

The current presidential debate: a fight based on ideas or on personal image

[Government](#)



So What

Talking about persuasion in the year of a very heated presidential race has been interesting. Many of the concepts we talked about in class have helped me understand how I have responded to the presidential candidates.

Personally, I have been affected more by their personalities than by their actual rhetoric. My motivation to vote for either of them was low in the first place, so I was more persuaded by their SNL caricatures than by their actual selves. It's obvious in this election that many people are persuaded by peripheral means as opposed to central. For example, people don't like one because he looks like a "villain billionaire from a movie" or don't like the other because she "looks crazy." Reasoning like this supports the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Learning about this specific theory has helped me realize how I process information that is meant to persuade me.

I have also discerned that some characteristics of the Theory of Reasoned Action can help me understand my behavior as well as my intentions. For example, I've expressed to my parents that I want to vote for a third-party candidate. My dad is very adamantly against third-party candidates because he considers votes for them to be useless. For awhile, I reasoned that my dad was right, and that if I wanted the country to be under good leadership, I should vote for one of the two main candidates, although I did not particularly like either one. What my dad said about one of the candidates made me believe that he was the better choice - at that point in time, my motivation to comply was higher than it is now. However, that was during the summer when I lived at home. Now that I am at school, the normative

beliefs around me have changed – many college students are vetting for a third-party candidate. My attitude, which hadn't changed and had remained skeptical toward the two main candidates, and my motivation to comply, which was higher at school than it was at home, led me to make the decision to support and vote for a third-party candidate.

A theory that interested me the most was Inoculation Theory. There have been countless examples of this in the news as of late. Another example that I have seen has been on a local TV commercial. There are two different carpet cleaning companies in the area, and one of them has the slogan of “simple and quick.” The other one, without using the brand's name, said this in a commercial: “Sometimes simple and quick is just that: simple.” Without being explicit, the company was telling customers that the other carpet-cleaning service was sub-par to their own. Honestly, I remember that slogan more quickly now than I remember the competitor's. The next time I saw the “simple and quick” commercial, I could only think of their competitor's ad. Now I have developed a schema that “simple and quick” is bad, and the competitors are good – even though I've used neither of their services. Now that I have discovered more about the inoculation theory, I understand why this was so effective. Similarly, most of these theories of persuasion have helped me understand why some persuasive techniques work and others don't. In a time of my life when college is changing some of the schemas I've grown up with, this is important to learn and understand so I can be more knowledgeable and discerning when I come across persuasive messages.