Cultural Diversity in Advertising and Representing Different Visions of America

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Our research explores how consumers with differing visions of America and its values evaluate cultural diversity in advertising. Consumers who support America’s dominant ideology more negatively evaluate ads with cultural diversity. This reverses when ads depict other cultures as loving America, or when ads sell American brands to other countries.

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The Value of Consumer Values: Explaining Value-Motivated Cognition and Behavior
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Paper #1: How Beauty Work Affects Judgments of Moral Character
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Paper #2: Cultural Diversity in Advertising and Representing Different Visions of America
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Paper #3: Global Character and Motivated Moral Decoupling Among Liberals and Conservatives
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Paper #4: Introducing the Implication Model of the Motivated Cognition
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SESSION OVERVIEW

Values matter. Value conflicts trigger international wars and shape political discourse. In hopes to strategically use values’ powers, firms craft value statements and design value-laden advertisements to attract employees and brands. For instance, Coca Cola’s 2014 Super Bowl commercial sought to bridge the gap between the values of diversity and patriotism. Additionally, Dove’s continuing #RealBeauty and #RealStrength campaigns aim to update traditional values to increase inclusiveness and authenticity. However, though policymakers, practitioners, and researchers across disciplines know the motivating power of values, more work is needed to achieve a nuanced and comprehensive understanding, and to thus ultimately effectively wield the value of consumers’ values.

Currently, consumer research has only begun to connect with perspectives from neighboring disciplines that highlight values and ideologies, and integrative models unifying findings on value-motivated cognition remain scarce and nascent. Besides deepening our understanding of fundamental political values and certain under-researched values related to essential character and true self, this work can help illuminate how and when values lead to attitude change versus steadfast denial, and thus help marketers navigate value conflicts from political macro pro-social issues to personal choices on the beauty isle. This session seeks to advance connections with these outside perspectives, build an integrative theoretical foundation around values, and broaden the scope of consumer research within this key area.

The first two papers examine how values shape consumers’ judgments of individuals and firms. Yang and colleagues reveal how greater effort in enhancing one’s appearance threatens values about truthfully representing one’s essential self. Shepard and colleagues find that diversity appeals, such as the 2014 Coca Cola ad, may have polarizing effects based on consumers’ values, provoking negative reactions from those who ideologically support the current American system. Both papers demonstrate the malleability of these effects, developing message framings that affirm these values and minimize threats.

The final two papers provide perspective on how and when values lead to motivational biases in cognition. Bhattacharjee and colleagues show that due to differences in values emphasizing essential character, conservatives selectively separate immoral behaviors from professional performance less than liberals, providing one of the first demonstrations that conservative ideology can in some circumstances reduce motivated reasoning. Finally, Campbell and Kay present a parsimonious model to unify ideas from the recent explosion of research on value-based motivated cognition across fields. This integrative model provides insight into the often hidden source of motivated cognitions, the multiple paths they often take, and how to reduce these biases.

Together, these papers explore novel territory, lay a theoretical foundation in an underexplored, growing area, and stimulate deeper questions. Namely, which sorts of values are most susceptible to threat, and which tend to motivate moderation rather than polarization? When and how can values conflicts be resolved and thus reduce interpersonal conflict? Given the fundamental role values play in our lives, we expect this session to interest researchers of value and preference, motivated reasoning, culture, identity, and moral and social judgment. We hope this audience can help us ponder these questions, engage in a fruitful dialogue, further advance connections, and collectively broaden our perspectives.

How Beauty Work Affects Judgments of Moral Character

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

Consumers devote countless hours and billions of dollars on appearance and beauty practices (i.e., beauty work, Kwan and Trautner 2009) because physical attractiveness leads to numerous positive outcomes (Langlois et al. 2000). However, an odd paradox exists: attractive people are generally perceived more favorably, but people who put a lot of effort in pursuing attractiveness are generally viewed negatively.

We propose that this occurs because an individual’s appearance holds symbolic, informative value in person perception. Attractiveness is perceived as a reliable indicator of fitness, health, and reproductive value, which is largely predetermined genetically (Langlois et al. 2000). Furthermore, people tend to use attractiveness as a global, general indicator of how good or bad an individual’s “true nature” is – something people are born with that they cannot change (Dion et al. 1972). Thus, by engaging in high levels of effort to upgrade or change one’s appearance, one may also be perceived as masking who they truly are. We posit that extensive beauty work is perceived as indicative of poor moral character because such effort implies that one is misrepresenting one’s “true essence” in order to acquire undeserved benefits. We test this effect and downstream consequences across 4 studies, focusing on the beauty work of women since they face the greatest pressure to conform to beauty standards (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997).

In study 1, we show that effort in beauty work influences judgments of moral character and perceived effectiveness in various roles. Female undergraduates were told that “Jenna” spent either 10 minutes or 2 hours getting ready to go out for an evening. When Jenna spent 2 hours getting ready, participants expected her not only to have poor moral character (moral, ethical, r=.70), but also to be a worse student, friend, sister, daughter, athlete and artist (all p’s <
.01). Ratings of moral character also mediated the effect of effort on participants’ judgment of Jenna, consistent with prior research finding that judgments of moral character are perceived as relevant to various domains (Blasi 2005).

In study 2, we show that the effort-morality link is unique to the beauty domain. Female undergraduates (N=101) read that Jenna put high or low effort into her beauty or academic work. A 2(effort: low vs. high) x 2(domain: beauty vs. academic) ANOVA revealed a two-way interaction (p<.01) where Jenna was rated as having poorer moral character (moral, ethical, genuine, sincere, α=.88; Walker and Hennig 2004) when she exerted high relative to low effort on beauty work (M_{High}=4.11 vs. M_{Low}=4.70, p<.05) but not on academic effort (M_{High}=4.90 vs. M_{Low}=4.61, ns). Given that individuals also serve to gain personally with academic success, the null effect in the academic domain rules out the possibility that negative perceptions of high effort for personal gain drove our effects.

In study 3, we examine the underlying mechanism, testing whether perceptions of misrepresenting oneself drive our effects on judgments of moral character. We also examined whether this effort-morality link exists in consumers’ expectations for how they themselves would be perceived by others. Female undergraduates (N=92) were told that they heard that a new friend spent 10 minutes or 2 hours getting ready (third person) or that a new friend learned the same information about them (first person). We measured moral character (same items as in S2, α=.90) and misrepresentation with two items (e.g., to what extent would you believe that she is trying to put forth an image of someone she is not, r=.83).

A 2(effort: high vs. low) x 2(perspective: third vs. first) ANOVA found only a main effect of effort on both ratings of moral character (p<.01) and perceptions of misrepresentation (p<.01). High effort garnered more negative ratings of moral character in both the third person (M_{High}=4.19 vs. M_{Low}=5.30, p<.01) and first person condition (M_{High}=3.73 vs. M_{Low}=5.18, p<.01). High effort also led to higher ratings of misrepresentation in both the third (M_{High}=4.17 vs. M_{Low}=2.09, p<.01) and first person condition M_{High}=4.55 vs. M_{Low}=2.06, p<.01). A bootstrapping moderated mediation analysis revealed misrepresentation mediated the effect of effort on moral character ratings in both the third (95% CI: -.94, -.22) and first person conditions (95% CI: -.10, -.34). Thus, these negative perceptions of high effort hold regardless of whether one is evaluating others or anticipating being evaluated by others.

In study 4, we use an advertising context to identify a boundary condition for our effects. We posit that extensive beauty work signals poor moral character because such behavior is perceived as misrepresenting one’s “true essence.” This suggests that if we can reframe the meaning of beauty work from reflecting one’s true self to reflecting one’s desire to enhance one’s best qualities that one already possesses, the effect of effort should be mitigated. To test this prediction, female Mturk participants (N=140) were presented with an ad for “PerfectSkin” foundation that required high or low effort to use and emphasized that the product would allow their “true self” or “best self” to shine through.

A 2(effort: high vs. low) x 2(message: true self vs. best self) ANOVA found two-way interactions on both ratings of one’s moral character (same items as prior studies, α=.90, p<.05), and willingness to purchase PerfectSkin (p<.05). Participants felt that purchasing PerfectSkin would hurt their moral character more when the product required high relative to low effort, but only in the “true self” (M_{High}=3.23 vs. M_{Low}=4.22, p<.01) and not the “best self” condition (M_{High}=3.60 vs. M_{Low}=3.71, ns). Similarly, effort influenced participants’ willingness to purchase PerfectSkin in the “true self” (M_{High}=4.19 vs. M_{Low}=5.28, p<.05) but not “best self” condition (M_{High}=4.57 vs. M_{Low}=4.52, ns). Further analysis confirmed that ratings of moral character mediated the effect of effort on purchase interest but only in the “true self” (95% CI: -.1.09, -.25) and not the “best self” condition (95% CI: -.37, .55).

Taken together, our studies provide support for the notion that high effort spent in enhancing one’s attractiveness is indicative of poor moral character because such beauty work implies that one is misrepresenting oneself and preventing others from accurately judging one’s “true essence.”

Cultural Diversity in Advertising and Representing Different Visions of America

**EXTENDED ABSTRACTS**

It is important for brands to reflect the growing diversity of America in their advertising, particularly brands that reflect American culture and values. Despite this, little research has sought to understand how consumers respond to diversity in advertising. Past work has investigated how ethnic minorities respond to ads depicting individuals from their cultural group (Brunbaugh and Grier 2006; Lee, Fernandez, and Martin 2002; Ueltschy 2001). However, ads depicting cultural diversity also have the potential to reflect American society and how different cultures view America, and so consumers may respond to these ads differently depending on their views of America in general.

System justification theory (Jost & Banaji 1994) posits that there are individual differences in how satisfied one is with the current state of society and the values that one stands for. Those who are high in system confidence are satisfied with their society and its dominant ideology, whereas those low in system confidence are less supportive of their society and the values it represents. Higher system confidence predicts a preference for brands that show explicit support for one’s social system (Banfield et al 2011; Cutright et al. 2011) and brands that reflect the values of the society’s dominant ideology (Shepherd, Chartrand, and Fitzsimons 2015).

**Hypotheses**

Cultural diversity in advertising has the potential to reflect American society and embody a view of America that is either consistent or inconsistent with a consumer’s beliefs and values. One way to interpret diversity in an ad is that minorities are changing America, which those high in system confidence should respond negatively to (H1). However, cultural diversity in ads may also communicate the idea that different cultures love America and American brands (e.g., Coca-Cola’s “America the Beautiful” ad from the 2014 Super Bowl). Ads with culturally affirming messages such as this should be particularly appealing to consumers high in system confidence, who have favorable impressions of America and its global power and influence (H2). Finally, depicting cultural diversity in ads in the service of selling American brands to foreign countries and exporting American values should also be appealing to those high in system confidence (vs. those low in system confidence, or when the ads are for a domestic audience).

**Research**

In Study 1, 180 American participants first rated their level of confidence in their social system using the system justification scale (Kay and Jost 2003). They then viewed a series of ads created by the researchers (matched as closely as possible) which depicted either white and/or heterosexual actors vs. non-white or homosexual actors (i.e., cultural diversity). We found that those who were higher in system confidence (i.e., those who subscribe to America’s dominant
ideology and its values) liked ads that contained cultural diversity less than the ads that did not (H1). This was in part due to their perception that minorities threaten traditional American values. The reverse was found for those lower in system confidence.

In Study 2, 200 American participants were then randomly assigned to either a baseline “no ad” condition, or our experimental condition where they viewed Coca-Cola’s “America the Beautiful” ad from the 2014 Super Bowl, depicting people from various cultures singing “America the Beautiful” in different languages (“ad condition”). The study was run shortly after the commercial aired. Participants then rated their attitude toward Coca-Cola (reflects ideal values, ethical, likeable; α = .90). We predicted that those high in system confidence would rate Coca-Cola more favorably in the ad condition because it affirms their view of America and depicts the world as loving America (H2). First those high in system confidence rated Coca-Cola more favorably in the ad condition compared to the no ad condition, and compared to those lower in system confidence. Second, Study 3 (n = 152) presented participants the same ad, and found that those higher in system confidence were more likely to perceive the ad as affirming America’s greatness and that world loves America, which in turn predicted their more favorable evaluations of the brand. Thus, Studies 2 and 3 in combination provide support for H2.

Another way that cultural diversity in ads may affirm America and its values is when the ad is for a foreign (as opposed to domestic) market, thus exporting American culture and exposing the rest of the world to American brands. This should be particularly appealing to those high in system confidence (H3). We explore this in Study 4 (n = 186) by measuring system confidence and then presenting participants with ads that cater to different ethnic/cultural groups. Critically, the ads were presented as being for an American audience (“domestic” condition) or for a foreign audience (“foreign” condition). Consistent with H3, those higher in system confidence significantly preferred the ads in the foreign condition vs. the domestic condition. No such effect was found among those low in system confidence.

In short, cultural diversity in advertising has the potential to reflect a view of America that is either desirable, or undesirable to consumers, depending on how those consumers view America in general. We find that those who are satisfied and confident in America respond negatively to cultural diversity in ads, but respond positively to ads with cultural diversity content when the ad suggests that (i) the world loves America, or (ii) when diversity is in the service of exporting American culture and brands to other countries. Implications are discussed.

Global Character and Motivated Moral Decoupling Among Liberals and Conservatives

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

From preferences for public policies to personal consumption decisions, political ideology is a pervasive influence on individual behavior (Khan Misra & Singh 2013).

Political issues are deeply enmeshed with powerful motivational forces like individual identity, morality, and values (Haidt 2012). Motivational biases are thus essential to understanding how consumers process information related to moral or political issues (Ditto, Pizarro and Tannenbaum 2009; Kahn et al. 2012). An influential stream of prior research suggests that political conservatism is associated with greater motivated reasoning in general (Eidelman 2012; Jost et al. 2003). Nevertheless, it may be important to investigate reasoning in specific contexts.

The current research examines how ideology affects the prevalence of consumer reasoning processes that often arise in the wake of public scandals. From Chris Christie to Brian Williams, the list of scandals involving public figures is varied and continually growing. Recent research finds that such situations can lead motivated consumers to engage in moral decoupling, a reasoning process by which they selectively dissociate immoral actions from judgments of professional performance (Bhattacharjee, Berman and Reed 2013).

We investigate ideological differences and motivational biases in how people judge the professional relevance of immoral personal behaviors by public figures. Three studies show that political liberalism is associated with greater moral decoupling, an effect rooted in conservatives’ greater belief that global character drives behavior across contexts. We also find clear evidence of motivational bias across the political spectrum in these judgments, and this evidence appears more robust among liberal respondents.

Study 1 examined the association between political ideology and general beliefs about the professional relevance of personal morality. On three items assessing beliefs about moral decoupling (e.g., “Judgments of job performance should remain separate from judgments of morality.”), agreement declined with individual political conservatism (r(207) = -.14, p<.008). This association held in regressions controlling for demographic factors such as age, gender, and education.

To examine more contextualized judgments in Study 2, we presented a scenario (described as an excerpt from a news article) about a Democrat versus Republican governor. The article reported that the governor had been popular and effective in office, but recently admitted to either having an ongoing extramarital affair with a campaign worker or implementing legislation that increased profits for companies in which he was invested. As a proxy for ideology and a means of manipulating motivation, we recruited registered Democrat and Republican voters. Results revealed a main effect of participants’ party affiliation on judgments of professional relevance: Democrats were more likely than Republicans to decouple both types of immoral acts from performance (M=4.44 vs. 3.58, F(1,1012)=37.41, p<.001). A two-way interaction between participant and governor party affiliation indicated motivational bias in decoupling judgments: participants from both parties advocated separating immorality from performance more strongly when the governor’s affiliation matched their own (F(1,1012)=35.09, p<.001). In these scenarios, Democrat voters exhibited significantly greater motivational bias than Republicans (F(1,1012)=4.61, p=.032).

These results persisted when controlling for participants’ judgments of the immorality of the governor’s actions. Hence, these patterns do not seem to be driven solely by ideological variation in caring about moral violations, and judgments of professional relevance and immorality appear to be distinct. Our third study assessed this possibility more carefully and examined what drives these effects.

Prior research demonstrates that liberals tend to care relatively more about moral violations related to harm and fairness, while conservatives tend to care relatively more about violations related to ingroup loyalty, authority, and purity (Graham, Haidt and Nosek 2009). Accordingly, in Study 3 we examined violations prettested to relate to each moral foundation: harm (abusing pets, harassing overweight people), fairness (rigging art competitions, discriminating against minorities), ingroup loyalty (divulging friends’ secrets, disowning family members), authority (disrespecting parents, disrupting political ceremony), and purity (drinking urine in a performance art piece, eating a dog that died naturally). To investigate ideological variation in moral decoupling outside the political domain, we
examined how Democrat and Republican voters responded to these personal transgressions being committed by a high school principal.

As before, Democrat voters decoupled these immoral acts from professional performance more readily than Republicans ($F(1,530)=29.43, p<.001$). This effect was directionally consistent within each moral foundation, with no two-way interaction. On the contrary, party affiliation had only a marginal main effect on judgments of immorality and interacted significantly with moral foundation ($F(4,530)=5.96, p<.001$). Across the three moral foundations associated with conservatism (ingroup, authority, purity), Democrats both judged violations as less severe ($M=5.34$ vs. $6.30, p<.001$) and decoupled them more readily from performance ($M=6.09$ vs. $4.91, p<.001$). More notably, even on the two foundations associated with liberalism (harm, fairness), for which Democrats judged violations as more severe ($M=7.07$ vs. $6.48, p=.037$), they exhibited greater moral decoupling than Republicans ($M=5.08$ vs. $4.49, p=.035$). Mediation analyses found that the effects of political ideology on the extent of moral decoupling were mediated by individual belief in global character (indirect effect $=-.029$, SE $=.013$, 95% CI $[-.060,-.008]$). There were no indirect effects related to the importance of role models, moral rationalization of violations, judgments of immorality, or judgments of moral character.

While ideology affects judgments of immorality inconsistently across different sorts of violations, we find consistently greater moral decoupling among liberals compared to conservatives in both political and apotethical contexts. Our findings suggest that conservatism may not always translate to greater motivated reasoning. Emphasizing essential global character may increase motivational biases in some contexts but reduce them in others.

**Introducing The Implication Model of Motivated Cognition**

**EXTENDED ABSTRACTS**

Recently, motivated cognition research (Kunda 1990) has seen an influx of value and important belief based motivated cognition (Haidt, 2007; Jost, 2006). Conducted in fields other than consumer research, this work shows how deeply people engage in biased thinking to maintain their cherished values and important beliefs and how this can strongly influence consumer behavior and reactions to marketing appeals, such as pro-social appeals (Feygina, Jost, & Goldsmith 2010).

Though value and non-value based motivated cognition is both prevalent and important, all research literatures currently lack a parsimonious meta-level-model to explain when motivated cognition will occur, what direction it will take, and by what means (e.g. denial of fact v. denial of implication). Without such a model we problematically may often miss the true source of motivated cognition and the manner it takes.

To address this gap and need, we present for first time the Implication Model of Motivated Cognition (IMMC). The model distinctively includes a focus on the implications of a fact, not only the characteristic of the fact. For instance climate change has factual characteristics such as weather dangers but also implications beyond fact, such as the need for political solutions, of which both may bias cognition.

The following is the IMMC’s “belief narrative” three-part structure: 1) a fact 2) implies 3) conclusion. In the model the “fact” doesn’t necessarily need to be true, the “implies” logical, nor the “conclusion” correct. These are placeholders for information, of which alterations can greatly affect acceptance of other parts of the chain.

To illustrate, consider further the case of climate change where the dominate narrative chain is that 1) the fact: dangerous climate change exists 2) which implies 3) the conclusion: danger and enacting liberal policies to fight the danger. Here the implied conclusion may motivate certain individuals to deny the fact more. In this conservatives may deny the fact more because the solutions are particularly antithetical and threatening to their values. Note that a simple model of motivated cognition would only focus on the aspects of climate facts (e.g., the dangerous weather consequence). Such a “fact only model” would not predict differential motivations for conservatives and liberals. However, the IMMC does predict such and these predictions are support by recently published experiments from our lab (Campbell & Kay, 2014).

Next, we explain published and unpublished findings from our lab and other labs, to illustrate contribution of the IMMC framework. **Solution Aversion**

As shown above in the climate change and similar climate change experiment conducted outside our lab (Feygina et al., 2010), the IMMC predicts that the associated solutions to problems can motivate denial of fact beyond the severity of the problem, in a sub pattern of the IMMC we call “solution aversion” (Campbell & Kay, 2014). Conceptually related, Ditto and Liu (2013) experimentally find people deny the factual efficacy of capital punishment, the more they see execution as deontologically aversive. **Problem Exaggeration**

The IMMC also predicts that especially desirable solutions may lead to exaggeration of problems. In a series of recent unpublished experiments conducted on Reddit.com, we find evidence of this prediction, such that when a problem (e.g. the common cold) is said to be in part solved by one’s important beliefs (e.g. using one’s personal scientific discipline) versus a neutral set of beliefs (e.g. another scientific discipline), people exaggerate the severity of the problem. Here, the exaggeration of the fact implies a more self-aggrandizing conclusion that one’s important beliefs (values, skills, and group) are important and this accordingly motivates exaggeration. **Denial of Implication**

Past work has found people will accept facts they are strongly motivated to deny when factual evidence is strong. However, we argue such “de-biasing” is not always a great cause for celebration. This is because though people may accept the fact, they may deny the implication, e.g. denying stage two in the case of a narrative we experimentally examined 1) fact: gay parents can be just as good parents, 2) this implies, 3) the conclusion: gay marriage should be legal. In a recent set of published (Friesen, Campbell, & Kay 2015) and a new line of unpublished experiments, we find people motivated to maintain certain beliefs from God to politics to consumer electronics, take a “flight from fact” and transform their beliefs to be more unfalsifiable when potentially falsifying facts seem more likely to endanger the narrative belief chain. **Accepting Conclusions**

For completeness, we present another untested prediction of the IMMC: people will be more likely to accept the logical validity of a belief narrative with an undesirable conclusion, if they feel it lacks factual validity (e.g. accepting the idea that climate change would imply government policies, but believe the evidence does not support the fact climate change exists).

The IMMC’s Future – Advancing Connections With Affirmation

Affirmation (Sherman & Cohen 2006) research has received a high level of attention in the psychology literature but less attention so in the consumer literature, especially when considering practical consumer applications. Particularly, we see affirmation as a force that can manage people’s sensitivity to implied conclusions of facts.
For instance, those wishing to persuade system justifiers that America needs to be more environmental and motivated, may find success when they also emphasize that America is already quite environmental or generally a fine country, a different strategy that derogates America may work better for anti system Americans.

In sum, we encourage researchers and practitioners to be more aware of the implications of their communications and present the IMMC as a parsimonious but rich and ubiquitous model to help predict, understand, and alter motivated interpretation of fact-implication-conclusion narrative belief chains.

REFERENCES


When, Why, and How People Advocate  
Chairs: Lauren Cheatham, Stanford University, USA  
Zakary Tormala, Stanford University, USA

Paper #1: Finding vs. Receiving: How Content Acquisition Affects Sharing  
Zoey Chen, University of Miami, USA  
S. Jonah Berger, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Paper #2: When is Saying Believing? Sharing Sensations after Tasting New Products  
Salvador Ruiz de Maya, University of Murcia, Spain  
Inés López López, University of Murcia, Spain  
Sarah Moore, University of Alberta, Canada

Paper #3: The Curvilinear Relationship between Attitude Certainty and Attitudinal Advocacy  
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Zakary Tormala, Stanford University, USA

Derek Rucker, Northwestern University, USA  
David Dubois, INSEAD, France  
Adam Galinsky, Columbia University, USA

SESSION OVERVIEW

Although considerable research has explored the psychological antecedents and consequences of persuasion, very little attention has been paid to when, why, and how consumers choose to advocate on behalf of their own beliefs regarding issues or products. In this session, we define advocacy as either: (A) sharing or expressing one’s opinion about an issue or product, or (B) making an explicit effort to persuade others toward one’s opinion about an issue or product. Across four papers, we attempt to answer when, why, and how people choose to share their opinions, make recommendations, or persuade others, and we explore how those exposed to such advocacy react in a variety of contexts.

The current session will provide insight into the fundamental drivers of consumer advocacy and the myriad ways in which consumers respond to information sharing and persuasion attempts. Chen and Berger focus on sharing and word of mouth. They find important differences in the effects of receiving content from others versus finding it themselves: When people receive content from others, they share interesting but not boring content; however, when they find the content themselves, they do not discriminate and end up sharing both interesting and boring content. Moore, López, and De Maya focus primarily on how learning others’ opinions influences consumers’ product evaluations. Specifically, they investigate when and why consumers are influenced by others’ opinions. They show that exposure to others’ opinions impacts subsequent evaluations and purchase intentions of products, even when a participant has direct experience with the product and shows initial dislike. Interestingly, they also find that the type of information consumers receive shapes these effects: receiving more information in the form of an explanation reduces reliance on others’ opinions compared to receiving relatively little explanation. Cheatham and Tormala explore the curvilinear relationship between attitude certainty and advocacy. Their findings suggest that being very high or very low in certainty can foster advocacy relative to having moderate certainty. The unexpected relationship between uncertainty and advocacy is attenuated by self-affirmation, suggesting that consumers express advocacy intentions as a way to compensate for feeling threatened by a lack of certainty. Finally, Rucker, Dubois, and Galinsky demonstrate a power-matching effect in message generation and recipient responsiveness. Participants induced to high/low power are more convincing in their argument generation – and also more persuaded by others – when source-recipient power matches rather than mismatches. Their results offer a framework for understanding how power affects the communication and reception of persuasive messages.

Taken together, these papers provide deeper understanding of the specific experiential and social drivers of consumer advocacy. In so doing, this session offers new insight into an extremely important yet understudied topic. Consumer advocacy is a crucial component of the marketing mix and we expect that this session will attract a diverse audience, including researchers interested in persuasion, influence, advocacy, word of mouth, and power, among other topics. In addition, each paper will discuss practical applications, giving the session both theoretical and managerial importance.

Finding vs. Receiving: How Content Acquisition Affects Sharing

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

People often share online content with others. They email videos, forward new stories, and post status updates. Consistent with the importance of this phenomenon, a great deal of recent research has begun to examine what people share and why (Berger and Milkman 2012; Chen and Berger 2013). But might how people acquire content also influence whether or not they share it? Sometimes people find content themselves (e.g., coming across it while browsing a website), while other times people receive content from others (e.g., email forwards and retweets). Might these different methods of content acquisition impact sharing, and if so, how?

We theorize that one way acquisition method impacts sharing is by affecting how people evaluate content. People tend to associate found content with themselves and received content with others. Further, people tend to hold themselves in positive regard (e.g., high self-esteem, positive illusions about themselves) and tend to be less critical of things associated with the self. Consequently, compared to received content, people should be less likely to critically process found content and thus be less attuned to underlying content characteristics (e.g., whether it is interesting or well-written). Taken together, this suggests that when people find (vs. receive) content, characteristics of the content itself should have less of an impact on whether it gets shared.

In Study 1, participants were randomly assigned to either find or receive a more or less interesting article (2x2 between subjects design). Those in the receiving condition were told “Imagine that someone emailed you the following article.” Those in the finding condition went onto a mock online news website and flip through the newspaper by clicking the Next button located on the bottom of the page. After flipping through a couple of filler pages (which only displayed the messages “Article A/B/C”), participants were shown either a low or highly interesting article (pretested). After reading the content, participants indicated (1) how likely they would be to share the article and (2) how interesting they found the article.

Participants said they would be more likely to share the more interesting article, but this was moderated by acquisition method. While receivers were much more willing to share the high than the
low interest article, finders were less discriminating between the two. Moderated mediation confirms that this is driven by sensitivity to underlyng content quality (interestingness in this case): While receivers were highly sensitive to content interestingness, and were thus more likely to share the high than the low interest content, finders saw less of a difference between the articles and their willingness to share was driven less by the content itself.

Study 2 provides further evidence for our theorizing in a more controlled setting. We selected one article and created high and low quality versions by adding typos. Participants followed the same finding versus receiving procedures used in study 1. Instead of rating the article on interestingness, participants indicated how well-written they found the article. Consistent with study 1, receivers were more likely to share the article without typos than the one with typos, finders were less discriminating and were equally likely to share the two. Moderated mediation shows that this is driven by finders being less sensitive to how well-written the articles were and thus making sharing decisions that are less dependent on underlying content characteristic. If our results – that finders are less sensitive to content characteristics— are indeed driven by people being less critical of things associated with themselves as we have theorized, then this effect should be attenuated among people who are more self-critical. Studies 3 and 4 test this idea.

Study 3 employs a 2 (Content quality: low vs. high interest) x self-esteem (measured) design. All participants imagined finding content and followed the same procedures used in study 1 with the addition of an implicit self-esteem measure (Bosson, Swann Jr., and Pennebaker, 2000). Not surprisingly, participants (in this case, all finders) were more willing to share the high than the low interest content, but importantly this is moderated by self-esteem. Moderated mediation shows that as finders’ self-esteem decreases (i.e., as they become more critical of themselves), they become more sensitive to the underlying content characteristic (interestingness in this case), which in turn drives sharing.

Our last study further tests the role of self-esteem using a 2 (self-esteem: high vs. low) x 2 (Acquisition method: receiving vs. finding) x 2 (Content quality: low vs. high interest) between-subjects design. We manipulated self-esteem by giving participants positive or negative feedback on their performance on an unrelated task (adapted from Baumeister and Tice 1985; Forgas 1991). The rest of the study is identical to study 1. For participants in the high self-esteem condition, results were the same as the prior studies: finders’ willingness to share depended less on characteristics of the content itself. Inducing low self-esteem, however, made finders look more like receivers: both finders’ and receivers’ willingness to share was equally sensitive to underlying content characteristics. It’s only when finders are primed to be self-critical that they become more sensitive to content characteristic.

Taken together, these four studies show that how people acquire content affects their subsequent sharing behavior. Compared to people who received content from others, the willingness to share of people who found content themselves depended less on the characteristics of the content. Further, this was driven by people’s tendency to be less critical of things associated with the self (as long as the self is seen positively). More broadly, this research contributes to understanding why people share. It is not just characteristics of the content itself, but also how content is acquired, that determines sharing.
opinion information after tasting the jellybean, their evaluations were still influenced. However, the valence manipulation in study 2 revealed that participants were influenced by others’ opinions only when they sampled disliked, rather than liked, jellybeans. This effect was so strong that participants’ final, “tuned” evaluations of the disliked jellybean were equivalent to their evaluations of the liked jellybean. Thus, studies 1 and 2 suggest that shared reality effects in the marketplace are fairly robust. In contrast, studies 3 and 4 identify a variable that attenuates these effects and allows consumers to rely on their own evaluations rather than on others’.

Study 3 shows that explaining can decrease consumers’ reliance on others’ opinions. One might predict that receiving additional information—of any kind—about others’ opinions should lead consumers to rely on them even more; however, we find the opposite. Compared to participants who received no information about others’ opinions and to participants who received basic information about others’ opinions (e.g., 95% of consumers like this muffin), those who received an explanation of others’ opinions (e.g., 95% of consumers like this muffin because it is sugar free) did not “tune” their evaluations to others’ opinions. We suggest that this is because the explanation decreases ambiguity enough to allow consumers to rely on—and to explain—their own experience with the product, without reference to others.

Study 4 (in progress) will further test the effects of explaining on shared reality by looking at hedonic versus utilitarian products (e.g., a gummy candy vs. a gummy vitamin) crossed with hedonic versus utilitarian explanations (I like this gummy because it’s tasty vs. healthy). We predict an explanation by product type interaction (Moore 2012), where receiving hedonic reasons will reduce ambiguity for the hedonic product, and receiving utilitarian reasons will reduce ambiguity for the utilitarian product; this should decrease consumers’ reliance on others’ opinions and reduce the shared reality effect. We should find a shared reality effect only when others’ explanations fail to reduce ambiguity—that is, when consumers receive a hedonic reason for liking a utilitarian product or a utilitarian reason for liking a hedonic product, they should still tune their evaluation to others’.

The current research provides a nuanced picture of when and why consumers are influenced by others’ opinions in the marketplace. We find that shared reality motives have a strong impact on consumers’ evaluations and intentions to purchase new products—in our behavioral measure, such that participants actually advocated more at the low and high ends of certainty than in our behavioral measure, such that participants actually advocated more at the low and high ends of certainty than.

The Curvilinear Relationship between Attitude Certainty and Attitudinal Advocacy

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

From gun control to vaccinations to new product purchases, consumers are constantly advocating their beliefs. On Facebook, for example, friends bombard each other with countless posts commenting on current world events, exciting new products, or the hottest new bar. What drives a person to advocate on behalf of these beliefs? Despite a voluminous literature exploring the antecedents and consequences of persuasion more generally, surprisingly little is known about the determinants of attitudinal advocacy.

One factor that does appear to contribute to advocacy is attitude certainty. Attitude certainty refers to the subjective sense of confidence or conviction with which one holds one’s attitude (Rucker, Tormala, Petty, and Briñol 2014). Certainty traditionally has been viewed as a dimension of attitude strength in that it shapes an attitude’s durability and impact. For example, attitudes held with certainty are more resistant to change and more influential over people’s choices and behaviors (Tormala and Rucker 2007). Most relevant to the current research, it also has been shown to contribute to advocacy intentions and actual advocacy behavior—people generally advocate more on behalf of their own attitudes and opinions (e.g., share them with others and seek to persuade others to their views) when they hold those attitudes and opinions with certainty (Akhtar, Paunesku, and Tormala 2013; Barden & Petty, 2008; Cheatham and Tormala under review; Visser, Krosnick, & Simmons, 2003).

However, there is also reason to believe that states of low certainty can foster advocacy type behavior. According to Gal and Rucker (2010), when a consumer’s confidence about a particular belief is undermined, he or she may feel threatened and engage in compensatory action that includes advocating more aggressively on behalf of the threatened belief. In a similar vein, Rios, Wheeler and Miller (2012) found that inducing people to feel self-uncertainty sometimes led them to express minority opinions more freely.

In short, based on past research there is potential controversy surrounding the role of attitude certainty in directing attitudinal advocacy. We propose that this difference might be explained by the fact that past research has examined attitude certainty at different points on the certainty continuum: moderate to high certainty in studies showing a positive relation between certainty and advocacy and low to moderate certainty in studies showing a negative relation. Our central hypothesis is that attitude certainty has a curvilinear relationship with attitudinal advocacy, such that people advocate more when they feel very uncertain or very certain, and advocate less when they are somewhere in between (i.e., moderate certainty). More specifically, we submit that high certainty fosters feelings of efficacy, which have been shown to promote advocacy in past work (Akhtar et al. 2013), whereas low certainty fosters compensatory motives, which lead people to advocate as a means of self-affirmation (Gal and Rucker 2010). We present 3 studies testing these relationships.

Study 1 used a correlational design to provide initial evidence of the proposed curvilinear relationship between certainty and advocacy. Participants were presented with several policy issues and asked about their attitudes, certainty, and advocacy intentions (i.e., their intentions to share their opinion with others and to persuade others to adopt their view). To test our hypothesis we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis. First, we observed a main effect of attitude certainty on sharing and persuasion intentions for each issue: the more certain people felt, the more likely they were to advocate. More importantly, we also uncovered a quadratic for both sharing and persuasion intentions, suggesting that both very uncertain and very certain participants expressed higher advocacy intentions than participants with moderate certainty.

Study 2 aimed to experimentally manipulate three levels of certainty to provide evidence of a causal role between certainty and advocacy. Participants were asked to think of an issue they were very uncertain, somewhat certain, or very certain about, followed by the same questions as in study 1 along with an open-ended behavioral question asking them to react to someone who disagreed with them. As predicted, we successfully manipulated attitude certainty at three levels. However, our core interest was in determining whether certainty had a curvilinear relationship with advocacy. Indeed, we continued to find significant evidence for the proposed curvilinear relationship between certainty and advocacy. Moreover, this pattern was replicated in our behavioral measure, such that participants actually advocated more at the low and high ends of certainty than.
they did at moderate levels of certainty. Thus, study 2 provided experimental evidence of a causal role between certainty and advocacy.

Finally, in study 3 we aimed to provide evidence for the mechanism driving advocacy at low certainty. Specifically, if uncertain individuals express intentions to advocate because of a compensatory motivation to reduce feelings of threat or discomfort, their intentions to advocate should be attenuated following an affirmation manipulation. To test this hypothesis, we randomly assigned participants to a self-affirmation or non-affirmation control condition. Self-affirmation was manipulated using a procedure adapted from past research by Fein and Spencer (1997) and Martens, Greenberg and Schimmel (2006). Participants were then exposed to a novel policy issue about lowering the national drinking age, followed by the same series of questions as in study 2. We found a main (linear) effect of certainty on advocacy intentions, and no main effect of affirmation condition. More importantly, there was also a significant curvilinear effect of certainty on advocacy intentions that was moderated by affirmation condition. The interaction indicated that the curvilinear relationship between certainty and advocacy was obtained in the no affirmation control condition but not in the affirmation condition. When participants were affirmed, the relationship between certainty and advocacy was linear and positive. These results suggest that uncertain individuals’ advocacy is compensatory in nature, whereas highly certain individuals’ advocacy is not.

In sum, 3 studies provide evidence for the proposed advocacy hypothesis: Attitude certainty has a curvilinear relationship with advocacy such that advocacy is fostered by very high and very low certainty (relative to moderate certainty), albeit through different mechanisms. Implications for understanding and eliciting advocacy in consumer contexts will be discussed.

**The Power Matching Effect: The Dynamic Interplay of Communicator and Audience Power in Persuasion**

**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

How does power affect the type of persuasive messages communicators generate and message recipients are responsive to? Building on the proposition that high power increases individuals’ tendency to be agentic and low power increases individuals’ tendency to be communal (Dubois, Rucker, and Galinsky forthcoming; Rucker, Galinsky, and Dubois, 2012), we propose that states of powerlessness and power systematically affect the types of arguments communicators use and recipients value along two foundational dimensions of social judgments: competence and warmth (Cuddy et al. 2008). Where competence refers to perceptions of efficacy, skillfulness and confidence attached to a message, warmth captures the helpfulness, sincerity and friendliness contained in a message. Importantly, agency has been linked to competence and communion has been linked to warmth (see Rucker, Galinsky, and Dubois, 2012).

Because high-power states are associated with agency, we predict that communicators in a high-power state will generate messages related to competence and recipients in a high-power state will be more receptive to messages that emphasize competence. In contrast, because low-power states are associated with agency, we anticipate that communicators in a low-power state will generate messages related to warmth and recipients in a low-power state will be more receptive to messages that emphasize warmth. Taken together, we predict a power-matching effect: high-power communicators will be more persuasive to high-power recipients, whereas low-power communicators will be more persuasive to low-power recipients.

Two initial experiments find support for these effects in both oral and written contexts, with different manipulations of power. A third experiment demonstrates how this knowledge can be used to craft marketing messages to consumers based on knowledge of consumers’ power. Analyses used ANOVAs and t-tests as appropriate.

**Experiment 1: Testing the dynamic interplay**

Participants were assigned to the role of boss (high power) or employee (low power; Lammers et al. 2008) for a future task in the session. Their position was unknown to other participants. Next, in a different task, participants took part in a persuasion game. Participants were given the name of a remote, fictional sounding city (e.g., Lalibela) and were instructed to craft a message aimed at convincing others that this city was in a particular location of their choice (e.g., Uruguay). Participants took turns to orally convince others, and alternated in the communicator and recipient roles. As recipients, participants were asked the extent to which they believed the city was in the location the speaker talked about.

High-power communicators were overall preferred to those generated by low-power communicators. Of central importance to the power matching hypothesis, high-power recipients found messages generated by high-power communicators to be more persuasive than those generated by low-power communicators, while low-power recipients found messages generated by low-power communicators more persuasive than those generated by high-power communicators.

**Experiment 2: Testing the underlying mechanism hypothesis**

Experiment 2 tested whether differences in warmth and competence explained the dynamic interplay between communicators’ and recipients’ power. In addition, a written context, as opposed to an oral context, was used. Participants were assigned to a 3(communicators’ power: baseline, low, high) × 3(recipients’ power: baseline, low, high) between participant design. Both communicators’ and recipients’ power was manipulated through an episodic recall task where they described a time they lacked power (low-power condition), possessed power (high-power condition), or did not write anything (baseline condition, Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee 2003). Communicators wrote a persuasive message aimed at promoting their university at a local high school. These messages were then randomly presented to recipients whose task was to judge the message on three dimensions: persuasiveness; perceived competence of the message; and perceived warmth of the message.

Results replicated experiment 1: high-power recipients judged the messages generated by high-power communicators as more persuasive than those generated by low-power and baseline communicators. In contrast, low-power recipients judged the messages generated by low-power communicators as more persuasive than those generated by high-power and baseline communicators. Among baseline recipients, there was no effect of power on persuasion. Further, mediation analyses found that among high-power recipients competence but not warmth mediated the effect of communicator’s power on persuasiveness. In contrast, among low-power recipients warmth but not competence mediated the effect of communicators’ power on persuasiveness. Thus, experiment 2 replicated experiment 1 and introduced evidence for the mediating process.

**Experiment 3: Using Knowledge of Warmth and Competence to Craft Messages to Consumers**

Based on experiments 1 and 2, experiment 3 examined how a communicator could craft their own messages to resonate with recipient power. That is, rather than vary communicator power, we
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examine how a communicator could select content in their own message to persuade an audience.

Participants were exposed to an ad for a charity project. The ad was similar across conditions, with one exception: The project was supported by a “.org” in the warm condition, and by a “.com” in the competent condition. This manipulation has been used successfully to manipulate warmth and competence, respectively (Aaker et al. 2010). To measure power, we asked whether participants considered themselves more of a boss (high-power) or an employee (low-power) at work. The dependent variable was the amount of time in minutes they would spend to help with the project.

Results revealed a significant interaction, such that individuals who self-reported themselves as bosses (i.e., high-power) were willing to donate more time when the ad emphasized competence (i.e., .com) than when it emphasized warmth (i.e., .org). In contrast, individuals who self-reported themselves as employees (i.e., low-power) were significantly more willing to donate more time when the ad emphasized warmth than when it emphasized competence. In addition, differences in perceptions of warmth and competence in the charitable organization mediated low- and high-power individuals’ willingness to donate time. This experiment demonstrates how messages can be effectively crafted based on knowledge of recipients’ power.

Conclusion and Contributions

Altogether, these experiments offer a framework for understanding how power affects the communication and reception of persuasive messages. The findings have important theoretical implications for understanding interpersonal communication and persuasion as they provide the first evidence of the dynamic interplay between communicators’ and recipients’ power.

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God, Luck and the World: Consequences of Consumer Beliefs On Judgment and Choice

Chair: Yimin Cheng, Hong Kong

Paper #1: How Symbolic Fusions with Religion Imbue Products with Increased Reliability and Safety
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Paper #3: When Engaging in Luck-Rituals Reduces Risky Choice
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SESSION OVERVIEW
Consumers use different sources of information as inputs to judgment and decision-making. Some are stimulus-based, while others are drawn from memory (Lynch and Srull 1982). In both cases, consumers often recruit their beliefs to assess the available information (Wyer 2003). Previous literature has identified a number of important beliefs, such as implicit theories of essentialism (Molden and Dweck 2006) and the belief in a just world (Lerner 1980). In this session we investigate when and why consumers rely on different systems of beliefs, and the consequence of relying on such beliefs, especially on judgment and choice.

In the first paper, Shepherd, Kay and Eibach test whether belief in God influences consumer preferences for certain kinds of products. They posit that because religious consumers believe God is a source of order and stability, God can provide safety and security to their products by rituals such as blessing. Four studies find that the need for structure and personal control lead religious (but not non-religious) people to prefer blessed products.

In the second paper, Cheng, Mukhopadhyay and Schrift find that PWE, a belief system that was originally conceptualized to have its roots in religion (Weber 1905), influences consumer’s tendency to apply cost-benefit heuristics in goal pursuit. Four studies show that people with high (vs. low) PWE are more likely to assume costlier means lead to better outcomes, regardless of their objective relationship.

People who subscribe to the Protestant Work Ethic believe that hard work leads to good outcomes, whereas some people may believe that desirable outcomes are equally a function of luck. However, while religious rituals may be beneficial for certain consumers, ordinary luck rituals may not always have desirable consumer consequences. In the third paper, Dong and Labroo find that luck rituals do not always make people feel lucky. Reconciling contradictory previous literature, they find that when losses (vs. gains) are highlighted, performing luck rituals makes people even less (vs. more) likely to engage in risky choice, but only among those who believe in luck.

A belief in luck is a belief about randomness. In the fourth paper, Kwon and Nayakankuppam investigate the extent to which consumers’ beliefs about stability in the world impact their search for information and choices. They find that entity (vs. incremental) theorists believe the nature of world is stable (vs. dynamic), and as a result entity theorists search for limited (vs. sufficient) information. Simulating the world using an innovative self-designed computer game, they find that entity (vs. incremental) theorists may outperform each other depending on the true nature of the world they inhabit.

This session discusses consumers’ beliefs in God, luck, and how the world is organized, all important dimensions of an individual’s worldview. We believe that it provides fresh perspectives on a high-impact area in consumer research. This session has the potential to be well attended by researchers interested in various aspects of decision-making, and we hope that a discussion held at the cross-roads of these areas will spark lively and productive debate.

How Symbolic Fusions with Religion Imbue Products with Increased Reliability and Safety

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Marketing often involves symbolically associating a culturally resonant source domain with a novel target. Within most cultures, religion provides a rich stock of symbols to draw from for persuasive purposes (familiar examples include Chick-fil-A and In-N-Out Burger). Fusing products with religious symbols is also initiated by consumers. Indeed, 24% of respondents in a survey had purchased religious jewelry or items (i.e., decals) in the past year to attach to themselves or their personal possessions (Baylor University 2005). Catholics can have their pets blessed in remembrance of St. Francis of Assisi (Sweeney 2011). In India, cars and other products are frequently blessed by a Hindu priest.

The present research draws on compensatory control theory (Cutright 2012; Kay et al. 2008), and research on cultural laws of sympathetic magic (Frazer 1925; Rozin et al. 1986; 1990) to test a novel hypothesis regarding the kinds of symbolic fusions mentioned above, with the potential to provide new insights into the effects of symbolic associations between the sacred and consumer goods.

Maintaining perceptions of personal control is a key means of protecting one’s belief that events in life are not random (Lerner 1980). How then do people maintain belief in an orderly, non-random world even when personal control is low, or when the need to see order in the world is otherwise heightened? Compensatory control theory suggests that in such instances, people turn to extrapersonal sources of control and order to reassure themselves that something provides order and control in the world.

God is often seen as an ultimate source of order in the world. While products may also offer a sense of order (Cutright 2012; Cutright and Samper 2014; Shepherd et al. 2011), they can also be risky, unpredictable, or undermine personal control (i.e., automobiles). We propose that when compensatory control needs are high (either chronically or situationally), religious consumers may view products as more reliable sources of control and order in their lives (i.e., seeing them as more safe, reliable, and less subject to randomness) when they are symbolically linked to God. Likewise, they may also place increased importance on having consumer goods symbolically associated with God. This prediction follows from compensatory control research, as well as theory and research on the culturally universal laws of sympathetic magic, which suggests that secular objects assimilate the supernatural properties of sacred objects when they come into contact (Frazer 1925; Rozin et al. 1986; 1990).
In four studies (2 correlational, 2 experiments) across two cultural contexts, we test whether or not consumer goods are increasingly imbued with control-affirming properties when compensatory control needs are high; that is, the product will be seen as more reliable, predictable, and safe from random events.

In Study 1 we used the personal need for structure scale (PNS; Neuberg and Newsom 1993) to measure the chronic need for order and control in the world (Cutright 2012). Because we recruited a Hindu sample from India via MTurk, where English is a second language, we administered a single, face-valid, representative item from the PNS scale. Participants were then asked to rate 28 items (e.g., car, boat, bicycle, toaster, television, computer, cellphone, washing machine, etc.) on how important it is for someone to have it blessed (i.e., a puja performed by a Pujari). As predicted, those with a higher need for structure placed higher importance on having consumer goods blessed. Thus, when the (chronic) need for order in the world is high, there is an increased desire to have consumer goods blessed.

In Study 2, we explore whether or not goods that are most seen as being subject to randomness corresponds with placing increased importance on having that item blessed. The same 28 items from Study 1 were presented to 78 Indian Hindu participants. Participants were asked to rate the importance of having the item blessed and also the perceived tendency for each item to break down or stop working without warning. As predicted, products that were seen as most susceptible to random processes on average were more likely to be seen as needing to be blessed ($r = .39, p = .04$).

Is there a causal link between symbolic religious fusions and perceptions of product reliability, and does this fusion help fulfill the need to see the world as orderly and controlled? In Study 3, Indian participants (Hindu, n = 148; non-Hindu, n = 65) were recruited and randomly assigned to either complete a memory task that decreases participants’ sense of personal control, or not. They were then presented with an ad for a used car. In the fusion condition, the ad stated and showed (via images) that a puja will be performed by a pujari upon purchase, as is common at many Indian car dealerships. This material was removed in the no fusion condition. Participants were asked to rate the car’s safety and how much they trusted the car with their family’s safety. The predicted two-way interaction was significant; participants saw the blessed car as more safe, but only when personal control was threatened. This effect was unique to Hindu participants.

Study 4 replicated Study 3 with an American sample (Christian, n = 84; non-Christian, n = 82). Here, the car incidentally had a Christian symbol attached to it (i.e., an ichthys, or “Jesus fish”), or not. Again, the predicted two-way interaction was significant. As in Study 3, this effect was unique to the target religious group, suggesting that ritual/symbol relevance is important to this effect.

Companies may align themselves with a particular religion. Likewise, consumers may attach religious significance to personal possessions, sometimes explicitly to have that item and its users protected by divine forces. By examining these phenomena through the lens of compensatory control theory, four studies supported the hypothesis that secular-religious fusions can boost confidence in the safety and reliability (i.e., control affirming properties) of consumer goods, particularly when concerns about order and control in the world are heightened, either chronically or situationally (e.g., via threats to personal control).

Do Costly Options Lead to Better Outcomes? How the Protestant Work Ethic Influences Cost-benefit Heuristics

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When people have multiple means available to achieve the same performance goal and these means differ in the level of cost involved, they often use the cost of the means to predict the benefit of the outcome. Kramer, Irmak and Block (2012) found that consumers judged a bad-tasting cough syrup to be more effective than a good-tasting one. Similarly, Labroo and Kim (2009) observed that people having an accessible goal evaluated a means more favorably if that means was more effortful (vs. easier) to process. Schrift, Netzer and Kivetz (2011) also found that when a goal was important, people proactively complicated the means as if this would ensure a better outcome. Despite the prevalence of cost-benefit heuristics in goal pursuit, their cause/origin is still unknown and little empirical work has investigated it. We propose that an individual’s tendency to hold a cost-benefit heuristic may depend on the extent to which s/he subscribes to the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE).

The Protestant Work Ethic is a concept introduced by Max Weber (1905) to explain the historical rise of capitalism in Protestant countries. According to this theory, during the 16th-century Protestant reformation, Puritans deviated from the Roman Catholic Church and believed the true way of showing their faith to God was through asceticism and economic success. As a result, Puritans developed systematically stronger work ethics, which facilitated the accumulation of wealth and capitalism in Western Europe and North America rather than Mediterranean Europe. Although religion plays a less central role in modern society, the work ethic itself is still highly valued and passed on across generations through parenting, education, media, and popular culture (Giorgi and Marsh 1990; Kelvin and Jarrett 1985; McClelland et al. 1953). Hence the concept of the PWE has evolved over time. Psychologists today see it as a secular individual difference variable and have developed psychometric scales to measure it (Mirels and Garrett 1971). Research has shown, for example, that high-PWE (vs. low-PWE) people were more likely to engage in work-related activities while commuting (Greenberg 1978) and more likely to oppose taxation and blame the unemployed for their laziness (Furnham 1982, 1985).

The PWE has been regarded as one of America’s core values and national character (Hsu 1972; Katz and Hass 1988), but it has largely been ignored in the Marketing literature. Because an essential component of PWE is a work-specific belief that “if you work hard, you will succeed” (Furnham 1990; Tang 1993) and people tend to protect their core beliefs and align their other cognitions to be consistent (Lerner and Miller 1978; Plaks, Grant and Dweck 2005), we propose that people with high (vs. low) PWE are (1) more likely to use cost-benefit heuristics in their consumer judgments, and (2) more likely to choose costlier means to achieve goals even in contexts where the costs do not objectively ensure better outcomes.

Study 1 measured PWE and manipulated cost as the pleasantness of taste in medicine. MTurkers (N=152) were shown a print ad of a cough syrup that claimed it tasted either awful or great. High-PWE participants judged the bad-tasting cough syrup to be more effective. However, low-PWE participants judged both syrups as being equally effective. Replacing PWE with need for cognition or trait self-control did not generate the same pattern.

Study 2 (N=180) was conducted on MTurk five days before Christmas. We manipulated high vs. low PWE in an ostensibly unrelated task (using a pretested manipulation) by asking participants to rank six quotes that either advocated or opposed the PWE. Then all participants named a person who lived far away and to whom they
would like to send a Christmas gift. Afterwards, we asked them to imagine that there were only two unfamiliar courier brands available, one charging 50% less than the other. Results showed that participants primed with high (vs. low) PWE expected that the more expensive brand was more likely to deliver their gift in time.

Study 3 (N=213) manipulated PWE the same way as in study 2. Then all participants made real choice between two filler tasks to do (one difficult and the other easy) before they worked on the main test in which they could earn money. When the filler tasks were framed as “training tasks”, priming high (vs. low) PWE made participants more likely to choose the difficult task. When the filler tasks were framed as “unrelated tasks” and hence not as means to the performance goal, priming PWE had no impact on choice. The results implied that high-PWE people’s choice of the costlier option was not driven by alternative mechanisms such as collecting special experience (Keinan and Kivetz 2011).

Study 4 (N=170) asked students to make a real choice between two health foods, of which one was sweet and the other bitter. Echoing study 3, people high (vs. low) in PWE were more likely to choose the bitter food, but only when its efficacy was ambiguous rather than ensured. Coding of open-ended protocols revealed that cost-benefit heuristics mediated the moderation effect on choice. Moreover, two self-reported behavioral cues related to PWE (i.e., how many hours do you work on the weekend; how much in advance of appointments do you set your alarm clock) predicted the same results as the PWE scale. This implies that marketers can customize their communications to high vs. low PWE consumers by identifying them through simple observation.

Work is a dominant feature of the daily life of most adults (Giorgetti and Marsh 1990). This research shows that a person’s work-related core belief can spill over and influence consumption decisions. Four experiments showed that PWE is a parsimonious antecedent to the cost-benefit heuristics in goal pursuit, including taste-efficacy heuristic (study 1 and study 4), price-quality heuristic (study 2) and effort-outcome heuristic (study 3). Our results suggest that marketers may customize the strategy of using cost (e.g., high price, bitter taste) to signal quality depending on whether they target high or low PWE segments.

When Engaging in Luck-Rituals Reduces Risky Choice

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Risky choices might prompt consumers to engage in luck rituals. But might engaging in a luck ritual also impact risky choice? How? On the one hand, research shows that engaging in a luck-ritual enhances self-esteem (Damasich et al. 2010), provides illusory-control over outcomes, and increases positive-expectancies of success, which are known to increase risky choice (Anderson and Galinsky 2006). However, other findings show that engaging in a luck-ritual can make people more conservative (Boshier 1973; Vyse 2013), reduce self-esteem (Tobacyk and Milford 1983) and remind them of low-controllability over outcomes, which are known to reduce risky choice.

While neither set of findings directly investigates the effect of engaging in luck rituals on risky choice, both sets of findings do show effects on factors that predict opposing effects on risk-taking. Thus, it is still unclear whether and how self-engaging in luck rituals would affect risky choice. The goal of our research is to directly investigate whether luck rituals increase or reduce risky choice.

We posit that one reason why some studies appear to predict that luck rituals will increase risky choice but others the opposite is that the domains of former versus latter researchers may have differentially highlighted gains versus losses. People usually attribute good outcomes to the self (Miller and Ross 1975), and attributing outcomes to the self can increase perceived controllability over outcomes. If engaging in a luck ritual in a gain domain increases focus on potential gains and the self as agency for these gains, then people are also likely to perceive greater controllability over these outcomes, which may increase risk seeking tendency. However, when potential losses are highlighted, bad outcomes are likely to become more salient (Neumann 2000). People associate bad outcomes with external agency and external locus of control (Miller and Ross 1975), and outcomes associated with external locus of control have lower perceived controllability. People who engage in a luck ritual when potential losses are salient may infer external agency is not working for them, perceiving lower controllability over outcomes, and inferring they can end up unlucky. They may, as a result, make less risky choice. Five studies tested our propositions, underlying mechanisms, and the boundary conditions.

In Study 1 (N = 149), participants first reported frequency of engaging in luck rituals and how unlucky they consider themselves to be (embedded within demographic items). Then participants responded to a six-item scale measuring general risk aversion tendency in loss situations. As the scale focuses on losses, we find engaging frequently in luck rituals is related to avoiding risky choice, and the effect is mediated by individuals inferring that they are unlucky (95% CI: [.01, .19]). To investigate causality, we ran Study 2.

In Study 2 (N = 75), participants were asked to either engage in their favorite luck ritual or hold a pencil for the duration of the study while completing an “unrelated” survey regarding their willingness to take financial risk, highlighting potential losses as verified in a pre-test. They also indicated to what extent they felt unlucky and bad things could happen to them. Replicating the findings of Study 1, Study 2 showed that those who engage in a luck ritual indicated lower willingness to take on financial risk in loss situations compared to the controls (M\textsubscript{ritual} = 1.68, SD = .63; M\textsubscript{control} = 2.16, SD = .79, F(1, 73) = 8.56, p < .01). And the effect is driven by “feeling unlucky” (95% CI: [−.22, −.01]).

Study 3 (N = 104) investigated the moderating role of belief in luck. Participants first completed an inventory of scale items including the belief in luck scale (Darke and Freeman 1997). Participants were then randomly assigned to either a luck-ritual or a control condition. Meanwhile, participants completed a real gamble, which again highlighted potential losses (risk of not getting extra compensation; verified through pre-test). Spotlight analyses yielded that the effect of engaging in a luck ritual on risk aversion in loss domain occurred only for people who believe in luck (M\textsubscript{ritual} = .92, M\textsubscript{control} = .60, b = 1.04, SE = .38, t(100) = 2.69, p < .01) and the effect disappears for those with low belief in luck (p > .83).

Study 4 (N = 204) followed a similar procedure as Study 3 and conceptually replicated the finding of Study 3 by demonstrating the moderating role of internal versus external locus of control. We find engaging in a luck ritual (vs. not) increased risk aversion (reflected in their greater inclination to purchase additional product warranty; a loss choice-frame as verified in a pre-test) among participants with external locus of control (M\textsubscript{ritual} = .34, M\textsubscript{control} = −.18, b = .26, SE = .06, t(196) = 4.15, p < .01). This difference disappeared for participants with internal locus of control (p > .80). A moderated mediation model confirmed that perceived luck in decision-making mediated the interactive effect of luck ritual and locus of control on willingness to buy warranty (95% CI: [.01, .06]).

Finally, Study 5 (N = 200) directly manipulated gain versus loss frame and assessed participants’ risk seeking tendency. As predicted, and tying to previous findings (Block and Kramer 2009; Jiang et
of 100 tiles of 4 different colors. Under each tile is a certain payoff (negative or positive). Turning over a tile costs something. In addition to the cost of turning over a tile, one could also pay an amount to obtain some information about what is below the tile, which would then place one in a better position to decide whether to invest in turning over the tile or not (i.e., information cost). In the game, some colors are stable and predictable (they overwhelmingly pay well or overwhelmingly penalize the player). Other colors are unpredictable (they sometimes pay well and sometimes penalize the player). In other words, the stable colors reward efficiency motivations – the sooner an evaluative judgment is formed, the sooner one can avoid incurring the cost of information. The unpredictable colors reward accuracy motivations – you are well served by paying the cost of information because it lets you benefit from the subset of tiles that are rewarding and helps you avoid the lethal ones by paying a smaller cost (the information cost). We predicted that entity (incremental) theorists would ‘do’ better in the efficiency-rewarded (accuracy-rewarded) areas of the world rather than in the accuracy-rewarded (efficiency-rewarded) areas of the world.

**Experiment**

Ninety-six undergraduate students (Male = 63.5%, Average Age = 21.2) are participated in two (implicit self-theory: entity vs. incremental theorists) between-subjects design. Each participant was first primed with either entity or incremental theory (Chiu et al. 1997) and proceeded to Color-tile game. A one-way ANOVA on the number of the information options used confirmed that entity theorists hit less information options than incremental theorists (Mentity = 59.10, Mincrement = 79.00, F(1,95)=10.81, p<.001) across all colors, indicating that entity theorists were more likely to be efficiency-oriented whereas incremental theorists were more likely to be accuracy-oriented.

We predicted that as a result of these behavioral differences (i.e., number of information options used), there would be differences between entity and incremental theorists in the sources of earning. These effects should then emerge as a form of the interaction between implicit self-theory and the color of tiles. A 2 (implicit self-theory: entity X 4 (color of tiles) mixed ANOVA on rewards earned from each color demonstrated the significant interaction effect (F(3,383)=7.51, p<.001), as well as the main effects of implicit self-theory (F(1,383)=3.97, p<.05) and of color (F(3,383)=85.77, p<.001). Planned analyses revealed that entity theorists earned more at red (F(1,95)=4.87, p<.05) and yellow (F(1,95)=2.79, p=.098) than incremental theorists, whereas incremental theorists did better at blue (F(1,95)=8.95, p<.01) and green (F(1,95)=7.43, p<.01) than entity theorists. These results confirmed our contention: entity theorists tried to efficiently earn money in the game (i.e., with less number of right-clicks), whereas incremental theorists tried to accurately earn money in the game (i.e. more number of right-clicks).

**Conclusion**

The current research provides the evidence of a stable motivational bias between these kinds of individuals. Entity theorists are biased towards emphasizing efficiency motives and this results in a tendency to make quick judgments with less number of “search” for efficient judgments and decision-making, whereas incremental theorists are biased towards emphasizing accuracy motives and this results in a reluctance to make quick judgments and in more number of “search” for accurate judgments and decisions. If we extend these findings in the game (each theorist’s different strategies employed and different performances) into their daily lives, we may expect that entity theorists would do better in relatively stable and invari-