

POLI 891, Framing  
Prof. Baumgartner  
Fall 2012

Questions for week 10, source credibility

Answer ONE of the following questions. Come to class prepared to discuss ALL of them. Essays should be limited to one page single spaced and should have perhaps one-third of the essay describing the issue and the rest analyzing it. It is preferable to go into detail on a small part of the issue, giving examples or illustrations, than to remain at a general level. The devil is always in the details.

1. Chaiken distinguishes between the source and the message. It is obvious that one's empathy or feelings toward the source of a message might matter. Advertisers do not take average-looking people to endorse their products; they must think that associating the product with an attractive spokesperson matters. (Or, they associate them with a positively-viewed celebrity...) All this seems far afield from the political science literature on framing. Is that a flaw of the political science literature? What are some ways we could do better in studying sources?
2. Many of you criticized Nelson et al. for discussing a Klan rally last week. Here Druckman compares Jerry Springer and Colin Powell, and then *The National Enquirer* with *The New York Times*. Discuss.
3. Go back and re-read the Peter Hall article from the first week in the semester when we read it. My article in *Governance* is part of a special issue discussing his contribution. Hall says that there are three levels of reframing, and that "paradigm shifts" are their own separate category. I suggest that maybe there is only one type of change, but that it can occur at any level. Wrap your head around what that means and discuss.
4. Riker's example of Nerve Gas is commonly cited. What makes the story so great?
5. Riker's example of Nerve Gas is commonly cited. What makes it such a good example of a "just-so" story? A just-so story is something that, when looked at in retrospect, involves the random coming together of various elements in a fashion that they come together "just so" to create a certain outcome that never could have been predicted ahead of time. The criticism is that it reconstructs an essentially random or unpredictable process in a way that makes it appear more structured or predictable than it was in fact.