Navigating by the Stars: The Cueing Effects of Celebrity Political Endorsements on Twitter

THESIS

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Abstract

This study investigates the power of celebrity political endorsements on Twitter to influence perceived issue importance among viewers. Manipulated Twitter feeds were shown to a sample of 254 undergraduate students. Participants were divided into four groups: strong celebrity cues, weak celebrity cues, news personalities, and a control group. The experimental groups saw Twitter feeds in which some of the celebrities’ tweets were replaced by retweeted messages about the importance of education, while the control group saw only actual, non-political tweets from the chosen celebrities. The cueing effect from seeing celebrity tweets about education resulted in participants from experimental groups rating education more highly in the post-test than individuals from the control group. Additionally, some celebrity source characteristics were found to be significant predictors of perceived issue importance, including perceived expertise for weak celebrity cues and the perceived amount of thought put into political beliefs and statements for news personalities.
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Fields of Study

Major Field: Communication
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study examines the agenda-setting power of statements by celebrities and journalists in non-news communication channels such as social media. Agenda setting research (McCombs, 1972; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) has demonstrated that the news media can influence audience issue priorities, “setting the agenda” for the national political debate. Recent research has found that these effects are concentrated among audience members with higher levels of trust in the news media (Miller & Krosnick, 2000; Tsfati, 2003). This suggests a mechanism of cueing, or accepting the conclusions of trusted others in order to avoid a difficult cognitive task (Chaiken, 1980). Note that this same general mechanism of cueing is also used to explain the power of celebrity endorsements in persuasion research (Ohanian, 1991; Priester & Petty, 2003; Premeaux, 2005). While mass media remain the primary focus of research on both agenda setting and celebrity endorsement, the explosion in social media usage has increased the availability of direct communication between citizens (particularly teens and young adults) and potential cue-givers of all kinds, including politicians, athletes, musicians, other celebrities, and even journalists. It should not be taken as a given that an issue cue directly from a journalist would have the same impact as a cue in the form of a news story by that same journalist, because agenda setting effects may require the perception that the cue has passed the news organization’s gatekeeping process and is therefore not only the judgment of a single individual. On the other hand, it is also possible that agenda setting effects are not rooted in such organizational-level perceptions, and are
instead based on the perception that professional reporters are in a better position to evaluate relative issue importance because in the course of their work they necessarily pay more attention to a wider range of issues than most audience members would themselves. Direct issue importance cues in non-news channels such as social media thus provide an interesting contrast to traditional agenda setting research, and an opportunity for a direct comparison to the mechanisms of influence involved in cues from celebrities versus cues from journalists.

If issue cues in social media can affect the public agenda, this may also have important normative implications. Many have noted the limitations of the news as a rational gatekeeper for important issues, either because of its tendency to under-emphasize issues that are important but lacking in news values such as drama, novelty, or conflict (Price & Tewksbury, 1997), or because of its tendency to index the range of issues covered to the range of issues currently under elite debate (Bennett, 1990). If issue importance cues in social media can affect the public agenda, this suggests an alternative route by which important issues that are systematically neglected by news media may receive something closer to the attention they deserve. This possibility motivates the focus of this study on whether agenda setting effects occur in such channels. Further, it motivates an examination of mechanisms of effect with an eye toward differentiating more and less desirable mechanisms, because cue-taking could be based on perceptions about the source that have some bearing on the actual quality of the source’s issue importance judgments, or it could be based on superficial attributes.
such as attractiveness or mere liking of the source. The goal of this research is to
determine if celebrities and journalists, by endorsing a political issue on Twitter, can
effectively convince readers of the importance of an issue. In addition, it will seek to
determine which, if any, source characteristics are particularly important in driving the
influence of these cues.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

*Agenda Setting*

In the field of communication, agenda setting has been one of the most widely-studied phenomena for the past 40 years (Tai, 2009). Since McCombs and Shaw's seminal agenda-setting study (1972), research—conducted using interviews, surveys, and experiments—has consistently indicated that there is a strong correlation between the topics covered in the media and those that are viewed as the most important by the general public, following the dictum that the media's greatest power comes from telling the public what subjects they should be thinking about, rather than telling them exactly what opinion they should have on those subjects (Scheufele, 2000). As far back as 2004, there had been over 400 different studies investigating the agenda-setting function of the media (McCombs, 2004). The 1972 article indicated, even at such an early stage in the theory's development, that not all media coverage affects issue salience; as McCombs (2005) wrote, if that were the case, then all anyone would ever talk about was the “whiteness of their laundry.” This raises the question of what factors might mitigate agenda-setting effects.

Issue salience was most effectively transferred to the public when a candidate's agenda and the media's agenda converged, limiting the number of issues that are frequently discussed (Hayes, 2008). Even when there is a divergence between the
candidates' preferred issues and the agenda presented by the media, the supposedly most important political topics are still determined by forces outside the control of individual voters (Petrocik, Benoit, & Hansen, 2003). This is not meant to suggest that those issues most commonly discussed by the prevailing elites are always irrelevant or unimportant; on the contrary, sometimes they truly are the most pressing points in an election. But from a normative perspective, it is troubling that the general public has so little access to other issues that may fall, intentionally or accidentally, outside the range of debate (Bennett, 1990). Compounding the problem is that information about a topic tends to have less of an effect on the public than the topic's mere presence in the discourse (Price & Tewksbury, 1997).

Research has also been conducted on the “lag time” of agenda setting effects, or in other words, for how long of a period the public agenda matches the media agenda. Using data collected in the 1970s, Stone and McCombs (1981) found that, immediately preceding a presidential election, the public agenda tends to focus on a narrow set of issues deemed most important. When the election was not imminent, there tended to be a period of two or three months before the media agenda was most strongly aligned with the public agenda.

There is evidence that the strength of agenda-setting effects varies depending on the type of media being consumed. A longitudinal study conducted in Belgium found that the perceived national agenda was affected more by newspaper coverage than by television coverage (Walgrave, Soroka, & Nuytemans, 2008). A similar study conducted...
previously in the United States yielded the same conclusions (Wanta & Hu, 1994). The data for these studies were collected in the 1990s, however, and media has changed a tremendous amount since then. That being said, the idea of one medium having more power than another is still valid. The importance of newspapers has most likely diminished in the last decade, but other forms of media have arisen to fill the void.

The most notable change has been the emergence of the ubiquitous Internet, which quickly transformed from a luxury item to a necessity. But the question remains: has it become part of the “mass media,” as it is typically conceptualized? There are arguments for both sides, but it might not be the correct question to ask. Even if traditional forms of media continue to reach more homes and more consumers than even the largest websites, the Internet can still play a major role in setting the national agenda. If nothing else, there is evidence that certain blogs and websites can shape elite opinion, which is then passed on to the public through traditional media outlets (Woodly, 2008).

More recently, even the Internet landscape has begun to change. Social media sites have been around for several years, but only in the last two or three have they begun to dominate the entire Internet culture. Research exists suggesting that this kind of interactive website can play a role in setting the national agenda much in the same way that the traditional media does. However, it is a mistake to automatically assume that online media is necessarily more “independent” than traditional media; traditional media outlets such as The New York Times and CNN are constantly expanding their own
presence in new media, so it is often the case that the same organizations are driving the agenda, though it is happening through a different platform (Meraz, 2009).

Twitter is a prime example of this phenomenon. Virtually every media outlet in existence has a presence on Twitter now, and the largest traditional media sources have huge numbers of followers. CNN, for example, has several different Twitter feeds, allowing followers to pick and choose which kinds of news they want access to. There is the main CNN feed, which posts a broad variety of stories; CNN Breaking News, where only high-profile, important events are covered; and several others. But one of the key innovations of Twitter is that it gives followers the chance to have direct access to the news personalities themselves, which gives users the opportunity to develop a closer, more “personal” relationship with the people actually responsible for bringing them the news.

Although agenda-setting is mostly studied from a macroscopic perspective, there is precedent for smaller-scale experimental studies, which provide much of the compelling evidence that the media agenda is the cause of the public's agenda, and not the other way around. One of the earliest examples of this type of research explored the effects of repeatedly exposing participants to television news coverage that had been manipulated to emphasize certain issues (Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder, 1982). They discovered that, at least under the experimental conditions they set up, there was a clear increase in participants' perceptions of the importance of a political issue after being exposed to news coverage about it, providing some of the first clear evidence of a
causal connection between the media and public agendas. Subsequent studies have indicated that, under many circumstances, these results hold true across other media, particularly with print newspapers and the online versions of those newspapers (Wanta, 1982; Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002).

**Celebrity Endorsement**

As much as celebrity endorsement has been researched, it has not yet been studied in terms of agenda setting outcomes. It is currently not known if celebrities have an additional influence on perceived issue importance that goes beyond general media cueing effects. Twitter and Facebook in particular grant users the ability to be exposed to a much wider spectrum of political ideas and opinions than any other medium allows. Of course, the ability to do something and actually doing it are quite distinct. It is known from previous research, however, that young people often do join Twitter specifically because of a desire to follow celebrities and keep up with celebrity news (Hargittai & Litt, 2011). While interest in local and international news were not significant indicators of Twitter adoption, the interest in celebrities could be co-opted as a way to expose Twitter users to political issues. Twitter users may not join the service as a way to keep up with politics, but once they begin to follow celebrities, they are exposed to whatever they decide to post. Because of this direct, unfiltered access to their fans, celebrities have the potential to be extremely important and powerful in molding political opinions.

In a perfect world, celebrities would endorse issues they have a passionate personal interest in, but the potential for profiteering exists as well. Many famous
Tweeters have turned their feeds into the equivalent of a roadside billboard, commanding up to $10,000 per tweet in which they mention a certain product (Associated Press, 2011). There is no guarantee that this trend will not extend to political advertisements, such that celebrity political discussion on Twitter becomes an extension of the mainstream media, but the phenomenon needs to be better understood in any case.

Although celebrity endorsements have been studied in some depth in advertising and marketing, very little research has been conducted into the effects of celebrity endorsement on political opinion. The prevailing attitude seems to be that, within certain limits, these endorsements do tend to be effective (Jackson & Darrow, 2005). These limits exist, however, and it is critical to understand exactly what they are. It is tempting to view celebrities as a monolithic whole, but reality is more complicated. Certain individual characteristics have to be taken into account, and people will react differently based on these.

It is important to remember that credibility is a perceived characteristic, and there is nothing inherent about a source that makes it more or less credible than another; perceived credibility can vary from person to person (Fogg & Tseng, 1999). Perhaps the most important aspects of an endorser are his or her perceived trustworthiness and expertise. In their seminal article on source credibility, Hovland and Weiss (1952) discovered that sources that were deemed to be more credible were, at least in the short term, more persuasive. Credibility, though, is a complicated subject; it
is perhaps too limiting to view it simply as a unidimensional concept. Ohanian (1990) developed a three-dimensional scale that encompasses the three most commonly discussed elements of source credibility throughout the literature: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Previous source credibility research, she argued, had been marred by inconsistent measurements, and this new scale would not only give a more accurate assessment of source credibility writ large, it also allows researchers to individually analyze the components of celebrities that make them effective or ineffective endorsers. In a follow-up study focusing on the individual characteristics of credibility, expertise was shown to be most closely associated with intent to purchase, while attractiveness was a very weak predictor (Ohanian, 1991).

Presumably, for a celebrity to be deemed credible as a political source, he or she must be seen as having expertise, at least to some level. For example, a celebrity like Bono may not know as much about AIDS and HIV as an immunologist, but he is perceived to be an expert, just by virtue of having spent so much time around the issue. From this perspective, the issue in question is just as important as the celebrity discussing it, because the synergy between the two is necessary for effective persuasion. McCracken (1989) referred to this as “meaning transfer.” Rather than just viewing endorsements through the traditional criteria, he claims that they depend on “the meanings he or she brings to the endorsement process” (p. 312). In other words, this is related to the notion of expertise; if a celebrity's fame or place in culture is related in some way to the issue they are espousing, it will be much more effective. This sense of
expertise could be the deciding factor when a person is evaluating how credible a celebrity source is, particularly when political issues are being discussed.

Priester & Petty (2003) found that untrustworthy endorsers, at least when paired with a strong argument, result in higher levels of elaboration than do trustworthy celebrities. The reasoning behind this phenomenon is that if a person trusts a celebrity implicitly, he or she will automatically, non-thoughtfully, accept the message. This leads to the paradoxical conclusion that, at least in some situations, untrustworthy endorsers are better than those that are most trusted. There is likely also a connection between a person's affinity toward a celebrity—how much they like them, in other words—and how much he or she trusts the celebrity. It seems unlikely that, in most cases, a celebrity would be liked and not trusted or trusted but disliked.

**Online Source Credibility**

One limitation of traditional source credibility research is that it does not take into account differences that exist in an online environment. Internet users must make these credibility judgments constantly. With the ever-present risk of viruses and scams, a person browsing the web must be eternally vigilant. The question, then, is whether or not Internet users have the same criteria for judging credibility online as they do in “real life.” This is a growing area of research, and many of the mechanisms are becoming clearer. As it turns out, there are some overlaps, but there are key differences as well (Callister, 2000; Taraborelli, 2008).

It appears to be the case that people tend not to make credibility decisions
online entirely on their own. Metzger, Flanagin & Medders (2010) described five different heuristics that Internet users tend to use to decide which sources to trust. One of the main strategies used is what is known as the “reputation heuristic.” Individuals tend to trust sites and other online presences that already have established reputations, such as CNN and eBay, even if they have never personally had experience with those sites. Also used are the consistency heuristic and the expectancy-violation heuristic. The former is a strategy by which individuals compare multiple websites to ensure consistency among them. With the latter, people tend to have negative responses to online information or requests that contradict previous experiences they have had.

The two most germane to the current study, though, are the endorsement heuristic and the persuasive intent heuristic. The endorsement heuristic, which has also been referred to as “conferred credibility” (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008), states that Internet users often judge a person or website as credible simply because others say they do as well. This differs from the reputation heuristic because the source does not have to be previously established. If a product shows up on Amazon.com that the individual has never heard of before, based on this heuristic, they will still trust it if it has many five-star reviews. It is trustworthy because other people say it is.

The final heuristic is problematic for online sources that are actively trying to persuade others. The persuasive intent heuristic claims that Internet users respond negatively to persuasive attempts. This heuristic applies almost exclusively to commercial persuasion, however, and there is much less evidence to suggest that it
applies across the board to political persuasion, especially if the persuasive message does not explicitly conform to a liberal or conservative worldview. The authors suggest that this negative reaction tends to “stem from fears of unknown others’ nefarious manipulation.” If this is indeed the case, then it is plausible that negative affect toward persuasion may be mitigated if the persuasive attempt comes from a source that has a strong reputation or has been endorsed as trustworthy by others.

So which source characteristics will be the most important for individuals when evaluating online messages from celebrities and news personalities? Six different characteristics (attractiveness, likeability, trustworthiness, expertise, the celebrity’s values, and the amount of thought celebrities put into issues they discuss) are tested in this study, with varying degrees of normative desirability. Likeability has been shown to be an important predictor of a celebrity’s endorsement effectiveness (Premeaux, 2005), and according to Ohanian’s (1991) study, attractiveness will be a weak predictor and expertise a strong one; from a normative perspective, this is promising, as it indicates that people actually want the celebrities to know what they are talking about. Although trustworthiness has been found to be important in the past (Priester & Petter, 2003), that was under circumstances in which the celebrity was trying to sell a product, so the decision about whether or not to trust the celebrity would be based at least in part on how much the viewer believed that the celebrity believed what he or she was saying. In circumstances like the current study, the celebrities are only trying to bring attention to a topic, not to actively convince followers to believe a certain idea. Because of this
difference, it is not expected that trustworthiness will play as important of a role.

It is not currently known whether or not a celebrity’s perceived values or the perceived amount of thought they put into an issue will affect a viewer’s reaction to the endorsement, but it seems plausible that they will. The former will likely be related to likeability, while the latter will probably play a similar role to expertise. Both of these characteristics are normatively important because they demonstrate a willingness on the part of the follower to focus less on superficial aspects of the celebrity. Instead, it would show that they place high value on the idea that celebrities are not just saying the first things that come to their head; they are actually thinking about the topics deeply before expressing their opinion.

Hypotheses

For this study, two hypotheses and one research question were tested. The hypotheses are grounded in the idea that celebrity tweets will, even after limited exposure time, result in a significant increase in perceived importance of an issue. The first hypothesis looks at the traditional agenda-setting hypothesis, which states that exposure to media coverage of political issues will lead viewers to see those as more important.

H1a: Individuals exposed to tweets from celebrities related to the cued issues will perceive the cued issue to be more important than individuals not exposed to tweets about the cued issue.

H1b: Individuals exposed to tweets from news personalities related to the cued
issues will perceive the cued issue to be more important than individuals not
exposed to tweets about the cued issue.

The second hypothesis stems from research that indicates endorsements and
persuasive attempts may be more successful if they come from likeable sources,
especially if participants are using heuristics to determine what the most important
issues are.

H2: Individuals in the strong (liked) celebrity cue condition will perceive the cued
issue to be more important than individuals in the weak (disliked) celebrity cue
condition.

The third hypothesis suggests that, because they have generally have greater
expertise and are expected to have put more thought into the issues they discuss, news
personalities will have a stronger effect on perceived issue importance than will
celebrities, regardless of how well they are liked.

H3: Individuals in the news personality condition will perceive the cued issue to
be more important than individuals in the celebrity cue conditions.

Finally, a research question is proposed. Although it is expected that likeability
will have a strong influence on a celebrity’s ability to increase perceived issue
importance, it is not entirely clear which other source characteristics will play an
important role when it comes to political persuasion, which likely functions in a different
way than traditional commercial celebrity endorsements. Although no specific
predictions are being made, the analyses will mostly focus on the comparative influence
of attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, celebrity values, and the amount of thought that the celebrity puts into political issues.

RQ1: Which celebrity/news personality source characteristics will have a significant influence on perceived issue importance?
Chapter 3: Method

This study used an experimental design with four cells: a strong celebrity cue condition (more “liked” celebrities), a weak celebrity cue condition (more “disliked” celebrities), a news personality condition, and a control condition. For the three experimental conditions, participants saw portions of Twitter feeds from six selected celebrities, two of which had been manipulated to include tweets about the importance of education. The control condition saw only the unmanipulated Twitter feeds.

Participants

Participants were recruited from undergraduate classes at a large Midwestern university and were given an extra credit incentive in order to encourage them to participate. A potential limitation of using a purely college student sample is that it could reduce the generalizability of the experiment to a wider population, as Twitter is used across a broad spectrum of ages and demographic categories. However, previous research has shown that effects related to the agenda-setting paradigm tend to hold across the population as a whole (Miller, 2007). Additionally, college-aged and college-educated people are the demographic groups that most commonly use Twitter, so the threats to external validity should be somewhat limited (Pew, 2011).

A total of 254 students participated in the study, and 235 (92.5%) completed the entire survey. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 50, with a mean age of 20.94 (SD
18.65 were female (69.6%), and 72 were male (30.4%). In each class where
students were recruited from, they were shown a flyer with a link to the online survey,
as well as instructions and a description of what would take place in the study.

Stimuli

The main stimuli for the experiment were Twitter posts that had been
manipulated to contain messages that promote awareness of needed changes in
educational policy. This topic was chosen because it is somewhat underrepresented in
mainstream news discussions, and it is also for the most part non-partisan. There are
certain educational policies that are favored by liberals and conservatives, but there is
general consensus among all sectors of the political spectrum that education is
important and in need of reform. The level of education (i.e. primary, secondary, college)
was not specified in order to make the tweets as broadly applicable as possible.
Manipulations were used in order to ensure a maximum amount of control over the
content of the messages, as well as allowing the researcher to select which celebrities
are being seen. The political messages needed to be clear, direct, and unambiguous so
that any attitudinal changes after the fact could reasonably be attributed to what was
seen in the Twitter posts.

The goal of the stimuli was simply to bring attention to the issue, not to promote
a specific policy or plan of action. If a stereotypically liberal policy was included in one of
the tweets, then it would likely have an effect on a conservative participant that is not
related to the influence of the celebrity endorsing it, and vice versa. In order to keep this
from happening, the tweets about education were left as vague as possible. In addition, there was the issue of what kinds of statements would be believable for the celebrities to make. To get around this problem, the manipulated Twitter feeds contained retweeted posts, rather than claiming the celebrities wrote the posts themselves. Again, in order to avoid partisan bias, the posts were retweeted from a non-celebrity source that would not be recognized by the participants (@wadha and @mwesch). An example retweet that was used in the study is “If you think an educated society is expensive, try an ignorant society.” All of the stimuli can be found in Appendix B.

Celebrities

All four celebrities were chosen from a list of the 100 most followed Tweeters in order to increase the likelihood that all or most of the subjects know who they are and recognize them as celebrities. While this may increase the odds of a participant already following one of the celebrities, the chances are still quite low, and this should not pose a threat to the validity of the study. Additionally, none of the political issues are specifically associated with the celebrities under normal circumstances. The following celebrities have been chosen:

1. Oprah Winfrey: As one of the most recognizable celebrities in the country, she has a certain amount of built-in credibility and is generally well-liked by the public. She was chosen based on her almost unprecedented and name recognition and her proclivity to speak out on political issues without alienating her main audience, as well as her extremely large number of Twitter followers. As of February 1, 2012, she has over
9 million followers. (@oprah)

2. Chris Brown: A popular R&B singer, Chris Brown lost many fans after being involved in a domestic assault case where he hit his then-girlfriend Rihanna, also a popular singer. Though he remains one of the most followed celebrities on Twitter, this well-publicized incident is expected to lead to lower levels of credibility and a greater amount of dislike toward him, making him a useful celebrity for studying the effects of valence on issue interest. Though he likely has a lower level of name recognition than the other chosen celebrities, it is expected that he will be well-known among the age demographic sampled in this experiment. As of February 1, 2012, he has over 7.5 million Twitter followers. (@chrisbrown)

3. Tom Hanks: A recent poll by *Forbes Magazine* (2011) ranked Hanks as the second most-trusted celebrity in America. Hanks's longevity, combined with the high amounts of acclaim he has achieved, should give him high levels of name recognition, and it is expected that he will be well-liked. As of February 1, 2011, he has over 3.3 million Twitter followers. (@tomhanks)

4. Paris Hilton: Hilton is almost universally known throughout the United States, and she is also given the moniker of “famous for being famous.” Though she was never embroiled in a scandal of the same type as Chris Brown, she has had her own legal troubles, and a 2007 Rasmussen Report showed that only 12% of Americans had a favorable opinion of her. Because of this, and her 6 million Twitter followers, she has been chosen as a second low-valence celebrity.
In addition to the celebrities, the news group contained two news personalities who are present on Twitter. This was a slightly difficult category to choose individuals for, because it could be difficult to separate the “celebrity” nature of some of the most well-known individuals from their roles as purveyors of news. This group, which was chosen based on name recognition and general non-partisanship, will consist of:

1. Anderson Cooper: Cooper is one of the most well-known and prominent news personalities. His presence in popular culture is perhaps stronger than ever before, especially since the recent addition of his new syndicated daytime talk show, *Anderson*. He originally rose to prominence based on his contributions to CNN, both in conjunction with pre-existing shows and his own news program, *AC360*. As of February 1, 2012, Cooper has over 2 million Twitter followers, making him the most-followed individual news personality. (@andersoncooper)

2. George Stephanopoulos: Stephanopoulos is the current host of *Good Morning America* and the second most-followed American news personality. This is a somewhat problematic choice, as he rose to prominence while working for Bill Clinton, and the goal is to avoid any overt partisan bias. These days, however, Stephanopoulos is mostly known for his role as a morning show host, and it is doubtful that most students know much of his previous political leanings. As of February 1, 2012, he has over 1.7 million followers. (@GStephanopoulos)

**Familiarity Measures**

Participants were asked to answer either yes or no to two questions relating to
the manipulations. 1) “Are you a Twitter user?” 2) “Are you familiar with this celebrity?”

These questions helped ensure the validity of the data, in that they made sure all participants have heard of the endorser. If they were not recognized as celebrities, then any additional benefits they had based on that characteristic would be lost.

**Celebrity Affinity**

Celebrity affinity used three separate seven-point scales: not appealing/appealing, not desirable/desirable, dislikeable/likeable. This scale was developed by Brett, Wentzel, and Tomczak (2008) to measure brand affinity, but there is not a strong reason to suspect that it will not be equally valid and reliable as a measurement of affinity toward the celebrities themselves. The affinity measurement was used as a manipulation check to ensure that the affect toward the celebrities was in the appropriate direction. Participants responded using a 1-11 Likert scale.

**Celebrity Source Characteristics**

For this study, Ohanian’s (1990) tridimensional scale was implemented. The scale consists of five adjective pairs within each of the three dimensions, and participants choose whichever adjective they find to be most accurate for the celebrity in question. Some examples include beautiful/ugly (attractiveness), honest/dishonest (trustworthiness), and knowledgeable/unknowledgeable (expertise).

In addition to Ohanian’s measurements, two scales were developed specifically for this study. The first, which aims to measure the celebrities’ values, contains four questions, such as “This celebrity has the same values as me” and “This celebrity is like
me.” This scale proved to be highly reliable, with Cronbach’s $\alpha = .859$ for Tom Hanks.

Similar reliability values were found for the other celebrities$^1$. The second measured the celebrity’s “thoughtfulness,” in terms of how much thought they put into political issues. This scale contained three measures, such as “This celebrity puts some thought into which issues to talk about.” This scale also had high reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .887$).

Participants responded to all of the above items on a 1-11 scale.

Additionally, for each participant in the experimental groups, “sourcemax” and “sourcemin” variables were created to account for participants being exposed to cues from two celebrities or news personalities. These were made for each of the main source characteristics (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, likeability, values, and thoughtfulness) so that the comparative influence of the two sources could be investigated. For example, in the weak celebrity cue condition, if Paris Hilton were more liked than Chris Brown, the “sourcemaxlike” variable would have been the likeability value Hilton was given. If the same participant had rated Chris Brown as having more expertise, the rating the individual gave him in expertise would be the value used for the “sourcemaxexpert” variable. The logic behind this variable was that, because each participant saw more than one manipulated cue, they could be more influenced by whichever celebrity was deemed more likeable, or more attractive, or so on.

**Issue Importance:**

Participants were asked “How important is ______ to society as a whole?” for

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$^1$ A full table of reliability figures can be found in Appendix A, and a full list of scale items can be found in Appendix B.
nine different issues, and they answered on a 1-11 scale, with 1 representing not important at all and 11 representing critical importance. In order to mask the intentions of the item, three issues were used related to education, and they were mixed in with several other non-education issues (immigration, national debt, etc.). After data were collected, the three issues related to education were combined together to form a single education importance variable ($\alpha = .841$).

**Procedure**

This was an experiment designed to examine the influence of celebrity discussion of certain political topics on participants' interest in those topics. Participants were told that the study was about celebrities on Twitter. This was true to a certain extent, but the exact nature of the study was left vague in an attempt not to skew the results. The experiment itself was conducted online. One group of participants (strong celebrity cue) was exposed to manipulated Twitter feeds in which selected *liked* celebrities promote education as an important political issue. A second group of participants (weak celebrity cue) was exposed to the Twitter feeds of *disliked* celebrities promoting awareness of the importance of education. A third group of participants was exposed to the Twitter feeds of major news personalities, all of which contained the same manipulated messages as the celebrity feeds. There was also a control group that was exposed to none of the aforementioned manipulations. Following this exposure, they took a post-test in which they answered the same questions as presented in the pretest.

In all four groups, participants saw the same Twitter feeds from the six
celebrities. The only difference was that two of the feeds were manipulated in each experimental group. All of the tweets were taken from the person’s actual Twitter feed, except for the ones promoting the importance of education. This decision was made because the manipulated tweets needed to remain uniform across all experimental conditions. The unmanipulated tweets remained the same across all four conditions.
Chapter 4: Results

A combination of statistical methods was used for the following analyses, including linear regression, ANOVA, and partial correlations. Before analyses were run, the data for several participants was thrown out, due either to them not completing the survey or for providing too many patterned responses. 58 participants were assigned to the strong celebrity cue group, 60 to the weak celebrity cue group, 51 to the news personality group, and 66 to the control group.

Manipulation Checks

Before calculating any of the following descriptive statistics or running the experimental analyses, a few steps were taken to try to avoid irregularities in the data. The celebrities and news personalities in this study are fairly well known, but there were still participants who were unfamiliar with one or more of them. In order to keep them from skewing the results, responses from participants who were unfamiliar with a particular celebrity were recoded as missing data. This was justified because preliminary analyses showed significant differences in every characteristic between those participants who were familiar with George Stephanopoulos and those who were not.

One of the key factors for the success of the study was that the chosen “liked” celebrities must actually be viewed as more likeable by the participants. For male celebrities, Tom Hanks was expected to be more likeable than Chris Brown. The results
supported this expectation, as Hanks ($M = 6.68, SD = 2.18$) was significantly more liked than Brown ($M = 5.17, SD = 3.06$), $t(237) = 10.75, p < .001$. The prediction also held true for the female celebrities, with Oprah Winfrey ($M = 7.09, SD = 2.61$) was significantly more liked than Paris Hilton ($M = 4.08, SD = 2.79$), $t(236) = 17.77, p < .001$. Although it was measured, likeability was not an important factor for news personalities.

In addition to likeability, three other characteristics were measured for the celebrities: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. These characteristics played meaningful roles in the analyses, and a full list of results can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Celebrity Descriptive Statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Celebrity</th>
<th>Liked</th>
<th>Attractive</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Expert</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanks</td>
<td>6.68(2.18)</td>
<td>5.75(2.11)</td>
<td>7.49(2.25)</td>
<td>8.40(2.09)</td>
<td>5.09(2.41)</td>
<td>7.42(2.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>5.17(3.06)</td>
<td>4.81(2.63)</td>
<td>3.52(2.23)</td>
<td>5.74(2.65)</td>
<td>2.92(2.12)</td>
<td>3.58(2.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winfrey</td>
<td>7.09(2.61)</td>
<td>6.62(2.16)</td>
<td>8.56(2.34)</td>
<td>8.77(2.17)</td>
<td>4.90(2.24)</td>
<td>9.40(1.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilton</td>
<td>4.08(2.79)</td>
<td>4.42(2.61)</td>
<td>2.94(2.08)</td>
<td>2.94(2.17)</td>
<td>2.50(1.78)</td>
<td>2.74(1.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>6.65(2.86)</td>
<td>6.18(2.88)</td>
<td>7.28(2.87)</td>
<td>7.78(2.95)</td>
<td>4.77(2.38)</td>
<td>8.32(2.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephan.</td>
<td>4.41(2.63)</td>
<td>4.31(2.57)</td>
<td>4.95(2.86)</td>
<td>5.26(3.02)</td>
<td>3.78(2.21)</td>
<td>6.23(3.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Values shown represent mean and standard deviation: Mean($SD$)

Experimental Results

Hypothesis 1 was based on previous research in cueing that suggests that an
issue discussed in the media will be perceived as more important to viewers of the message than it will be for people who do not see the message. In order to test this, two separate independent sample t-tests were conducted, one to compare the celebrity conditions to the control condition and one to compare the news personality condition to the control. Both celebrities, $t(181) = 2.93, p = .004$, and news personalities, $t(113) = 2.77, p = .007$, resulted in significantly higher ratings for post-test educational importance than did the control.

The first hypothesis focused on the power of exposure, regardless of any other factors, to influence people’s opinions about the importance of an issue, but Hypothesis 2 predicted that, among individuals who did see the Tweets about education, liked celebrities would be more influential than disliked celebrities. This turned out not to be the case at all, however. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to ascertain any differences in the group, but there was almost no difference between the strong celebrity cue ($M = 7.74, SD = 1.96$) and weak celebrity cue ($M = 7.77, SD = 2.39$) groups, $t(116) = -.077, p = .939$. Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 posited that news personalities would have a greater effect on perceived issue importance than would celebrities. Although participants in the news personalities group ($M = 7.89, SD = 2.02$) rated education slightly more important in the post-test than did those in the celebrities groups ($M = 7.75, SD = 2.18$), the difference was not significant, $t(166) = -.394, p = .694$. The hypothesis was not supported.

The research question was more open-ended, and it sought to help understand
what other source characteristics might play a meaningful role in predicting perceived post-test importance of education. Several analyses were run to investigate this relationship. For the most part, celebrity source characteristics seemed to be of little consequence, however.

Because participants in each experimental group saw Tweets from two celebrities, new variables (sourcemax and sourcemin) were calculated, which made it possible to account for the effects of both the more and less liked celebrity in each condition. For example, if an individual liked Oprah Winfrey very much but was ambivalent toward Tom Hanks, this would make it possible to separate each celebrity’s individual effects.

Once this had been done, a linear regression was conducted that included the four basic source characteristics of likeability, expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. This test did not reveal much, though, as the tolerance values were quite low (ranging from .112 to .247), indicating that much of what was being measured was not unique. In this initial regression, only minimum source attractiveness was found to be a significant predictor of an increase in perceived issue importance, $\beta = .365, p = .026$.

Because it seemed implausible that only the celebrity viewed as less attractive drove the change in perceived issue importance, a simpler regression was run in order to reduce collinearity. Strangely enough, in every regression, minimum source attractiveness was a significant predictor. When perceived trustworthiness was removed
from the regression, minimum source attractiveness became very slightly *more*

significant, $\beta = .358$, $p = .024$.

Within two of the three experimental groups, there was a particular source
characteristic that was a significant predictor of perceived issue importance. A partial
correlation table was run for each group, measuring the correlation between each
source characteristic and post-test issue importance, controlling for their pre-test
perceived importance scores.

For individuals in the strong celebrity cue group, none of the source
characteristics were significant. With weak celebrity cues, on the other hand, source
expertise is significantly, though moderately, correlated with perceived issue importance,
$r(51) = .278$, $p = .044$. In the news personality group, the significant predictor of
perceived issue importance was “sourcethought,” or how much thought the participants
believe the person puts into his political beliefs and discussions, $r(36) = .479$, $p = .002$. 
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This study had two primary goals. The first was to test for agenda setting effects in a social media context involving direct cues from individual journalists or celebrities, instead of cues in the form of news stories that may be seen as a cue from a whole news organization. The second goal was to combine the disparate fields of agenda setting and celebrity endorsements in order to build on the understanding of which source characteristics drive these cueing effects.

In this sense, the research was a partial success. The significant results for Hypothesis 1 lend further support to the phenomenon of agenda setting, since individuals who saw Twitter feeds espousing the importance of education rated that issue as more important in the post-test than did individuals in the control group, who saw only non-political Tweets from the celebrities. The basic agenda setting hypothesis is that issues that are treated as important in the media will be viewed as more important by the public than issues that are downplayed or ignored, and that seems to be the case here. Since education was never mentioned in the Twitter feeds seen by participants in the control group, it was not triggered as a particularly important issue for them. The lack of a significant difference between the strong celebrity cues, weak celebrity cues, and news personalities complicates the matter, however, as it seems to suggest that, on the whole, it does not matter much who the political message is coming from. This
makes it difficult to argue that the post-test results were the result of the celebrity endorsements and not something simpler, like a basic cueing effect.

On the other hand, the research question gives credence to the idea that some source characteristics may play a role in how effective celebrity political endorsements are, although their strength might be limited. Of particular interest was the finding that source expertise was a significant predictor of perceived importance for participants in the weak celebrity cue group. This is actually a positive sign, as it is evidence that media users are focusing on something besides superficial attributes. This finding suggests that, even if a person does not like a celebrity, they can still be influenced by him as long as they believe he knows what he is talking about. Hearkening back to the Bono example from earlier, if a person dislikes him, they might still trust his expertise on issues of poverty and world health and therefore be influenced by him. This backs up research indicating that in many cases, expertise is the most important factor in a celebrity endorsement. It is an important both for liked and disliked celebrities, but a high level of expertise becomes even more crucial for those who are disliked, because it can mask the other negative aspects of their personalities (Premeaux, 2005).

Secondarily, the discovery that perceived level of thought put into political statements is a significant predictor of a news personality’s usefulness as an endorser leads to the possibility that there are, in fact, different mechanisms at work for celebrities and journalists. While the news personalities used in this study are, at least to an extent, celebrities themselves, the journalistic role they play still likely affects the way
they are viewed by the public. Expertise was not a significant predictor of news personality influence, but perceived cognitive effort was. A possible explanation for this is that journalists are not expected to know everything about a topic themselves, but their job requires them to come into contact with many possible topics to discuss. Therefore, they are expected to put a great deal of thought into which of these topics they do finally talk about.

The most puzzling finding of this study relates to the discovery that minimum source attractiveness was a significant predictor of post-test issue importance across all experimental groups. This contradicts a great deal of literature in the field of celebrity endorsement that suggests that attractiveness is often the least important factor in the success of an endorser. Even if this is interpreted as evidence that attractiveness does matter in an endorser in some situations, it still does not make much sense for the person with the lower level of perceived attractiveness to be the one who is more important. It is possible that this result is some kind of aberration caused by showing participants political tweets from two celebrities at a time, as there is no theoretical basis for this result to have occurred. A secondary explanation is that the high level of collinearity in the regression skewed the results so badly that none of its findings are to be trusted.

Limitations

While this study could revealed some potentially useful information about the effects of celebrity political discussion using social media, there are certainly some
problems that need to be overcome. One of the primary concerns involves the
celebrities being used in the research. The peril of using real, well-known celebrities is
that every subject will come into the experiment with widely varying opinions; it is
doubtful that participants would have uniformly positive or negative opinions about
anybody, so there will always be some degree of variance regarding the valence of the
celebrity.

In addition to the problems with celebrity affinity, the experimental design itself
has some weaknesses. Traditional agenda-setting research, with which this has some
level of kinship, involves repeated exposure to the stimuli, in whatever form it takes. This
experiment, on the other hand, is a one-shot design; subjects will be brought into the
lab, see a celebrity tweet one time, and that will be the end of it. While this is
acceptable for studying the direct persuasive effects of the celebrity messages, it is not
optimal for studying Twitter as an agenda-setting medium, as the nature of Twitter
allows a celebrity's followers to repeatedly be exposed to their messages. There are
more factors to consider as well. No matter how frequently a person uses Twitter, it will
be, in almost every case, only a fraction of their total media usage.

The problem with using two celebrities or new personalities for each
experimental group may be problematic in more ways than just making it difficult to
separate the individual effects of each celebrity. It is possible that this design was itself
responsible, at least in part, for the lack of differences between the experimental groups.
The design assumed that participants, upon answering the post-test issue importance
item, would remember which celebrities had tweeted about education. But because they could not return to the Twitter feeds once they had passed them, it is plausible that, for many individuals, they could not remember which two celebrities had just tweeted about education. They would almost certainly remember that they had seen such a tweet, but if they were not specifically studying the feeds, it is easy to believe that they could forget who had said what.

There was a potential issue with using education as the political issue being investigated as well. Because everyone in the sample was a college student, it is likely that, to a lesser or greater extent, the importance of education was already salient to them. This is corroborated by the high ratings given to educational issues even in the pre-test issue importance item. There is a conceivable side effect to this, in that seeing the celebrity tweets may have served simply to validate beliefs that participants already had, rather than actually changing their minds about what issues are most important. This could also influence which source characteristics are important in an endorser. For more complicated issues, traits like trustworthiness or perceived cognitive effort might take on a greater importance.

Future Considerations

Future projects would be very helpful for dealing with some of the problems present in this study. As mentioned above, it can be problematic to use real celebrities because if participants are familiar with them, they will come into the study with all kinds of pre-established opinions about the celebrities, and it would be difficult or
impossible to control for them. However, there seems to be no other way to conduct this kind of research. If fictional celebrities were used, the aspect of familiarity would be gone, as would the effectiveness of the endorsement. A better strategy would be to use real celebrities, but instead of basing the celebrity choices on factors like Q-ratings and Twitter followers, it would be more useful to pre-test a number of different celebrities to determine who fits best into the categories of likeability, trustworthiness, expertise, etc.

Additionally, a huge improvement would be to show participants only one celebrity in each experimental cell. Although this would require a greater number of participants, it would greatly improve the ability to separate the influence of each celebrity. In the current design, there is always the risk of conflicting opinions about the celebrities. If a participant in this study considered Oprah to be an expert in a topic but not Tom Hanks, the expertise ratings would cancel out, and it would be impossible to determine which factor was driving the post-test results. The only potential downside, which is that it would reduce the total number of Tweets that participants read, could be mitigated by increasing the number of tweets in each feed.

It might also be useful to study the comparative effects of celebrity political endorsements on men and women. At least for commercial products, celebrity endorsements tend to be more effective on male consumers than they are on female consumers (Premeaux, 2005). While there is no specific evidence about this related to political endorsements, it would be interesting to find out if and under what circumstances these results still hold true.
Finally, the best-case scenario would be to run a follow-up study as a two-step design, where the pre-test is administered some time before the experimental groups are assigned. In this study, the pre-test question of issue importance and the post-test question of issue importance were answered within minutes of each other, and this experimental problem strongly affected the data. If there was a time delay between the two items, it would yield a much more realistic picture of what effect reading the Twitter feeds is actually having.

Conclusion

While there are many improvements that could be made, this study yielded a few interesting results. In the coming years, it will become increasingly important for the field of communication to apply its existing theories and principles, which were developed under a traditional media paradigm, to the emerging forms of media and social networking that have begun to change the landscape of American society. This project was a very modest step in that direction, but sometimes small steps are important steps. It supports some ideas that have been around for many years, and it offers a glimpse into celebrity characteristics that matter to Twitter users. Twitter may not have the same societal clout as a site like Facebook, but it appears to be here to stay. As more and more users continue to join that community, it will become even more important to understand the mechanisms at work within it.
References


adoption among a diverse group of young adults. *New Media & Society, 13*(5), 824-842.


Appendix A: Tables and Figures

Table 2: Cronbach’s α for Celebrity Source Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Celebrity</th>
<th>Likeability</th>
<th>Attractiveness</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Expertise</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanks</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>.897</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td>.935</td>
<td>.859</td>
<td>.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>.993</td>
<td>.889</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td>.926</td>
<td>.870</td>
<td>.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winfrey</td>
<td>.856</td>
<td>.849</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>.953</td>
<td>.813</td>
<td>.890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilton</td>
<td>.949</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>.951</td>
<td>.798</td>
<td>.803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>.954</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.990</td>
<td>.876</td>
<td>.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephan.</td>
<td>.951</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.993</td>
<td>.884</td>
<td>.939</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Partial correlations for post-test perceived issue importance controlling for pre-test perceived issue importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exp. Condition</th>
<th>Strong Celeb Cues</th>
<th>Weak Celeb Cues</th>
<th>News Personalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.118**</td>
<td>.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>.479***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>-.098</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.279*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .10, **p < .05, ***p < .01
Table 4: Source characteristics as predictors of post-test perceived educational importance across all experimental conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SourceAttractMax</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SourceAttractMin</td>
<td>.367**</td>
<td>2.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SourceExpertMax</td>
<td>.321*</td>
<td>1.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SourceExpertMin</td>
<td>-.201</td>
<td>-.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SourceTrustMax</td>
<td>-.244</td>
<td>-1.191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SourceTrustMin</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>.303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SourceLikeMax</td>
<td>-.138</td>
<td>-.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SourceLikeMin</td>
<td>-.120</td>
<td>-.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SourceValueMax</td>
<td>-.192</td>
<td>-1.309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SourceValueMin</td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>-.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SourceThoughtMax</td>
<td>-.078</td>
<td>-.438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SourceThoughtMin</td>
<td>.317*</td>
<td>1.940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on OLS regression. Standardized betas shown.  
* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$
Appendix B: Stimuli and Measurements

I. Stimuli

Instructions: You will be shown posts from celebrity Twitter feeds. Some tweets may be fictional. Please read each post carefully and then answer the following questions.

@tomhanks

- Typewriter of the day. Royal 'Apollo 10' model from 1969. Electric that got us to the moon! It's noisy but types fine...
- Another Book Suggestion: ALL THAT I AM, by Anna Funder, who also wrote STASILAND.
- In '12 take up Ichiban rock ‘n soul on WFMU.org – killer!

@parishilton

- Jetting off to NYC with my girl Nicole. #GirlsTrip :)
- Good morning everyone! Have a great day! Love Paris xoxo
- Fun day at my parents house celebrating @ConradHilton's Birthday with my whole family. Love everyone so much.
- Another beautiful sunny day in Los Angeles! I love LA!

@chrisbrown

- Love...
- The things you love are better when you can share them with a friend...
- Love you team breezy. #openroad
- Got a chance to speak with a group of kids today about aspirations and goals. Had an amazing time!

@oprah

- Feed your spirit Super Soul Sunday 11 am. One of my favorite things on #OWN. And the reason I took on the humongous challenge of a network.
- Holy moly I'm on Jimmy Kimmel right now on ABC.
- @drclawsinc And u r already a beacon of Light. Know it!
- @MarzialiLucas we're all instruments of God. Trouble is most people have forgotten. The journey of being human is to REMEMBER!
@andersoncooper

- Latest on tornado damage in midwest tonite on @AC360, all the latest videos and eyewitness accounts from survivors. 8pm and 10pm
- Do you have odd eating habits? Today on @Anderson, meet people whose food obsessions are hurting the quality of their lives. #Fri
- Do you ever sign documents without reading the fine print? Have you ever been scammed for it?
- Just intvd mom of boy killed in #chardon school shooting. He was to get first paycheck tomorrow. She will now put it in his coffin.

@Gstephanopoulos

- Just a few minutes away from @Coldplay...what’s your favorite song?#GMAColdplay
- Congrats to @RobinRoberts and her team on a terrific show!#GMAOscars
- I’m taping my new Yahoo show, the Bottom Line, tomorrow and taking your questions. What do you want answered?
- So proud of my wife @AliEWentworth on her new web show "Daily Shot."

The following two tweets will replace the top two tweets of whichever celebrity's group participants are assigned to.

RT @wadhwa Please retweet this if you think education needs to be a higher priority!
RT @wadhwa If you think an educated society is expensive, try an ignorant society.
RT @mwesch The importance of a college education is evident in today's economy.
RT @plthomasEdD Education is a key factor in a person’s success.

II. Measurements

Sex: Male Female

What is your age?

Are you a Twitter user?
Yes No

Are you familiar with this person?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Follow Twitter</th>
<th>Do you find this celebrity to be:</th>
<th>Celebrity Source Credibility (for each celebrity):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom Hanks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not appealing/appealing: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (0 = not appealing, 10 = extremely appealing)</td>
<td>Attractive: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Brown</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not desirable/desirable: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (0 = not desirable, 10 = extremely desirable)</td>
<td>Classy: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oprah Winfrey</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Dislikeable/likeable: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (0 = dislikeable, 10 = extremely dislikeable)</td>
<td>Handsome/Beautiful: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris Hilton</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Elegant: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson Cooper</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sexy: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Stephanopoulos</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dependable: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Honest: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reliable: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sincere: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthy: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Expert: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experienced: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledgeable: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Qualified: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skilled: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Issue Importance**
How high of a priority should each of the following issues be? (0 = not a priority, 10 = highest priority)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner city schools</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
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<td>Immigration</td>
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<td>College scholarships</td>
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<td>Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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**Perception of cognitive effort at weighing issues**
This celebrity puts some thought into which issues to talk about: (0 = no thought, 10 = very much thought)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Celebrity</th>
<th>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tom Hanks</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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When this celebrity brings up an issue, it's because they have given it thought and decided it is really important: (0 = strongly disagree, 10 = strongly agree)

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This celebrity thinks about a wide range of social issues: (0 = strongly disagree, 10 = strongly agree)

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**Value similarity**
This celebrity has the same values as me: (0 = strongly disagree, 10 = strongly agree)

Tom Hanks: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Chris Brown: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Oprah Winfrey: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Paris Hilton: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Anderson Cooper 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
George Stephanopoulos 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Personal Similarity
This celebrity has a similar personality to mine: (0 = strongly disagree, 10 = strongly agree)

Tom Hanks: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Chris Brown: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Oprah Winfrey: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Paris Hilton: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Anderson Cooper 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
George Stephanopoulos 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

This celebrity is like me: (0 = strongly disagree, 10 = strongly agree)

Tom Hanks: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Chris Brown: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Oprah Winfrey: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Paris Hilton: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Anderson Cooper 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
George Stephanopoulos 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

This celebrity has a similar background to mine: (0 = strongly disagree, 10 = strongly agree)

Tom Hanks: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Chris Brown: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Oprah Winfrey: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Paris Hilton: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Anderson Cooper 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
George Stephanopoulos 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Stimulus

*How important are these issues to society as a whole?* (0 = not a priority, 10 = highest priority)

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Manipulation Check
In the tweets that you read, did any of these celebrities mention education?
Tom Hanks: No Yes
Chris Brown: No Yes
Paris Hilton: No Yes
Oprah Winfrey: No Yes
Anderson Cooper: No Yes
George Stephanopoulos: No Yes

Information Seeking
How likely would you be to:
Read a news story about education if you encountered one? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Seek out more information about problems faced by schools? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Seek out more information about a candidate’s views on education when deciding whether to vote for them? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10