: www.census.gov, all data are reported in the 2010 Census.

Video Stimuli used in the “Love Story” survey experiment can be found at these links:


Objects “No Empathy” Video Control Condition: [http://youtu.be/mLgZ2RxPfT4](http://youtu.be/mLgZ2RxPfT4)

Jason Collins Empathy Stimuli:

*Sports Illustrated* article (posted online 4/29/13 and printed in the magazine on 5/6/13):  

Excerpts from *Sports Illustrated* article (quoted from web version of article linked above):

“I want to be genuine and authentic and truthful. Why am I coming out now? Well, I started thinking about this in 2011 during the NBA player lockout. I'm a creature of routine. When the regular season ends I immediately dedicate myself to getting game ready for the opener of the next campaign in the fall. But the lockout wreaked havoc on my habits and forced me to confront who I really am and what I really want. With the season delayed, I trained and worked out. But I lacked the distraction that basketball had always provided. The first relative I came out to was my aunt Teri, a superior court judge in San Francisco. Her reaction surprised me. "I've known
you were gay for years," she said. From that moment on I was comfortable in my own skin. In her presence I ignored my censor button for the first time. She gave me support. The relief I felt was a sweet release. Imagine you're in the oven, baking. Some of us know and accept our sexuality right away and some need more time to cook. I should know -- I baked for 33 years.”

“When I was younger I dated women. I even got engaged. I thought I had to live a certain way. I thought I needed to marry a woman and raise kids with her. I kept telling myself the sky was red, but I always knew it was blue. I realized I needed to go public when Joe Kennedy, my old roommate at Stanford and now a Massachusetts congresswoman, told me he had just marched in Boston's 2012 Gay Pride Parade. I'm seldom jealous of others, but hearing what Joe had done filled me with envy. I was proud of him for participating but angry that as a closeted gay man I couldn't even cheer my straight friend on as a spectator. If I'd been questioned, I would have concocted half truths. What a shame to have to lie at a celebration of pride. I want to do the right thing and not hide anymore. I want to march for tolerance, acceptance and understanding. I want to take a stand and say, "Me, too." The recent Boston Marathon bombing reinforced the notion that I shouldn't wait for the circumstances of my coming out to be perfect. Things can change in an instant, so why not live truthfully? When I told Joe a few weeks ago that I was gay, he was grateful that I trusted him. He asked me to join him in 2013. We'll be marching on June 8.”

“Openness may not completely disarm prejudice, but it's a good place to start. It all comes down to education. I'll sit down with any player who's uneasy about my coming out. Being gay is not a choice. This is the tough road and at times the lonely road. Former players like Tim Hardaway, who said "I hate gay people" (and then became a supporter of gay rights), fuel homophobia. Tim is an adult. He's entitled to his opinion. God bless America. Still, if I'm up against an intolerant player, I'll set a pretty hard pick on him. And then move on. The most you can do is stand up for what you believe in. I'm much happier since coming out to my friends and family. Being genuine and honest makes me happy. I'm glad I can stop hiding and refocus on my 13th NBA season. I've been running through the Santa Monica Mountains in a 30-pound vest with Shadow, the German shepherd I got from Mike Miller. In the pros, the older you get, the better shape you must be in. Next season a few more eyeballs are likely to be on me. That only motivates me to work harder…” (Collins 2013).

Good Morning America interview:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bP39V26gSEM&feature=player_embedded

Oprah interview segments:
JC and his twin brother- http://youtu.be/Vo46D7zUOCM
JC and his parents- http://youtu.be/Lp_JwDVVAjE
JC and his aunt- http://youtu.be/qswHdaAexXk
JC and Oprah- http://youtu.be/23xDeSA9hUE
Variable Question Wording and Descriptive Statistics

Please read each statement carefully and rate how much you agree or disagree with it. [Responses: Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree]

Global Empathy Predisposition Index Items

It is hard for me to see why some things upset people so much. (-)
Friends usually talk to me about their problems as they say that I am very understanding.
I can tune into how someone else feels rapidly and intuitively.
Other people often say that I am insensitive, though I don’t always see why. (-)
I am good at predicting how someone will feel.
I often find it difficult to judge if something is rude or polite. (-)
Other people tell me I am good at understanding how they are feeling and what they are thinking.

(Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree)

Global Empathy Predisposition Index Items

Sympathy Predisposition Index Items

I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
Sometimes I don’t feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (-)
Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (-)
I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.
When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (-)
I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

(Cognitive Perspective-Taking Predisposition Index Items)

I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (-)
I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view. (-)
I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Empathy</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Perspective-Taking</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
State Empathy Index

I could feel what the main character was feeling.

I had a hard time understanding the main character's emotions. (reversed)

I imagined myself in the main character's shoes.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Empathy by Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

State Sympathy

I felt sorry for the main character.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Sympathy by Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DOMA

“Federal law that defines marriage as only between a man and a woman” (reversed)

**Time 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time 2:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

85 The variable is an index of agreement with these three statements in the survey experiment. Stem: “Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.” Response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree (higher values = greater empathy, rescaled 0-1).

86 The variable is level of agreement with this item in the survey experiment. Stem: “Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.” Response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree (higher values = greater sympathy, rescaled 0-1).
ADOPT

“Adoption rights for gays and lesbians so they can legally adopt children”

**Time 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time 2:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BOOKS

“Laws requiring kindergarten curricula to include picture books about families with two moms and two dads”

**Time 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time 2:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BENEFITS (TIME 2 ONLY)

“Health insurance and other employee benefits for gay and lesbian domestic partners or spouses”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SCOUTS (TIME 2 ONLY)

“The Boy Scouts of America’s policy of banning openly gay leaders” (reversed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BULLY (TIME 2 ONLY)

“Anti-bullying policies in elementary and high schools that include protections based on sexual orientation”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Gay Treatment</td>
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<td>.77</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MARRY2 (TIME 2 ONLY)

“I am in favor of legalizing same sex marriages”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Control</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Treatment</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Jason Collins Natural Experiment: Supplemental Analyses

### Jason Collins “Treatment” Effects by Sympathy and Perspective-Taking Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA</th>
<th>ADOPT</th>
<th>BOOKS</th>
<th>MARRY1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jason Collins Effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Subjects with Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of Sympathy</td>
<td>.02 (.03)</td>
<td>.03 (.03)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.05 (.04)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Collins Effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Subjects with High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of Sympathy</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>-.00 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>1361</td>
<td>1361</td>
<td>1360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Collins Effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Subjects with Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking</td>
<td>.03 (.02)**</td>
<td>.03 (.02)*</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.05 (.03)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Subjects with High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-Taking</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.03)</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>1068</td>
<td>1068</td>
<td>1068</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The table above reports “Jason Collins” coefficients from OLS models of gay rights opinion, which also contained control variables for education, gender, age, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, racial resentment, state of residence, and state of origin. All variables (except for “Jason Collins” and “Marry1,” which are dichotomous variables) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are one-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

### Jason Collins “Treatment” Effects by Gender and Knowing a Gay Person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMA</th>
<th>ADOPT</th>
<th>BOOKS</th>
<th>MARRY1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jason Collins Effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Men</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.02 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Collins Effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Women</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)*</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.02 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Collins Effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on those who do NOT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know a gay person</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.03 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>787</td>
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<td>787</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason Collins Effect</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>on those who DO know</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a gay person</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.04 (.02)**</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The table above reports “Jason Collins” coefficients from OLS models of gay rights opinion, which also contain control variables for education, age, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, racial resentment, state of residence, and state where R grew up. The second set of models also contains a control variable for gender. All variables (except for “Jason Collins” and “Marry1,” which are dichotomous variables) reported in the table were rescaled to 0-1 for ease of interpretation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses and p-values are one-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.
Results of “Love Story” Manipulation Check Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Heterosexual Condition</th>
<th>Gay Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saw Engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw Engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said Heterosexual</td>
<td>464 (68.6%)</td>
<td>465 (69.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(conditional on seeing)</td>
<td><strong>391 (84.4%)</strong></td>
<td>199 (42.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said Gay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(conditional on seeing)</td>
<td>72 (15.6%)</td>
<td><strong>266 (57.2%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total answering sexuality question who saw</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not see engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not see engagement</td>
<td>212 (31.4%)</td>
<td>202 (30.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said Heterosexual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(conditional on not seeing)</td>
<td>157 (80.5%)</td>
<td>137 (69.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said Gay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(conditional on not seeing)</td>
<td>38 (19.5%)</td>
<td>60 (30.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total answering sexuality question who did not see</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The starred categories show the truly treated subjects (those who actually received the intended manipulations of being encouraged to empathize with a straight man in the control condition and a gay man in the treatment condition) who are included in the main analyses in the body of Chapter 4.
**“Love Story” Intent to Treat (ITT) Analyses:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gay Treatment Effects Relative to Heterosexual Control (G=1, H=0)</th>
<th>Empathy States</th>
<th>Sympathy States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know a gay person</td>
<td>.03 (.01)**</td>
<td>.04 (.02)*****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients of treatment dummy variables (coded 1 if the subject was assigned to the gay treatment condition, and 0 if the subject was assigned to the heterosexual control condition) predicting states of empathy and sympathy, each rescaled 0-1. The models also include control variables for MARRY1, pretreatment measures of DOMA, BOOKS, and ADOPT variables, knowing someone who is gay, four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses, and p-values are two-tailed, *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love Story &amp; Jason Collins Effects on Gay Rights Opinion Change (ITT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC SI Article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC GMA Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC Oprah Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC Other Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing a gay person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To assess individual opinion change between Time 1 and Time 2 due to the “Love Story” treatment and the Jason Collins story, the table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting Time 2 opinions in three models of gay rights support, controlling for opinions at Time 1. The models also include control variables for education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love Story &amp; Jason Collins Effects on Gay Rights Opinions (ITT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC SI Article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC GMA Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC Oprah Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC Other Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing a gay person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting opinions (measured in Survey 2 only) in four models of gay rights support. The models also include control variables for MARRY1, pretreatment measures of DOMA, BOOKS, and ADOPT variables, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.
To assess individual opinion change between Time 1 and Time 2 due to the “Love Story” treatment and the Jason Collins story, the table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting Time 2 opinions in six models of gay rights support, controlling for opinions at Time 1. The models also include control variables for knowing someone who is gay, four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.

### Love Story Effects on Gay Rights Opinion Change by State Empathy (ITT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Empathy?</th>
<th>DOMA Change</th>
<th>ADOPT Change</th>
<th>BOOKS Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition (G=1, H=0)</td>
<td>- .03 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Love Story Effects on Gay Rights Opinions by State Empathy (ITT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Empathy?</th>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>SCOUTS</th>
<th>BULLY</th>
<th>MARRY2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>.03 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.05 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>-.00 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition (G=1, H=0)</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>-.00 (.01)</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Love Story Effects on Gay Rights Opinion Change by State Sympathy (ITT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Sympathy?</th>
<th>DOMA Change</th>
<th>ADOPT Change</th>
<th>BOOKS Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-.03 (02)*</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)*</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition (G=1, H=0)</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Love Story Effects on Gay Rights Opinions by State Sympathy (ITT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Sympathy?</th>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>SCOUTS</th>
<th>BULLY</th>
<th>MARRY2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)**</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.00 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition (G=1, H=0)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>-.00 (.01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting opinions (measured in Survey 2 only) in models of gay rights support. The models also include control variables for MARRY1, pre-treatment measures of DOMA, BOOKS, and ADOPT variables, knowing someone who is gay, four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.
To assess individual opinion change between Time 1 and Time 2 due to the “Love Story” treatment and the Jason Collins story, the table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting Time 2 opinions in six separate models of gay rights support, controlling for opinions at Time 1. The models also include control variables for four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait Empathy</th>
<th>DOMA Change</th>
<th>ADOPT Change</th>
<th>BOOKS Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Man</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>-.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Het. Man</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.03 (.01)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know gay</td>
<td>.02 (.01)**</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.03 (.01)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1114</td>
<td>848</td>
<td>1114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reports OLS regression coefficients predicting opinions (measured in Survey 2 only) in eight models of gay rights support. The models also include control variables for MARRY1, pre-treatment measures of DOMA, BOOKS, and ADOPT variables, four measures of exposure to Jason Collins empathy stimuli, education, gender, age, age squared, partisanship, ideology, income, race, religious preference, religious importance, state of residence, state of origin, and racial resentment. Standard errors are in parentheses. P-values are one-tailed *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01. All variables originally on a 6-point scale and rescaled to 0-1.
## Appendix C: Appendix to Chapter 5

### Indices of Empathy, Sympathy, and Perspective-Taking Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Global Empathy</th>
<th>Sympathy</th>
<th>Cognitive Perspective-Taking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Baron-Cohen &amp; Wheelwright 2004)</td>
<td>(Davis 1983)</td>
<td>(Davis 1983)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>It is hard for me to see why some things upset people so much. (-)</td>
<td>I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.</td>
<td>I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Friends usually talk to me about their problems as they say that I am very understanding.</td>
<td>Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (-)</td>
<td>If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I can tune into how someone else feels rapidly and intuitively.</td>
<td>Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (-)</td>
<td>I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the &quot;other guy's&quot; point of view. (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Other people often say that I am insensitive, though I don't always see why. (-)</td>
<td>I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.</td>
<td>4. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I am good at predicting how someone will feel.</td>
<td>When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I often find it difficult to judge if something is rude or polite. (-)</td>
<td>When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (-)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Other people tell me I am good at understanding how they are feeling and what they are thinking.</td>
<td>I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All items above are directly quoted from the source. Items followed by the symbol "(-)" are negatively worded (greater agreement indicates less of the trait) in order to minimize survey effects.
Bibliography


King, Martin Luther Jr. 1963. Letter from a Birmingham Jail.


226


