Priming News Credibility Judgments: Interactions in the World of User-Created Content

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Presented at the 2009 annual conference of the
Midwest Association for Public Opinion Research
November 21, 2009, in Chicago, IL

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ABSTRACT

User-driven content outlets are changing our understanding of how news is consumed and interpreted. Information attached to traditional news content may prime audience judgments about the stories, people in them and issues they address. We test hypotheses proposing that blog readers are more susceptible to priming by a YouTube uploader's description of a news story in evaluating individuals in it.

In an experiment, respondents were presented with a story about nuclear power that was embedded in a mocked-up YouTube page. The headline and description of the story either described it as balanced or pro-nuclear. A series of ANCOVAs tested the effects of advocacy and blog reading habits, and the effects of YouTube message dissonance and blog habits, on judgments of people in the story and the YouTube uploader. Interaction effects were found across all models, suggesting that blog readers were more likely to let the advocacy cue guide their evaluations.

In the 2006 and 2008 U.S. election cycles, user-driven new media venues such as YouTube fundamentally altered the way political information is distributed to and understood by the public. While features of YouTube such as its ability to repackage existing news content (such as Katie Couric's interviews with Sarah Palin) and to provide an outlet for non-traditional content (such as the video of George Allen's "macaca" incident) received quite a bit of attention, a more basic feature of the site may have been just as important: the discussion and commentary that accompanies videos on the site. Whenever an individual uploads a video to YouTube, that person has the ability to shape the way viewers interpret it based on the title and description given to it. In communication theory terms, these elements of the YouTube page may act as primes, prompting viewers to focus on particular elements of the video, or to view it with particular concepts or facts made more salient.

The question of how these features of YouTube might affect news processing intersects with a recent line of research indicating the strong susceptibility of political blog readers to cognitive effects of news content. These individuals tend not just to be invested in and sophisticated about politics (Authors, 2007a), but also to be very comfortable with the grammar of new political media such as YouTube. In this study, we use political blog readers as the lens through which to examine how messages added by uploaders to the videos they post to YouTube affect evaluations of those videos. Specifically, we look at credibility judgments of individuals within a real news story on nuclear power plant construction, and how those judgments may be altered by a suggestion that the story supports greater nuclear development, as opposed to a suggestion that the story treats both sides evenly and fairly. These questions may help in

understanding how users and producers interact within the new media environment, and how news norms manifest among political blog readers. They may also shed some light on the cognitive structure underlying blog readers' frame susceptibility.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Framing and Priming Effects in Political Blog Readers. A growing body of experimental research suggests that the cognitive effects of news frames are felt much more strongly by political blog readers than by those who don't read political blogs. The original finding came in a test examining the effects of value and strategy frames on learning from the news. Researchers found that the strategy frame elicited more learning from a story on stem cell technology, but only among blog readers; non-readers learned no more in one condition than in the other (Authors, 2008a). The nature of the phenomenon suggested that the value frame caused a spread of activation within existing memory (Shah, Domke, & Wackman, 1996), blunting the impact of new information coming from the news story, and that blog readers had more well-developed political value networks than did non-readers.

A follow-up study (Authors, 2007b) tested this notion by examining likely attitudinal differences between political blog readers and non-readers, including political interest, partisanship, strength of partisanship and media trust. This study used a similar model to the first, examining the impact on attitude constraint of value and strategy news framing in the context of the immigration debate. The findings in this study validated the spread of activation hypothesis. Blog readers in the value condition had significantly more constrained immigration attitudes than did other participants. Moreover, variables suspected to be doing the real work for which blog readership might be a proxy were

uniformly non-significant, suggesting that the impact of blog readership goes beyond simply strong involvement in politics.

This uniqueness was examined from another perspective in a subsequent study, which posited a role for the grammar of the blog medium in these findings (Authors, 2008b). Similar findings came from this study as in the previous two, though the context changed somewhat – rather than value and strategy frames, this study looked at benefit and risk framing in coverage of a proposed piece of health care legislation. Significant effects of the frame on support for the bill were found for blog readers, but not for non-readers. Three similar models were used to attempt to replicate the findings among people who use Facebook for politics, heavy users of online news video and heavy TV news viewers. In each of these models, the two groups of media users had statistically indistinguishable reactions to the frame manipulation.

Each of these studies looked specifically at the effects of news frames, but that area makes up only a small part of the universe of news effects. In this study, we examine whether a more fundamental priming effect may be at the root of this process. While a news frame presents the information in a story through a particular focal point (Entman, 1993), priming effects color how information received after the prime is processed into memory (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Carpentier, 2002).

Research on media priming derived from the agenda-setting literature of the 1970s (Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder, 1982; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Iyengar and his colleagues (1982) posited that the theory of agenda-setting could be applied at a more micro scale – specifically, that "agendas" could impact the thought process that led to judgments such as presidential approval. In their experiments testing this hypothesis,

they found strong support – individuals exposed to a prime related to a specific issue were more likely to form overall judgments of President Carter that conformed to their evaluations of him on that particular issue.

Krosnick and Kinder (1990) found similar effects in a natural field experiment, conducted without the constraints of laboratory analysis. Using survey data collected both immediately before and immediately after the 1986 revelation of the Iran-Contra affair, they analyzed the underpinnings of support for President Reagan in relation to attitudes toward Central America and U.S. foreign policy. After the revelation, foreign policy attitudes became significantly more important in determining attitudes toward Reagan. Though they were unable to control specific aspects of the news content seen by survey respondents, this finding presents an important case of priming affecting attitudes in the context of the general public's opinion formation process.

In the case of Krosnick and Kinder's study, the media's agenda-setting capability may have created an environment in which individual approval judgments were particularly vulnerable to priming. Issue salience has been shown to be an important factor in the process of priming evaluations of the president (Edwards III, Mitchell, & Welch, 1995), and that salience may be affected by news coverage. In the modern media environment, we may find users of niche media such as political blogs holding different issues to be salient than the general public; these may include issues such as media credibility, as media critique has long been a motivating force in the blogosphere (Kaye, 2005a).

This notion may also be seen more broadly, as blog readers may be more responsive to cues and news agenda changes in general. MacKuen (1984) found that

political sophisticates – specifically those who are more interested in politics and more highly educated, which is the case with blog readers (Kaye, 2005b) – are better equipped to assimilate changes from the mass news agenda. He contextualizes this as an issue of "elite-mass linkages," though it is worth considering how we might reconceptualize this in the many-to-many user-driven content era. Most YouTube uploaders are not what we would think of as political elites, but at the aggregate and sometimes the individual levels, they are an important part of the contemporary political conversation.

For blog readers, content uploaders may be the sort of respected figures that have been shown to have the greatest priming impact (Page, Shapiro, & Dempsey, 1987). Previous research has indicated that experts, respected media figures and elected officials (the president, in particular) had the greatest ability to prime individuals' political judgments. However, blog readers may have attuned themselves to a new kind of expertise, in which opinion expression and activism are highly valued. If this is the case, we should expect them to be especially susceptible to the priming effects of cues found on YouTube. Indeed, we may find that this understanding of political communication enhances some of the benefits of cross-cutting discussion when it occurs, by according a level of respect to the dissonant view through the source's role in the new media network.

Message Dissonance. Communication scholars have long wrestled with effects of encountering messages which are incompatible with existing beliefs, both in terms of content and perception (Festinger, 1957; Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955; Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). When exposed to information that directly counters previous held attitudes or beliefs, people will engaged in more effortful, motivated processing (Kunda, 1990). Lord, Ross and Lepper (1979) found people who held strong beliefs on an issue

were more likely to process information in a biased manner. Specifically, they noted the propensity of people to uncritically accept information that supports their beliefs, while processing unsupportive information in a hypercritical manner. Similarly, Edwards and Smith (1996) found when respondents were presented with arguments were incompatible with their prior beliefs, they spent a longer time reading and generated a greater number of relevant thoughts and counterarguments. Edwards and Smith suggest that when people are confronted with a dissonant message, they engage in a complex cognitive process of "counter arguing" the content. This process, which takes more time than processing a congruent message, involves the automatic activation of memory relevant material (i.e. stored beliefs and arguments). Taber and Lodge (2006) elaborated on the "prior attitude effect" by linking the tendency to uncritically accept confirmatory information while scrutinizing dissonant to outcome of attitude polarization, especially among respondents who were high in political sophistication. Their results suggest the availability of a more developed network of knowledge and attitudes on a given issue will result in processing differences compared to those who are less familiar, or ambivalent about the issue.

This greater depth of processing apparent when exposed to a dissonant message can also have important impacts of judgments or source and message credibility. Specifically, people tend to rate information that contradicts their beliefs or views as less probative or credible than supporting information (Edwards & Smith, 1996; Kunda, 1987; Lord et al., 1979). Therefore, the scrutiny and skepticism that people bring to processing of a dissonant message have real-world implications in affecting their perceptions of its credibility, both of the message as a whole and of specific dissonant elements of that message.

Source Credibility and Audience Differences. The concept of credibility has long been a thorny issue that the news media and scholars alike have attempted to unravel. Concerns about the appropriate level of credibility for the media have plagued researchers for decades (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Meyer, 1988). Research has not only investigated differences in credibility ratings for competing media outlets, such as television, newspapers, and more recently, the Internet (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Kiousis, 2001), but has also explored different features that can heighten or limit media credibility (Fico, Richardson, & Edwards, 2004; Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Greer, 2003).

Among the variety of factors shown to influence source and medium credibility, the source characteristics should play an important role. While some research has suggested that source credibility has a strong impact on how trustworthy the audience rates a particular story (Greer, 2003), others suggest that source credibility does not influence overall ratings (Austin & Dong, 1994). These competing findings may be driven by a congruence effect: people tend to rate information as more credible when the source of information matches the medium in which it is found (Bucy, 2003), or by a mediational process between source expertise and message quality evaluations (Slater & Rouner, 1996). Finally, the causal order may be reversed – story credibility itself may have an influence on how trustworthy or credible people find the source of that information (Fico et al., 2004; Perloff, 1989).

But credibility can play another important role: in determining the types of processing that people use for a subsequent message. Credibility has been shown to serve a variety of mechanisms related to processing: for example, high credibility can either

function as a simple heuristic, can increase cognitive effort, or serve as evidence for a persuasive argument (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Mondak, 1990; Wu & Shaffer, 1987).

Thus, the apparent credibility of a message can influence an individual's processing and ratings of that message. When it comes to hard news formats, great emphasis is placed on maintaining objectivity and balance, including attribution of sensitive information (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Sundar, 1998; Tuchman, 1972). Violations to this objectivity norm, such as imbalance in a story, are likely to provoke audience response, increasing the likelihood that audiences will rate the content as biased (Fico et al., 2004). Beyond actual changes in the structure of the story itself, people cued to expect bias in a subsequent news story do tend to describe the story as more biased, although they did not point out more instances of bias in the story (D'Alessio, 2003). Conversely, a presentation on news media literacy can decrease perceptions of bias in a subsequent news story (Authors, 2007b). In particular cases, however, admission of bias can render a subsequent communication more effective, especially in terms of persuasion – mediation literature suggests that a biased mediator is more effective than an unbiased mediator, especially for increasing trust in opponents (Kydd, 2003, 2006). The expectations that individuals bring to a media message impact their perceptions of the content.

Beyond expectations from media content, individual differences themselves are influential in ratings of credibility. One of the most commonly studied differences is the effects of partisan affiliation on perceptions of media credibility – with Republicans rating the media as less trustworthy and more biased (Eveland & Shah, 2003; Pew, 2007;

Watts, Domke, Shah, & Fan, 1999). But beyond partisan affiliation, people's primary source of information also plays a role in their perceptions of the media and its messages, likely due to the role that credibility plays in viewership patterns (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Johnson & Kaye, 1998, 2004). Blog readers in particular have demonstrated unique relationships to media content, especially in terms of credibility overall (Authors, 2008a; Johnson & Kaye, 2004).

HYPOTHESES

Extant literature suggests that political blog readers have more fertile mental networks for understanding and retrieving information about news and politics than do non-readers. This manifests in a number of ways, including greater responsiveness to cues within news content. The online news environment presents the opportunity for many cues that don't originate with journalists to impact the way the audience processes news, such as comments posted by people who upload news videos to YouTube. News-processing responses to such comments should be largely experienced by political blog readers as opposed to non-readers.

Because political blogs take media critique as an important function (Kaye, 2005a), and political sophisticates are more likely to pick up on evaluative primes (MacKuen, 1984), cues that implicate news credibility and advocate for one side should prompt closer scrutiny of content that is associated with them. In cases when the news story is actually well put-together and conforms to the norms of quality journalism, increased attention by the audience should enhance the appearance of its credibility and judgments of individuals within the story. Thus, we predict the following:

H1. Blog readership and an advocacy cue will interact such that blog readers exposed to the advocacy cue will judge individuals in the subsequent story to be more credible than will others.

Furthermore, since blog norms favor opinion and activism (Authors, 2007a), we predict that judgments of the YouTube uploader for such a video will be similarly impacted:

H2. Blog readership and an advocacy cue will interact such that blog readers exposed to the advocacy cue will judge the news story uploader to be more credible than will others.

Message dissonance is also known to trigger a more active information-processing style, particularly among sophisticates (Edwards & Smith, 1996; Kunda, 1990; MacKuen, 1984). As such, we predict these effects specifically when the advocacy cue is dissonant with one's existing beliefs:

H3. Blog readership and cue dissonance will interact such that blog readers exposed to a attitudinally dissonant cue will judge individuals in the subsequent story to be more credible than will others.

METHODS

Study Design

The data used in this study were collected using an experiment embedded in a web-based survey of respondents enrolled in undergraduate courses at a large Midwestern university. Instructors in journalism and mass communication classes offered students extra credit for study participation. All potential participants were contacted via e-mail in December 2008 and given the address of the online survey. A total of 201 students

completed the survey.

Stimulus Construction and Procedure

After completing a series of pre-test questions, respondents were randomly assigned to one of two experimentally manipulated conditions. Respondents viewed a simulated YouTube page in which a single video was prominent (See Appendix 1 for simulated YouTube layout). This page was manipulated so that the fictitious uploader of the video, JemmaXZ, provided a cue as to the video's content. Specifically, the uploader either encouraged viewers to watch the video for its information about the pros and cons of the nuclear power as an energy source, or encouraged viewers to watch the video for information on the benefits of nuclear power for the environment. Thus, the respondents were exposed to either a pro-nuclear advocacy cue from the uploader or a balanced, non-advocacy cue, meant to influence their processing of the posted video clip (See Appendix 2 for cue manipulation).

All respondents viewed a news clip regarding the use of nuclear as an energy source. This clip was extracted from a *60 Minutes* broadcast (Devine, 2007) and ran for three minutes and seven seconds (see Appendix 3 for full script). The news story was held constant in both conditions, provided basic information about the current debate about nuclear power as energy source for the environment; however, the video contained a short textual lead-in stating the uploader's view of the story and matching the cue in the uploader's description of the video. Additionally, the headline above the video was manipulated. In the advocacy condition it read, "The verdict is in and nuclear power IS the answer," whereas in the non-advocacy condition it read, "The jury is out on nuclear power." Most of the images in the video were scenes of nuclear power plant construction

sites with workers and close-ups of each interviewee or the reporter from *60 Minutes*. Throughout the story, the *60 Minutes* logo was shown at the bottom right corner of the video.

Measures

Political Blog Readership. Political blog readership was measured on an 11-point Likert scale running from "Not At All" (0) to "Very Often" (10). To create an index for political blog readership, two items of political blog readership, conservative and liberal political blog use, were measured, split at the median, and collapsed to two categories - those who said they do read blogs (1; 19.4% of the sample) and those who said they don't (0; 80.6% of the sample).

Attitude toward Nuclear Power. Participants' attitude toward nuclear power was measured on an 11-point Likert scale running from "Strongly Disagree" (0) to "Strongly Agree" (10) ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 2.23$). Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement, "We should continue to use nuclear power." Within the advocacy condition, those who scored 0 to 4 on this measure were recoded to 1, to indicate dissonance with the advocacy message in the stimulus (15.4% of sample). Those who scored 5 to 10 were recoded to 0, to indicate that the advocacy message was not dissonant to their views on nuclear power (29.4%). Since the nature of dissonance requires a position to be taken, it does not make sense to talk about dissonance within the non-advocacy condition. As such, all respondents in the non-advocacy condition were assigned a value of -1 for dissonance, in order to include them as an identifiable group in the analysis (54.7%).

Credibility of Individuals in Stimulus. Three individuals appeared in the news

story: Clay Sell (Deputy Secretary of Energy), David Jhirad (Head of Science and Research for the World Resources Institute), and Steve Kroft, (the *60 Minutes* reporter). Additionally, a fictional username, JemmaXZ, was credited with uploading the video to YouTube. The credibility variable for each individual was constructed based on three items presented on 11-point semantic differential scales: trustworthy/untrustworthy, credible/not credible, and likeable/not likeable (Sell index: Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$, $M = 6.39$, $SD = 1.80$; Jhirad index: Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$, $M = 6.65$, $SD = 1.61$; Kroft index: Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$, $M = 6.41$, $SD = 1.82$; JemmaXZ index, using only first two items: $r = .77$, $M = 4.40$, $SD = 2.13$).

Control Variables. Three trust items – media trust, government trust and science trust – were used in our ANCOVA models as covariates. These three concepts account for pre-existing feelings toward the institutions represented by the individuals featured in the stimulus news story. The media trust index was created by averaging agreement scores on two items: "Most of the information provided by the news media is accurate," and, "I distrust most information from the news media" (reversed-coded) ($r = .52$, $M = 5.73$, $SD = 1.88$). Similarly, the science trust variable was measured by two items: "Science and technology are making our lives better," and, "Because of science and technology, there will be more opportunities for the next generation" ($r = .61$, $M = 7.22$, $SD = 1.74$). Government trust was measured by a single item, "Government officials usually say what they think" ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.89$).

Additionally, two items were included in order to separate the effects of blog readership from other concepts for which it may act as a proxy. Interest in politics was measured with agreement with the statement, "I am interested in politics" ($M = 5.59$, SD

= 2.69). A two-item index of elite news media use was included in order to isolate blog reading effects from other outlets – specifically, news commentary magazines (such as *The New Republic*) and online-only news magazines (such as *The Huffington Post*). These items were measured by days used per week and were averaged to create an index (r = .57, $M = 0.31$, $SD = 0.46$).

RESULTS

Hypotheses were tested using a series of ANCOVA models, with the dependent variable changing for evaluations of each individual. In the models testing interaction effects of the advocacy cue and blog readership, significant results were found for each of the individuals in the story (Sell: $F(196) = 4.463$, $p < .05$; Jhirad: $F(195) = 6.018$, $p < .05$; Kroft: $F(195) = 9.190$, $p < .01$), supporting the three sub-hypotheses of H1. The interaction effect on evaluation of JemmaXZ was marginally significant ($F(196) = 2.766$, $p < .1$), providing some support for hypothesis H2. Full results for these models can be seen in Table 1.

In our models testing the interaction of message dissonance and blog readership, significant results were again found for each of the individuals in the story (Sell: $F(196) = 6.089$, $p < .01$; Jhirad: $F(195) = 3.682$, $p < .05$; Kroft: $F(195) = 5.787$, $p < .01$), support the three sub-hypotheses of H3. Full results can be seen in Table 2.

DISCUSSION

This study adds to a growing line of experimental and survey research suggesting that blog readers respond very differently to media messages than their non-reading counterparts. Specifically, blog readers interpreted an advocacy cue very differently in allowing it to influence their evaluations of source credibility. While an advocacy cue

does not affect non-readers' perceptions of source credibility within a subsequent media message, when blog readers are exposed to a cue indicating that subsequent media coverage provides support for a particular position, rather than being a balanced news report, they rate all three of the sources within that story as more credible. It is notable that this holds true across all three individuals, despite the fact that they come from different domains (the Bush administration in the case of Clay Sell, the world of science policy in the case of David Jhirad, and journalism in the case of Steve Kroft).

Furthermore, their perceptions of the uploader of the story – or the source of the story – shift in response to an advocacy. While blog readers and non-readers appear to find the uploader equally credible when the story is presented as a balanced news piece, blog readers find the presenter substantially more credible than non-readers when the piece is presented as advocacy.

Of course, when people are exposed to advocacy, it makes sense to consider how the advocated position fits in with the individual's predispositions. In other words, it is important to consider whether or not the advocacy cue is dissonant with a respondent's beliefs about the topic or subject. Our results suggest that dissonance is especially consequential for blog readers. When blog readers are exposed to a dissonant advocacy cue – claiming that the news story is supportive of the opposition – they rate all of the sources within this story as significantly more credible than when they are told it is a neutral news story. When blog readers see a consonant advocacy cue, they tend to rate the sources' credibility between these two extremes. On the other hand, the differences between a news cue, a consonant advocacy cue, and a dissonant advocacy cue do not emerge with the same strength among non-readers.

These differences between blog readers and non-blog readers in their perceptions of source credibility may be derived from differences in processing. Blog readers tend to be more engaged politically, as well as more familiar with a partisan news environment apparent on blogs (Authors, 2007a; Kerbel & Bloom, 2005). That is, they may be more comfortable with the use of an advocacy cue followed by a news story, and are consequently better trained to scrutinize the message for a particular slant. When no slant in news story content is detected, savvy blog readers evaluate all three sources of the story as more credible.

Given their wider engagement with the political arena and citizen-driven media that blog readership implies, blog readers are probably also more receptive of other sources of user-driven content, like YouTube. Therefore, they should place more normative value on people being able to upload content, especially in support of their own views. In addition, the news story remained consistent, regardless of the view offered by the YouTube uploader. Blog readers may have appreciated the uploader's honesty in presenting their opinion about the video, rather than providing a vague description of it.

Finally, it is intriguing that blog readers perceived the story sources as most credible when they were exposed to a dissonant advocacy cue. This harkens back to an individual's motivation to process. Anticipating that the news story would disagree with their predispositions, individuals carefully scrutinized the news story for any traces of bias (Edwards & Smith, 1996; Kunda, 1990). When bias goes undetected, they rated the story as even more credible, given their lowered expectations. This result is particularly pronounced among blog readers. Given that motivation plays a key role in determining

learning and processing of a media message (Authors, 2008a), blog readers' overall heightened ability to process results in more divergent assessments of credibility under conditions of dissonance.

Our study is not without several limitations that should be considered along with our results. The first centers upon the use of a student sample and our inability to generalize to the larger public. However, this limitation should have restricted our ability to find results. Several descriptive studies about blog readers find that most are college educated (e.g., Blogads, 2006). Therefore, our examination of college students who read blogs, versus those who do not, controls for an important covariate of blog readership – education, meaning the differences between these two groups may be less broad than those who separate blog readers from non-readers in the general public. Thus, our ability to find results even among this population, with education level controlled, suggests that it is a processing difference that divides blog readers from non-readers. Future research should replicate these results with adults in the general population to determine if these results remain, or, as is more likely, even exacerbated.

Second, it could be that the issue of nuclear energy was one that students did not find engaging and thus were not motivated to carefully process the video. This may limit the ability of an advocacy cue to arouse interest in the topic. Using a non-science issue or an issue that divides respondents more along partisan lines, will allow us to determine how our results might differ when respondents are passionately involved in an issue and whether processing changes as a result.

The implications of these findings are both illuminating and forward-looking. At their most basic, these findings help to explain the underpinnings of previous results

demonstrating strong news frame effects among blog readers. It appears that the phenomenon may not require the relatively complex or structured context of a narrative to be seen, but that a simple cue may also be sufficient. This suggests that blog readers are indeed more responsive to subtle political messages than are non-readers. This may open up the possibility of manipulation of attitudes among this group, but it also suggests that they read or view news content more closely, and thus may learn more from it or give alternative viewpoints a fairer shake.

YouTube is only one venue in which these priming effects may occur outside the laboratory setting. Future research could extend significant on our findings by examining more ideologically charged sources, such as blogs themselves, or discussions related to news content, such as comment threads found at news sites. Additionally, our findings raise further questions about the perspectives and attitudes held by blog readers. In particular, the news and political norms held by blog readers are strongly implicated by the process suggested in our analysis. Important questions remain about these norms, both as antecedents and outcomes. As research on blog readers and new media effects moves forward, understanding how the critical norms of the blogosphere color news processing and attitude formation will be crucial to uncovering the ways communication theory will have to evolve to account for new media technology.

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Table 1: Effects of Advocacy Cue and Blog Readership

	df	F	Sig.
Clay Sell Evaluation			
Blog Readership	1	0.026	0.872
Advocacy Cue	1	0.841	0.360
Blog/Cue Interaction	**1**	**4.463**	**0.036**
Corrected Total	196		
R Squared = .169 (Adjusted R Squared = .134)			
David Jhirad Evaluation			
Blog Readership	1	1.507	0.221
Advocacy Cue	1	5.064	0.026
Blog/Cue Interaction	**1**	**6.018**	**0.015**
Corrected Total	195		
R Squared = .157 (Adjusted R Squared = .121)			
Steve Kroft Evaluation			
Blog Readership	1	0.031	0.861
Advocacy Cue	1	11.254	0.001
Blog/Cue Interaction	**1**	**9.190**	**0.003**
Corrected Total	195		
R Squared = .203 (Adjusted R Squared = .169)			
JemmaXZ Evaluation			
Blog Readership	1	2.168	0.143
Advocacy Cue	1	0.191	0.662
Blog/Cue Interaction	**1**	**2.766**	**0.098**
Corrected Total	196		
R Squared = .057 (Adjusted R Squared = .017)			

Table 2: Effects of Dissonance and Blog Readership

	df	F	Sig.
Clay Sell Evaluation			
Blog Readership	1	1.000	0.319
Dissonance	2	0.342	0.711
Blog/Dissonance Interaction	**2**	**6.089**	**0.003**
Corrected Total	196		
R Squared = .215 (Adjusted R Squared = .172)			
David Jhirad Evaluation			
Blog Readership	1	0.071	0.790
Dissonance	2	2.356	0.098
Blog/Dissonance Interaction	**2**	**3.682**	**0.027**
Corrected Total	195		
R Squared = .164 (Adjusted R Squared = .119)			
Steve Kroft Evaluation			
Blog Readership	1	1.620	0.205
Dissonance	2	5.240	0.006
Blog/Dissonance Interaction	**2**	**5.787**	**0.004**
Corrected Total	195		
R Squared = .221 (Adjusted R Squared = .178)			

Figure 1

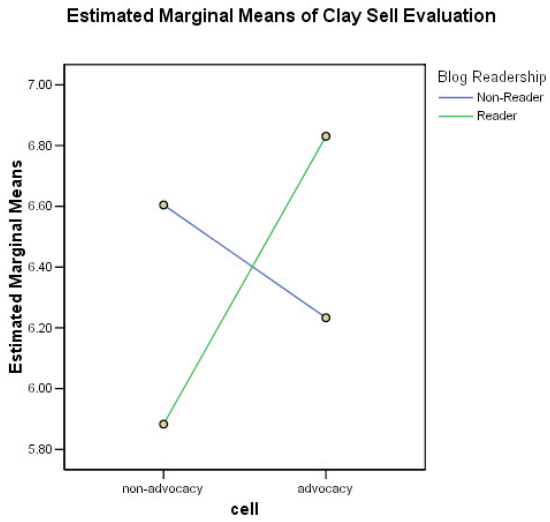


Figure 2

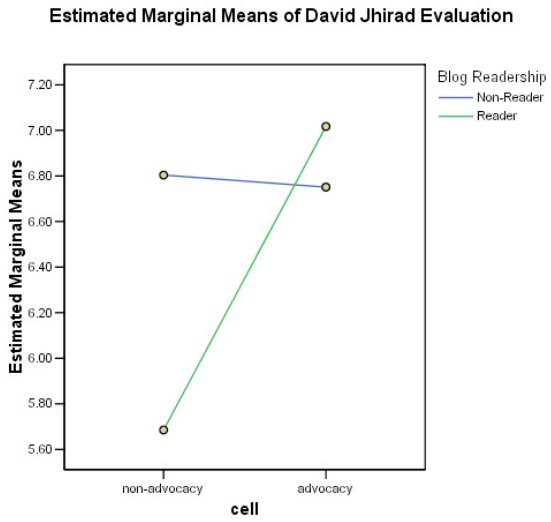


Figure 3

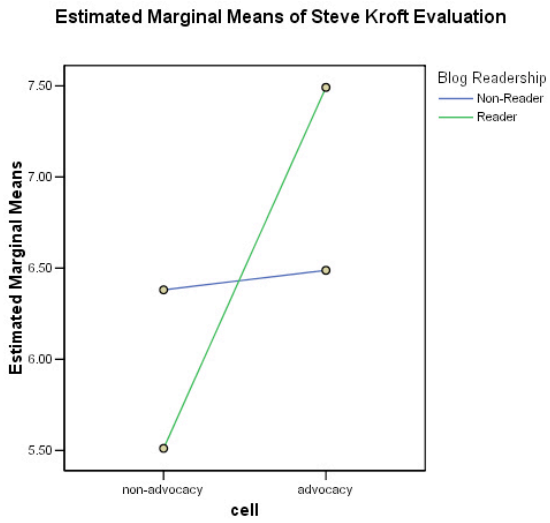


Figure 4

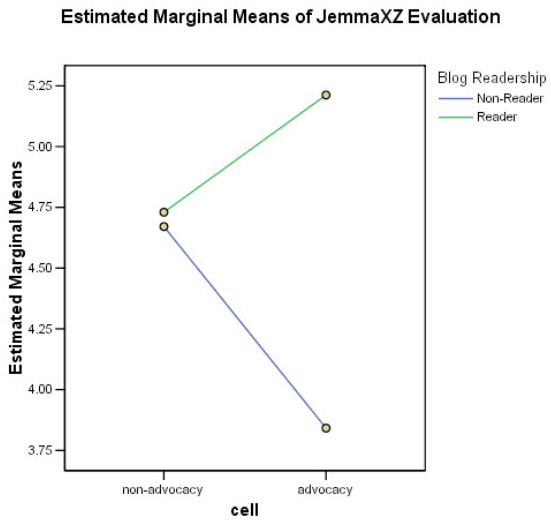


Figure 5

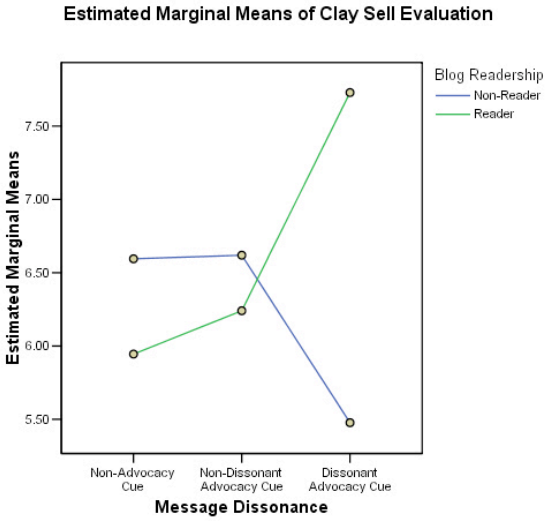


Figure 6

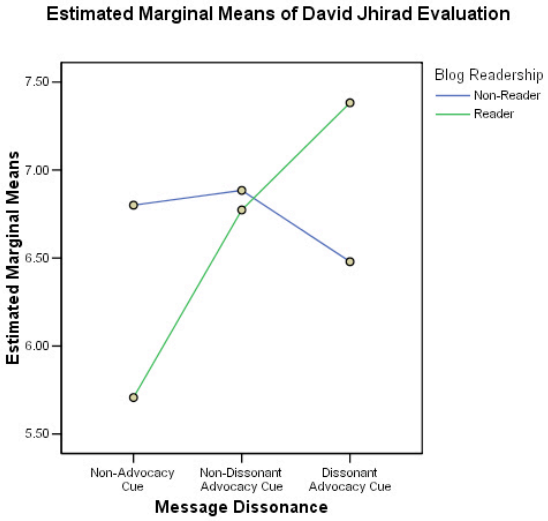
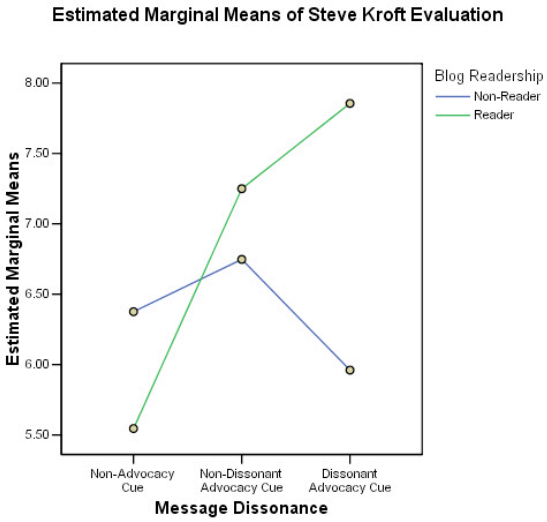


Figure 7



APPENDIX 1: SIMULATED YOUTUBE LAYOUT

[Advocacy Cue Condition Example]



APPENDIX 2: CUE MANIPULATION

[Non-Advocacy Cue Manipulation]

The jury is out on nuclear power

(On screen: Check out this video with information about the pros and cons of nuclear power for the environment.)

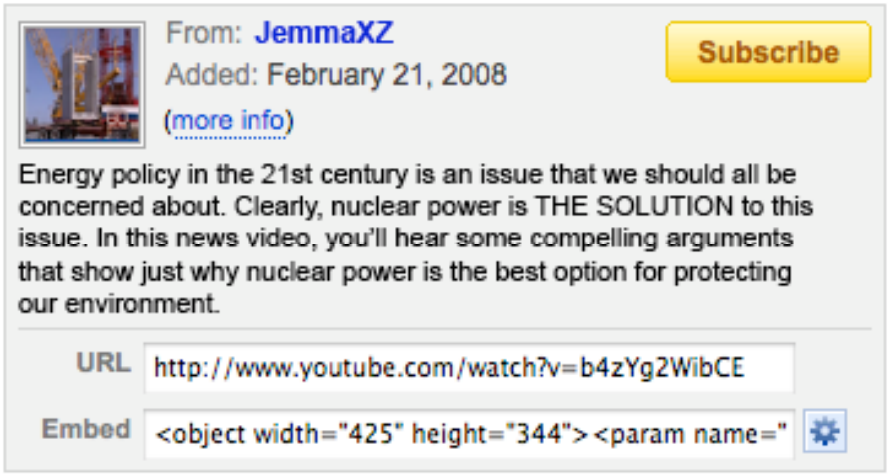
(To the side: Energy policy in the 21st century is an issue that we should all be concerned about. Some propose nuclear power as a solution to this issue and others see it as a problem. In this news video, you'll hear some important arguments on both sides of the issue regarding the impact of nuclear power on the environment.)

[Advocacy Cue Manipulation]

The verdict is in and nuclear power IS the answer

(On screen: Check out this video with information about the benefits of nuclear power for the environment.)

(To the side: Energy policy in the 21st century is an issue that we should all be concerned about. Clearly, nuclear power is THE SOLUTION to this issue. In this news video, you'll hear some compelling arguments that show just why nuclear power is the best option for protecting our environment.)



APPENDIX 3: VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

STEVE KROFT, *60 Minutes* reporter:
(V/O) Because nuclear plants emit no greenhouse gases, France has the cleanest air in the industrialized world, and because the price of oil is now around $60 a barrel, it has the lowest electric bills in Europe. In fact, France has so much cheap electricity, it exports it to its European neighbors. French nuclear plants supply power to parts of Germany, Italy and help light the city of London.

PIERRE GADONNIEX, head of Electricite de France:
It is a very competitive way of producing electricity when oil prices are beyond, I would say, around $40 a barrel.

KROFT:
(V/O) And the rest of the world has taken notice. Nearly a dozen countries, including the United States, are either building or planning to build new nuclear plants, and some of that business will go to AREVA, the French government monopoly that controls every step of its nuclear industry.

CLAY SELL, Deputy Secretary of Energy under George W. Bush:
In many respects, the nuclear industry in the United States has disappeared. Over 100 plants were cancelled in the 1970's.

KROFT:
(V/O) Clay Sell is the Deputy Secretary of Energy and the administration's point man on nuclear power. With world energy demand expected to rise 50 percent over the next 25 years, he says it is the only practical option for producing huge amounts of electricity with no carbon emissions.

SELL:
No serious person can look at the challenge of greenhouse gases and climate change and not come to the conclusion that nuclear power has to play a significant and growing role in meeting that challenge worldwide.

KROFT:
(To Sell) How much interest is there right now in building new plants?

SELL:
There is a tremendous amount of interest. Two years ago there was exactly zero plants on the drawing boards here in the United States. Today, there are about 15 companies talking about building over 30 commercial nuclear power reactors.

KROFT:
(V/O) David Jhirad, the head of science and research for The World Resources Institute, an environmental think tank in Washington, acknowledges that the industry’s safety record has been pretty good.

(To Jhirad) Why are so many people afraid of it?

DAVID JHIRAD, head of science and research for The World Resources Institute:
When there's a small probability of a catastrophe people think about the catastrophe and not the small probability.

KROFT:
(To Jhirad) Why have the French accepted it? And what is there about the two cultures that may influence that?

JHIRAD:
The French love high technology. Whether it be nuclear power. Or supersonic airplanes. Or high-speed trains. They love that. And they love, they accord huge respect and credibility to scientists and engineers.

KROFT:
(V/O) nuclear power can help solve some of the world's environmental problems.

(To Jhirad) One of the things the French tell us is that they consider nuclear power to be a green energy source. Accurate?

JHIRAD:
Accurate, except for one thing, which is perhaps the Achilles' heel of nuclear power. It's certainly accurate that the plants emit no carbon dioxide. The one thing that needs to be solved is the issue of long term radioactive waste storage and management.