

ISSUE INVOLVEMENT

Involvement, characterized by a “heightened motivational state” toward some object, is a key factor in influencing persuasion (Day, Stafford, & Camacho, 1995; Fei, 2008; Mittal, 1989).

Individuals who are highly involved with an object will be more active in receiving information about the object relative to individuals who are not highly involved (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Te'eni-Harari, Lehman-Wilzig, & Lampert, 2009), and will put more effort into decisions related to the object (Fei, 2008). They will also respond differently to object-relevant messages depending on their level of involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1986).

Due to its substantial influence on purchasing behavior, product involvement has been of great interest to researchers in the field of marketing. In this context, involvement has a substantial effect on search time and product evaluation (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985) as well as attitudes, preferences, and perceptions of alternatives (Te'eni-Harari et al., 2009).

Perhaps more interestingly, consumers who have high enduring involvement with a product exhibit greater expertise with that product, and tend to become sources of word-of-mouth recommendations and advice regarding the product (Bloch, Commuri, & Arnold, 2009). This may lead to elevated status and greater fulfillment for high involvement consumers. Improved understanding of involvement will result in enhanced consumer satisfaction, and increasing involvement may improve marketing effectiveness (O'Cass, 2000).

Along with the general consensus that involvement is multi-dimensional (Mittal, 1989; Schneider & Rodgers, 1996), recent research has supported the proposition that there are different types of involvement. O'Cass (2000), for example, developed a measure of Purchase

Decision Involvement (PDI), and Bruner and Kumar (2007) measure involvement with technology. It has been found the nature of an individual's heightened motivational state will vary with the nature of the object.

Of great relevance to the current study are the measures of *Value-*, *Outcome-*, and *Impression-Relevant* involvement developed by Cho and Boster (2005) based on the meta-analytic work of Johnson and Eagly (1989). According to Johnson and Eagly, Value-Relevant Involvement (VRI) refers to "the psychological state that is created by the activation of attitudes that are linked to important values." VRI is argued to influence persuasion through the latitude of acceptability of positions relevant to the involvement object; a relatively high VRI results in a narrow latitude of acceptance/broad latitude of rejection of a proposed position. Johnson and Eagly propose that the reduced latitude of acceptance makes highly value-involved individuals more difficult to persuade than less value-involved individuals.

Outcome-Relevant Involvement (ORI) refers to the relevance of consequences to the individual. This conceptualization of ORI is derived from what Petty and Cacioppo (1979) originally labeled Issue Involvement. A high ORI has been shown to result in either high susceptibility to persuasion or low susceptibility to persuasion, depending on the strength of the argument (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). High ORI has also led to increased sensitivity to negative framing in messages (Maheswaran & Meyerslevy, 1990). It has also been shown to result in enhanced information seeking (Cho & Boster, 2005).

Following the work of Zimbardo (1960), Impression-Relevant Involvement (IRI) is characterized in Johnson and Eagly, and also Cho and Boster as the consequence of an individual's opinion on how others evaluate that individual. In other words, individuals with a high IRI will seek to be rewarded for holding a situationally-acceptable position. As with VRI, Johnson and Eagly propose that a relatively high level of IRI will result in reduced susceptibility to persuasion.

Validity Check

In order to validate the measures used in the study herein considered 53 junior and senior marketing majors at a West Coast university were surveyed on the subject of the legalization of marijuana. This issue was chosen in order to replicate one of the issues tested by Cho and Boster. The scale items used to measure ORI and VRI were replicates of those used by Cho and Boster, and the items used to measure IRI were based on the Product Interest and Engagement Scale (PIES) (Chapman, Lahav, Love, & Alford, 2009).

As a further means of validating these measures students were also asked the following questions:

- I am highly involved with the issue of the legalization of marijuana from a personal values standpoint (used to validate VRI).
- I am highly involved with the outcome of legalization of marijuana (used to validate ORI).

- My position on the legalization of marijuana is closely related to my self-image (used to validate IRI).

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on each of the three involvement factors. For VRI, a single factor explained 60% of the variance and the factor's correlation with the VRI validation was marginally significant ($p < .1$). For ORI, a single factor explained 62% of the variance (eigenvalue = 4.34), and the factor was significantly correlated with the ORI validation ($p < .05$). For IRI, a single factor explained about 50% of the variance (eigenvalue = 2.016) and the factor was significantly correlated with the IRI validation ($p < .05$).

Study One

To test the relationship between these issue involvement subfactors, 203 undergraduate students at a West Coast university were surveyed. Group 1 ($n = 141$) was drawn from an introductory management class and a social responsibility/ethics course. Students received a nominal amount of course credit for participating in the study.

Method

At the beginning of the Fall 2009 academic quarter, subjects were asked to complete a short survey. In the first part of this survey, students responded to several 7-point likert type questions related to the issue of free market capitalism (shown in Table 1) and consequence-

based decision-making. Seven of the items measured VRI, seven items measured ORI, and four items measured IRI. The measures of VRI and ORI were adapted from Cho and Boster (2005), and measure of IRI was adapted from Chapman et al. (2009).

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

In the second section of the survey, similar measures were taken related to the issue of consequence-based decision-making.

Results

The reliability of the involvement subfactors was tested. Scale reliability analyses provided satisfactory reliability measures for VRI, ORI, and IRI ($\alpha = .69, .88, \text{ and } .71$ respectively for free market capitalism, and $\alpha = .76, .74, \text{ and } .70$ respectively for consequence-based decision making).

A series of structural equation model (SEM) was then developed to test the proposed relationship between these constructs, i.e., that they are each subfactors of the higher-order construct that we label issue involvement. We prepared two models for each issue, one with the higher-order factor and one without. We found that adding the issue involvement factor substantially improved model fit (GFI = .86 vs. .58, RMSEA = .07 vs .15 for free market capitalism, and GFI = .88 vs .82, RMSEA = .06 vs .09) with each subfactor significantly contributing to the issue involvement

factor. One contribution of this research is the demonstration that the three subfactors do converge on a common issue involvement factor.

COURSEWORK and INFO SEEKING SECTION HERE

H2: High outcome-relevant involvement with an issue will result in increased information seeking related to that issue.

H3: High values-relevant involvement with an issue will result in decreased information seeking related to that issue.

Study Two

The purpose of Study Two was to evaluate the relationship between the subfactors of issue involvement and information seeking. [MORE HERE, DEPENDING ON WHAT THE LIT SAYS ABOUT INFO SEEKING]

Method

In order to test whether levels of VRI AND ORI influence information seeking, we collected survey data from two groups of students, both at the same university on the West Coast of the United States. The first group of students (the Control group, n = 68) was taken from an introductory management course, and the second group (the Experimental group, n = 110) was taken from an introductory geology course.

Survey questions were similar to those described in Study One above for VRI, ORI, and IRI, although in this study the focal issue was global warming. Five, five-point likert-scale items were adapted from

Laurent and Kapferer (1985) and Cho and Boster (2005) to measure information seeking. Specific wording was as follows: “I try to keep myself informed about the issue of global warming”, “I tend to pay attention to articles on global warming,” “I tend to pay attention to television programs on the issue of global warming,” “I would be interested in reading articles on the issue of global warming,” and “I would be interested in watching television programs on the issue of global warming.”

Results

The relationship between VRI, ORI, and IRI and information seeking was tested in a structural equation model using data from all 178 subjects in the pretest. The resulting model provided a very good fit of the data (RMSEA < .06), and indicated a relationship between the constructs. Based on the maximum likelihood regression weights from the model, ORI had a significantly positive influence on information seeking (critical ratio = 5.36, $p < .01$) and VRI had a significantly negative influence on information seeking (critical ratio = 3.25, $p < .01$). These results provide support for hypotheses 1 and 2. Individuals who are highly involved with the outcome of the issue of global warming will tend to be more likely to engage in information seeking behavior. On the other hand, individuals who are highly involved with this issue because it is central to their values will be less likely to engage in information seeking.

Study Three

The purpose of Study Three was to determine whether a specific course with content that is relevant to a given issue could influence student involvement and information seeking related to that issue, and also to explore the relationship between issue involvement and information seeking. An increase in information seeking could be taken as a particularly positive outcome from a course.

Method

Whether coursework can influence student levels of VRI, ORI, IRI and information seeking was tested as a follow-up to Study Two. At the end of the term, the same two groups of students were given a post-test survey with the same questions used in the pre-test. Of the 68 students in the Control group pretest, 54 completed the posttest. Of the 110 students in the Experimental group pretest, 59 completed the posttest. Students in both groups received a small amount of course credit for completing the surveys.

Results

Pre- and Post-test results for the two groups were rescaled between 0 and 1 and tested using a repeated measures general linear model. Membership in the experimental group was included as a between subjects effect.

For the measure of VRI, a test of within-subjects effects shows a significant interaction between participation in the geology class and the change in values-relevant involvement observed over the course of the quarter ($F = 6.104, p < .015$). Whereas students in the Control condition showed essentially no change in their involvement over the course of the term (mean pretest score of .38 vs. mean posttest score of .37, n.s.), students in the Experimental condition showed a significant increase in their VRI (.43 vs. .50, $t = 3.29, p < .01$).

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

The effect of coursework on ORI was similar. Participation in the Geology class had a significant influence on student level of ORI ($F = 9.55, p < .01$). As with VRI, the level of ORI in the Control group was essentially unchanged between measures (.58 vs. .57, n.s.), but increased significantly for the students in the course (.62 vs. .72, $t = 4.8, p < .01$).

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

The results for IRI are more ambiguous, with Geology students showing an only marginally significant increase relative to the Control group ($F = 3.38, p < .1$). As was the case with VRI and ORI, the Geology students showed a significant increase in IRI (.41 vs. .46, $t = 2.40, p < .05$), while the Control group students did not (.42 vs. .41, n.s.).

INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

Results for Information Seeking are more consistent with those of VRI and ORI. The influence of the Geology course on information seeking is significant ($F = 11.58, p < .01$), and, unlike students in the Control group, students in the Geology class showed a significantly greater tendency toward information seeking behavior at the end of the quarter than at the beginning of the quarter (.51 vs. .59, $t = 4.64, p < .01$). Mean Information Seeking in the Control group declined from .46 to .43 (n.s.).

INSERT FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

Although these results demonstrate that coursework can significantly influence both involvement and information seeking related to an issue, an important caveat applies. First, while this study shows that these effects can occur, the authors do not suggest that they will always occur. Simply because course content is relevant to a given issue does not mean that will influence students along these dimensions. A number of underlying factors may explain the likelihood of such effects taking place. Instructor effectiveness, for example, may be expected to play an important role.

In any case, these findings do suggest that coursework may influence students in previously unrecognized ways. In certain cases, this may provide new dimensions on which courses may be evaluated.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Bibliography

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Table 1: Issue Involvement Measures, Free Market Capitalism

<p>Outcome-Relevant Involvement Subfactor Items:</p> <p>ORI_1r Whether I live in a free market system or not has little impact on my life.</p> <p>ORI_2r All in all, the effect of a free market system on my life is little.</p> <p>ORI_3 My life would be changed if I did not live in a free market system.</p> <p>ORI_4r Laws concerning the free market system have little effect on me.</p> <p>ORI-5r My life would not change much if free market regulations were changed.</p> <p>ORI_6 It is easy for me to think of ways the free market system affects my life.</p> <p>ORI_7r It is difficult for me to think of ways a change in free market regulations would impact my life</p>
<p>Values-Relevant Involvement Subfactor Items:</p> <p>VRI_1 The values that are the most important to me are what determine my stand on the free market system.</p> <p>VRI_2 Knowing my position on the free market system is central to understanding the kind of person I am.</p> <p>VRI_3r My position on the free market system has little to do with my beliefs about how life should be lived.</p> <p>VRI_4 My position on the free market system is based on the values with which I try to conduct my life.</p> <p>VRI_5 Arguments for or against the free market system are relevant to the core principles that guide my life.</p> <p>VRI_6 My beliefs about how I should live my life determine my position on the free market system.</p> <p>VRI_7 My position on the free market system reflects who I am.</p>
<p>Image-Relevant Involvement Subfactor Items:</p> <p>IRI_1 When people hear someone's opinion about the free market system, they form an opinion of that person.</p> <p>IRI_2 A person's opinion about the free market system expresses a lot about that person.</p> <p>IRI_3 You can learn a lot about a person by learning the person's opinions regarding the free market system.</p> <p>IRI_4 It is important to have an opinion about the free market system that matches one's image.</p>

Table 2: Estimated Regression Weights, Free Market Capitalism

			Estimate	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	P (One-Tailed)
Outcome	<---	Involvement	1			
Self Image	<---	Involvement	0.767	0.175	4.375	<.001
Values	<---	Involvement	1.141	0.244	4.685	<.001
ORI_1r	<---	Outcome	1.23	0.19	6.467	<.001
ORI_2r	<---	Outcome	1.22	0.195	6.268	<.001
ORI_3	<---	Outcome	1.038	0.17	6.092	<.001
ORI_4r	<---	Outcome	1			
ORI_5r	<---	Outcome	0.873	0.167	5.215	<.001
ORI_6	<---	Outcome	0.833	0.191	4.365	<.001
ORI_7r	<---	Outcome	0.946	0.174	5.437	<.001
VRI_1	<---	Values	1			
VRI_2	<---	Values	1.634	0.263	6.216	<.001
VRI_3r	<---	Values	1.789	0.283	6.32	<.001
VRI_4	<---	Values	1.111	0.23	4.827	<.001
VRI_5	<---	Values	0.974	0.17	5.726	<.001
VRI_6	<---	Values	1.147	0.17	6.728	<.001
VRI_7	<---	Values	0.661	0.166	3.978	<.001
IRI_1	<---	Self Image	1.233	0.167	7.372	<.001
IRI_2	<---	Self Image	1			
IRI_3	<---	Self Image	1.089	0.16	6.812	<.001
IRI_4	<---	Self Image	0.979	0.146	6.701	<.001

Figure 1: Involvement with the Issue of Free Market Capitalism

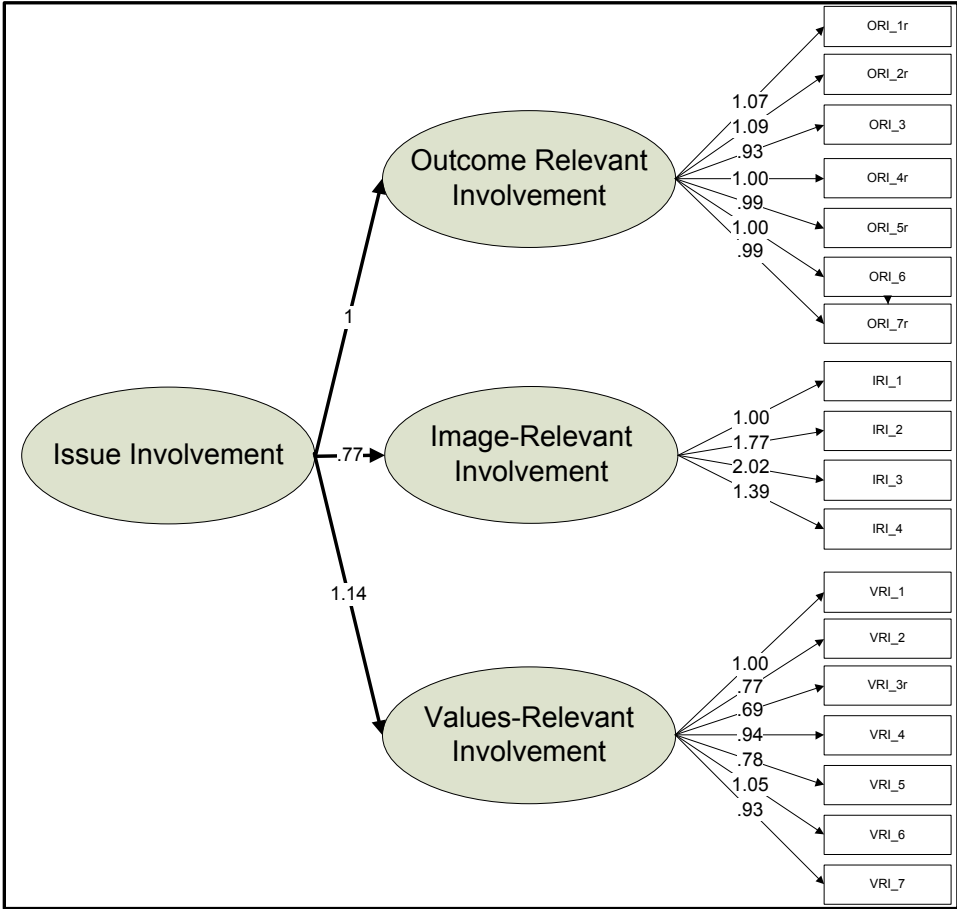


Figure 2: The Effect of Coursework on Values-Relevant Involvement with Global Warming

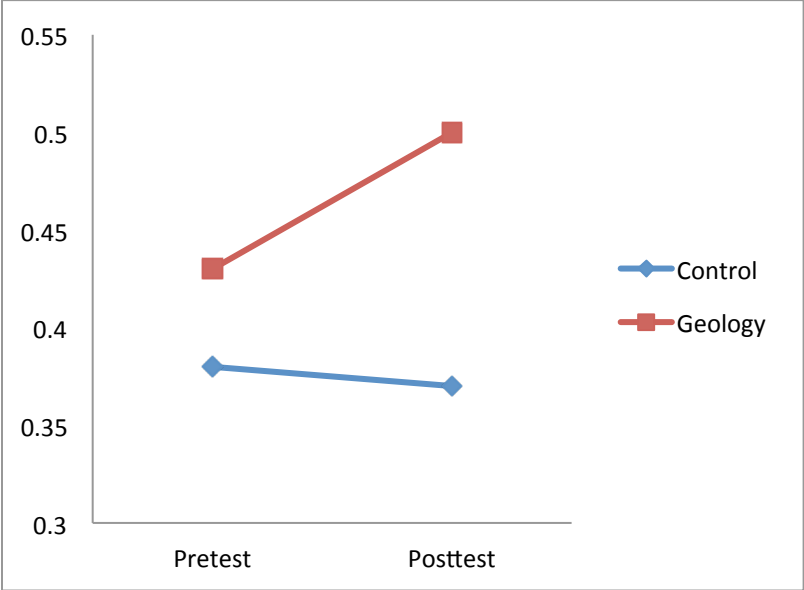


Figure 3: The Effect of Coursework on Outcome-Relevant Involvement with Global Warming

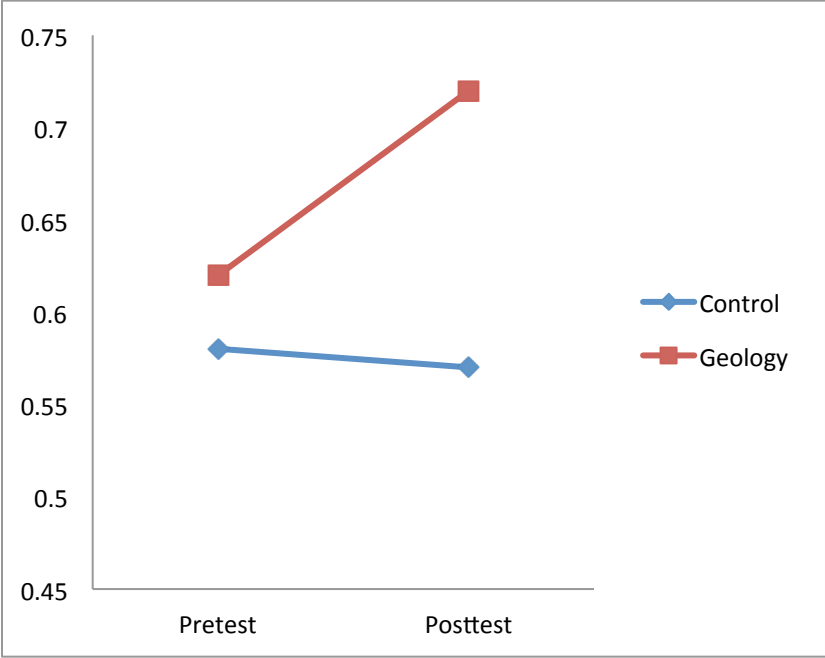


Figure 4: The Effect of Coursework on Image-Relevant Involvement with Global Warming

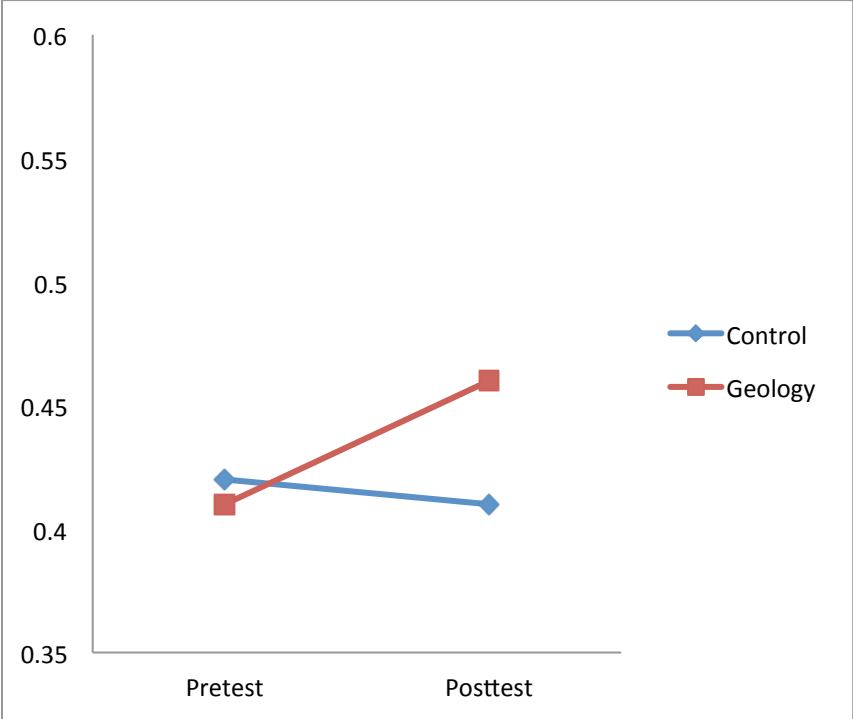


Figure 5: The Effect of Coursework on Image-Relevant Involvement with Global Warming

