



# Narrative news frames: Affective processes as mediators and type of issue as moderator of news framing effects

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# News framing and effects

- Framing is to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993)”
- All news have frames, these are selected by journalists and editors based on their understanding, training, and how the issue was framed TO them by issue advocates
- News frames of issues have well-documented effects on audiences opinions about the people or institutions in stories, and about policies

# Cognitive mediation?

- Mechanisms for framing effects are still under study, some starting work on cognitive mediation based on principles of biased processing primed by a framing mechanism (Nabi, 1999)
- “message-induced negative emotions may direct information processing and subsequent attitude change and information recall (p.239)”
- Triggering an emotion biases the reading of a story, extends to evaluation and recall
- Particular emotional states may lead to persuasion, others may lead to withdrawal from the content
- What is it about different frames that lead to different emotions?

# Narratives vs. Numbers

- Presence of statistics and numbers in news stories encouraged, in early literature shown to lend credibility and lead to rational processing
- Narrative formats in news stories are encouraged in practice because audiences seem to gravitate toward them, heightens emotions, increases empathy, more interest
- Narrative structures have a beginning, middle, and end that connect actions of characters in a story to implications of those actions
- Non-narrative structures make the same implications from cause to effect, but without focusing on an individual's storyline, rather on a set of propositions that lead to a logical conclusion

# Consider the following news headlines.

RAPPLER IQ

## IN NUMBERS: The Philippines' 'war on drugs'

(79th UPDATE) As of April 23, 2017, there have been over 7,000 deaths, both from legitimate police operations and vigilante-style or unexplained killings

IMPUNITY

## A HALLOWEEN MASSACRE

On the eve of the day of the dead, five people were executed by men who decided they did not deserve to live.

TEXT BY PATRICIA EVANGELISTA

PHOTOS BY CARLO GABUCO

VIDEO BY DAQLO VILLALUNA

POLICY

78% of Filipinos are satisfied with the government's "war on drugs"

- SWS survey, March 2017

# 'TARIFFS FROM RICE IMPORTS TO HELP FARMERS CUT COST, BOOST INCOME'

March 6, 2017

[Cai U. Ordinario & Jovee Marie N. dela Cruz \(BusinessMirror\)](#)

## POLICY

Approval of government's rice self-sufficiency policy

# Gov't plan to import 1.5M tons of rice 'embarrassing'—archbishop

## ISSUES

- **Crime**
- Drug war
- Violent and non-technical policy
- **Economic**
- Quantitative restriction on rice importation
- Highly technical policy

## JOURNALISTIC FRAMING CHOICES

- **Non-narrative**
  - Straightforward reporting of “objective” facts, data, statistics
- **Narrative**
  - Personalized with appeals to emotion; follows storyline of central character
- **Hybrid (Policy)**
  - focus on policy under consideration

*How do types of journalistic framing choice (i.e., news story format) influence approval of a particular policy and through what mechanisms?*

# SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ 1: Does news story format and type of issue influence empathy and emotions felt toward a central character featured in a news story?
- RQ 2: Does empathy mediate the effect of type of issue on emotions?
- RQ 3: Does the effect of narrative or non-narrative format on empathy, emotions, and approval of policies differ depending on the type of issue?



# METHOD

## PARTICIPANTS

- 336 undergraduate students from a state university
- 83% females
- Age range: 17-29 years old

## DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

- 3 (story format) X 2 (type of issue) experiment
- Participants were randomly assigned to read on paper one of the 6 types of news articles.
- Participants answered a questionnaire which included empathy, emotions, and support for policies

**MANILA  
BULLETIN**

The Nation's Leading Newspaper

[Home Category](#) / [National](#) / How rice self-sufficiency policies hurt the poor

**How rice self-sufficiency policies hurt the poor**

**MANILA  
BULLETIN**

The Nation's Leading Newspaper

[Home Category](#) / [National](#) / More blood but no victory as Philippine drug war marks its first year

**More blood but no victory as Philippine drug war marks its first year**

# Stimulus design

- Crime (Tokhang Policy)

- Narrative = story of Rowena's experience. Rowena was present when her son was killed inside their home, by police officers who accused him of using drugs. Her grandchild was also present. Vivid description of events, heavy with quotations.
- Non-narrative = describes Tokhang policy, focuses on numbers "accomplishments" as reported by PNP, mentions Rowena and her story in one short paragraph
- Hybrid = straddles both

- Rice (Quantitative Restriction vs Tarrifing)

- Narrative = story of Mila, wife of a rice farmer. She supports lifting QR on importation because they do not grown enough rice for their own consumption and can barely afford to buy enough rice for their children
- Non-narrative = explanation of policies and trade-off of each, mentions Mila's story in short paragraph
- Hybrid = straddles both

# Measures

- Emotions = self-reported extent of feeling the following emotions in response to the story: rage, happiness, sadness, fear, hope, confusion, disgust
- Empathy = how moved are you by the character's plight, did you feel concern for her
- Policy = do you support or oppose X policy?

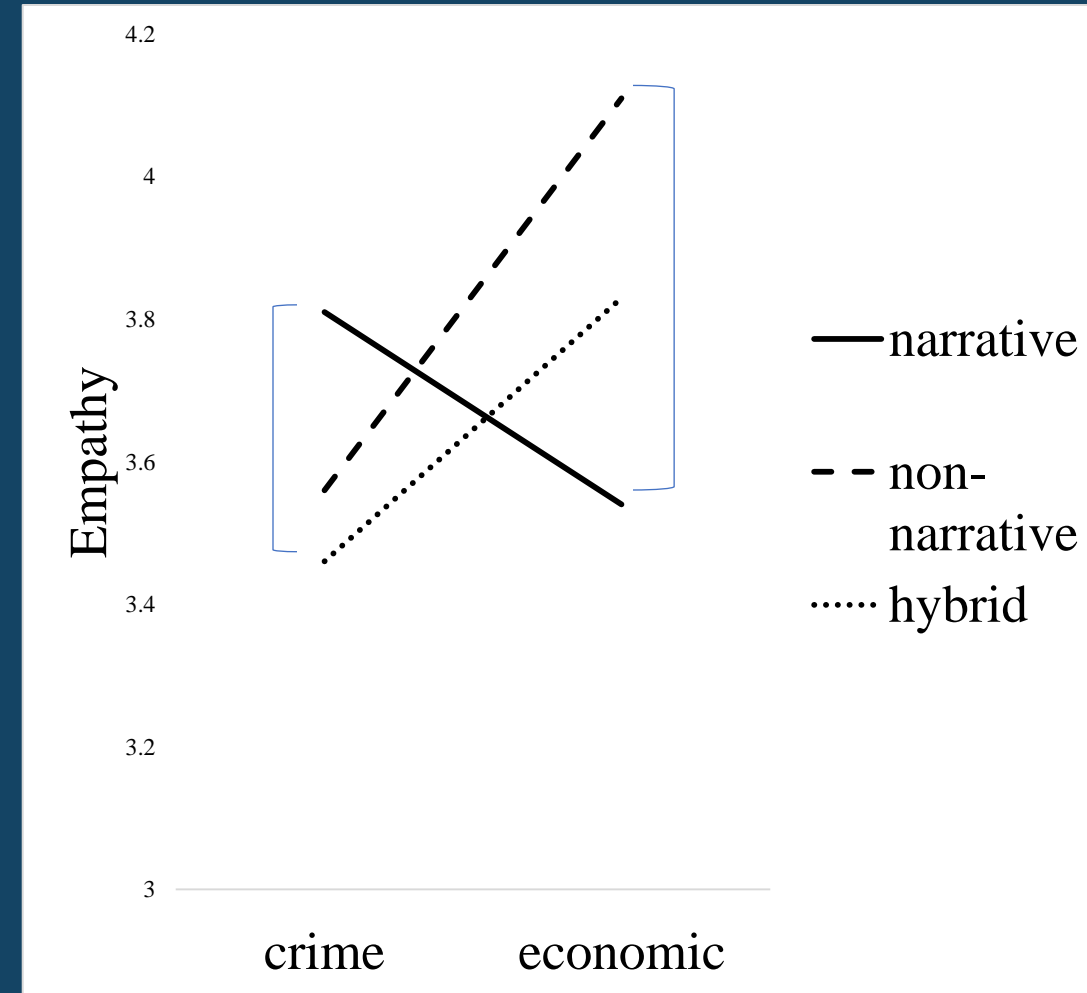
# RESULTS

Non-significant main effects of emotion and empathy when not accounting for issue type. Within each issue type, empirical support for effects of story format on empathy and emotion, some albeit moderate effect on policy approval/disapproval.

## RQ 1:

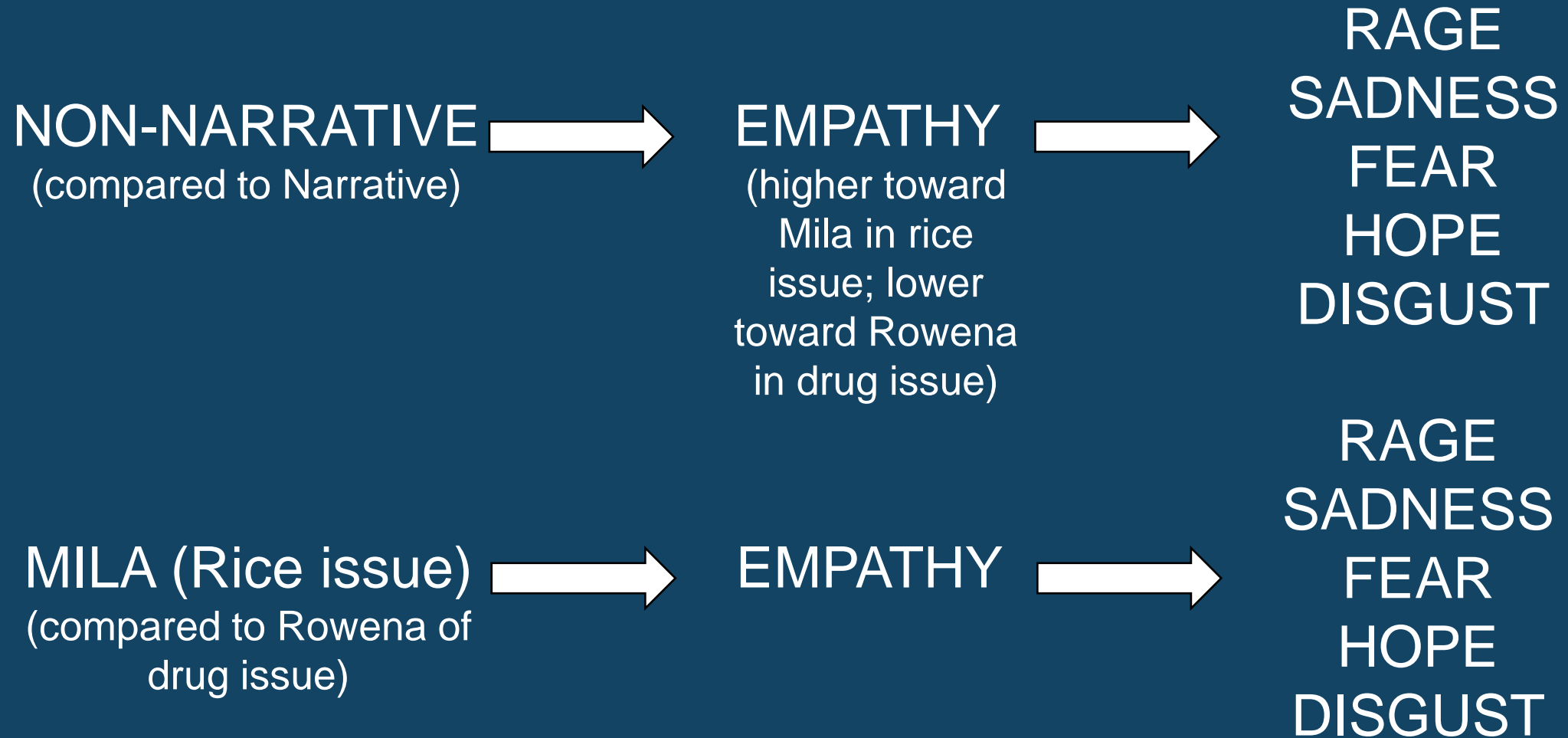
Different news formats are more effective at eliciting empathy depending on the type of issue.

- *Narrative format* elicited **HIGHER** empathy ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ) compared to the *hybrid format* ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ) when the issue was about the drug war.
- *Non-narrative format* elicited **HIGHER** empathy ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ) compared to the *narrative format* ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ) when the issue was about the QR on rice importation.
- Significant interaction



## RQ 1:

News story format and type of issue that elicit empathy evoke stronger positive and negative emotions from the readers.



## RQ 2:

- Downstream effects of news story format on approval of policies are mediated by emotions.

## RQ 3:

- Depending on the type of issue, different emotions lead to increased or decreased approval of a policy.

### DRUG WAR:



### QR on RICE IMPORTATION:



# Implications

- Some issues (like the drug war) have greater potential to evoke strong emotions, some not. Can all policy issues evoke emotional response based on narrative story format?
- Emotions elicited are all negative, there is no significant change in positive emotions. May just be the selection of issues tackled.
- Results add to the mounting evidence that affective responses to news frames are consequential to issue response and extend to policy support or opposition, but there are important conditionalities pertaining to the nature of the issue and the relationship audiences have with the issue.



# IMPLICATIONS and WAY FORWARD

- A matrix showing issue typology, story format, and probable cognitive and affective responses would be a valuable addition to academic literature as well as to newsroom awareness.
- “*...informed and active citizenship might require emotional involvement and personal identification with social issues*” (Bas & Grabe, 2015, p. 160).
- We have been privileging reason and cognition in most research on news effects and public opinion about policies and issues, more work is needed to understand the role of emotion.

**THANK YOU.**