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Auth [Meyers-Levy, Joan](#); [Malaviya, Prashant](#)
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CONSUMERS' PROCESSING OF PERSUASIVE ADVERTISEMENTS: AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK OF PERSUASION THEORIES

In this article, the authors propose an integrative model of *advertising* persuasion that orders the major *theories* and empirically supported generalizations about persuasion that have been offered in the information-processing literature. The authors begin by reviewing this literature, placing particular emphasis on the assorted processes or mechanisms that have been suggested to mediate persuasion. To consolidate this material, the authors propose a framework that delineates three alternative strategies that people may use to process persuasive communications and form judgments, in which each strategy represents a different level of cognitive resources that is employed during message processing. In addition, the framework identifies a judgment correction stage that allows people to attempt to correct their initial judgments for biases that they perceive may have affected such judgments. The authors add to this by identifying particular processes that appear to mediate when and how these judgment formation and judgment correction processes operate. They also attempt to foster growth by specifying some of the critical issues and gaps in the knowledge that appear to impede further progress. Finally, the authors clarify how the proposed framework can inform the decisions *advertising* practitioners make about *advertising* execution and media factors.

Every day, U.S. consumers are exposed to no less than 1000 commercial messages (Kotler 1997*). Regardless of their content and the techniques they employ, most messages share a common final goal: persuading target consumers to adopt a particular product, service, or idea. How do *advertising* messages influence consumers' judgments and preferences and thereby advance persuasion? A vast body of work has explored this question from various perspectives, seeking to develop a theoretical understanding of the persuasion process. Yet, to date, no single *theory* or framework that has been developed has been able to account for all the varied and sometimes conflicting persuasion findings. Presumably, this is because the complex process of persuasion is intricately dependent on a myriad of contextual, situational, and individual difference factors, whereas the *theories* remain relatively simplistic and narrowly developed. The inability of existing *theories* to accommodate all persuasion findings need not suggest, however, that these *theories* are inaccurate. Rather, we propose that these *theories* simply may represent pieces of persuasion processes that operate in certain conditions that are not always clearly specified. This view is consistent with the popular assumption that judgments are sensitive to many contextual and situational influences (Forgas 1995; MacInnis and Jaworski 1989, 1990; Payne, Bettman, and Johnson 1993).

Assuming that this perspective of current *theories* is accurate, what appears to be needed is a framework that organizes and integrates the various persuasion *theories* by delineating the conditions in which each is likely to operate. We attempt to develop such a framework in this article. More specifically, this work pursues four goals: It (1) briefly reviews some dominant and seemingly competing persuasion *theories* in the information-processing literature; (2) proposes a coherent, integrated framework of judgment formation and persuasion that shows how these disparate *theories* fit together and interrelate to offer a more complete understanding of persuasion; (3) identifies some of the major gaps in the understanding of the mechanisms believed to mediate persuasion and outlines fertile avenues for investigating them; and (4) highlights some applied insights that emerge from the framework, which suggest how practitioners might design more effective *advertising* strategies.

Our consideration of the dominant persuasion *theories* is necessarily subject to some constraints. First, we consider only *theories* that adopt an information-processing perspective, identify particular mechanisms that may mediate the persuasive impact of *advertising* messages, and have garnered significant research attention and empirical support.[1] Second, we include only *theories* that *pertain* to persuasion, as indicated by people's judgments, preferences, or attitudes about an *advertising* message. Third, though we acknowledge the importance of *theories* about various qualitative and causal issues *pertaining* to persuasion (e.g., attitude strength and persistence, information search, the attitude-behavior relationship, the use of stored versus newly computed online attitudes), these *theories* extend beyond the purview of this work and are not discussed. We begin by providing a brief overview of our proposed framework. This overview is intended to facilitate understanding of and serve as a road map for the discussions that follow.

Overview of the Integrative Framework

The integrative framework of judgment formation and persuasion that we propose uses the dual-process model 'as its foundation. Therefore, the framework assumes that, when exposed to an *advertisement*, people use either a fairly effortful and deliberative systematic approach to judgment formation or a far less demanding and less rigorous heuristic approach (Chaiken, Liberman, and Eagly 1989; Petty and Cacioppo 1986). However, to incorporate considerable theorizing and findings that go beyond this basic dichotomy, our framework extends the dual-process model in several ways.

First, it delineates contingencies in which people are likely to employ a third fundamental processing strategy in response to an *advertisement*, one referred to as an "experiential processing strategy." When this strategy operates, judgments are not based on thoughts prompted by message content per se but rather on sensations or feelings prompted by the very act of processing (Strack 1992). Second, our framework moves beyond these mechanisms of judgment formation and allows for the possibility that people may engage in a judgment correction process subsequent to forming an initial judgment. This correction process may occur when people perceive that potentially biasing influences may have affected their initial judgments inappropriately (Martin and Achee 1992). Third, the framework explains when and how a variety of processes proposed by other persuasion *theories* may come into play, which serves to elucidate the particular processing mechanisms that may mediate all approaches to judgment formation or correction. For example, in contrast to dual-process models, which suggest that judgments depend on message elaboration that varies only in magnitude, our framework incorporates judgment consequences that can follow from variation in both elaboration type (Hunt and Einstein 1981) and the degree of comparability between the amount of cognitive resources that are supplied and the amount required for message elaboration (Anand and Sternthal 1989).

In summary, our framework differs from the dual-process model by suggesting that people can use any of three different strategies for forming judgments and that they may engage in a process of judgment correction. Moreover, as we describe next, each of these strategies or processes possesses unique antecedents, mediating mechanisms, and consequences.

Unique Antecedents

Consistent with many *theories* of persuasion, our framework posits that the antecedent for which of the three persuasion strategies is adopted is the level of cognitive resources that message recipients devote to processing the *advertisement* and rendering judgments (Chaiken, Liberman, and Eagly 1989; MacInnis and Jaworski 1989; Petty and Cacioppo 1986). This level of resources

can be influenced by assorted recipient (e.g., expertise, personal relevance of issue), message (e.g., complexity), and situational (e.g., time constraints) variables. More specifically, our framework suggests that when the level of mental resources a message recipient allocates to message processing is substantial, moderate, or minimal, judgment formation proceeds through a systematic, heuristic, or experiential strategy, respectively. Moreover, attempts at judgment correction are likely to occur only when substantial resources are available during the correction stage (Marin, Seta, and Crelia 1990).

Unique Mediating Mechanisms

The proposed framework holds that different types of information provide the material on which ad recipients elaborate, depending on the processing strategy they adopt. In the case of a systematic strategy, judgments are mediated by the extent to which message recipients can identify and elaborate on the strong message claims. Presumably, these claims suggest that the *advertised* product or position offers unique benefits (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Provided that message recipients engage in this sort of elaboration and regard the unique features favorably, judgments are likely to be favorable.

In contrast, when a heuristic strategy is employed, the mediating mechanism entails invoking a simple judgment rule that generally is prompted by some salient or otherwise readily accessible message or contextual cue (Chaiken, Liberman, and Eagly 1989). For example, this cue might be an exceptionally large display of a product's price in an *advertisement* or perhaps the small number of supporting claims an *advertisement* provides for a product. In the first case, the enlarged price cue could prompt favorable judgments if the rule that is invoked indicates that the oversized price display must mean that the product is being offered at a greatly reduced price, making it a good buy (Inman, McAlister, and Hoyer 1990). In the latter case, relatively unfavorable judgments would ensue if people employ the intuitive logic that few supporting claims for the product must mean that the product is inferior (Alba and Marmorstein 1987). When an experiential strategy is used, the process that mediates judgments involves not message cues per se but the elicitation and interpretation of sensations or autonomic responses that emerge from the very process of processing (Strack 1992). Such a sensation might be a feeling of familiarity that could be generated by highly fluent or smooth processing of an *advertising* message. Yet, given the dearth of cognitive resources people expend when they use this strategy, these serendipitous sensations might be construed as being caused by factors that bear implications for people's judgments.

Finally, the mediating process that ensues if judgment correction actually is attempted involves several steps. The message recipient must identify a source that may have biased his or her initial judgment inappropriately (e.g., the self-serving goals of the source of the information), identify a logic that suggests the likely size of the bias and direction in which it occurred (e.g., a schema about the "schemer"; Friestad and Wright 1995), and, provided that available cognitive resources allow it, attempt to partial out of the initial assessment the influence of the biasing agent (Martin, Seta, and Crelia 1990). If failure occurs at any of these steps or adequate resources are lacking, the person's initial judgment remains.

Unique Consequences

The judgments that result from the use of each strategy are believed to be different in certain respects. For example, judgments that are arrived at following the use of the systematic, heuristic, and experiential strategies are likely to be held with decreasing levels of certainty regarding their accuracy (Eagly and Chaiken 1993'). Furthermore, judgments that have undergone correction, so

that all inappropriate influences presumably have been removed from them, should differ in favorableness from those rendered initially (Petty and Wegener 1993). And though we are aware of no empirical research that has assessed the possibility, it seems plausible that judgments that have been subjected to all steps of the correction process could be held with heightened certainty because message recipients have devoted more effort to producing them and/or believe that they have been appropriately adjusted.

Next, before developing and discussing our framework in more detail, we turn our attention to some major *theories* of persuasion. Specifically, we focus on those that inform the framework.

An Examination of the Major Persuasion Theories

The Cognitive-Response Model of Persuasion

Whereas previous learning and belief-based *theories* of persuasion embraced the notion that persuasion depends on the extent to which message recipients learn, form beliefs about, and retain the ideas conveyed in a message (Fishbein and Azjen 1975'; Hovland, Janis, and Kelly 1953'), the information-processing perspective spawned a *theory* that rejected this view. In contrast, a *theory* called the cognitive-response model holds that persuasion is a function of people's reflections on and cognitive responses about the content of a message (Greenwald 1968'; Wright 1980). Cognitive responses are defined as any thoughts that arise during the process of elaboration when people relate message material to other message content or to their preexisting knowledge and views stored in memory. Accordingly, this model suggests that persuasion reflects the net favorableness of the cognitive responses that people evoke as they elaborate on a message.

This conceptualization of persuasion as evolving from people's cognitive responses has been reasonably supported by data (Chattopadhyay and Alba 1988'; Keller 1987; Keller and Aaker 1992; Mick 1992*), and it significantly advances our understanding of the fundamental process that may mediate persuasion. Yet this *theory* is silent about many issues, such as why people sometimes are persuaded, even though evidence suggests that they did not elaborate on any relevant message content.

Dual-Process Models of Persuasion

The preceding observation prompted speculation that there might be multiple mechanisms by which persuasion occurs. This thesis led to several similar *theories* (e.g., Batra and Ray 1986'; Burnkrant and Sawyer 1983; Fazio 1990; MacInnis and Jaworski 1990'), but dual-process *theories* such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty and Cacioppo 1981', 1986; also see Chaiken 1980'; Eagly and Chaiken 1993') have been most widely embraced. Dual-process *theories* posit the existence of a systematic or central route to persuasion, as well as a heuristic or peripheral route. The systematic route presumably produces more enduring judgments that are based on extensive and critical elaboration of message claims, whereas the heuristic route results in relatively ephemeral judgments that are grounded in simple and intuitive inferences that emerge from exposure to readily processed cues and involve scant elaboration. Furthermore, which of these two routes ensues and mediates persuasion in a given case is posited to depend on any number of factors that influence the amount of cognitive resources that a person devotes to thoughtful, elaborative processing of a message (e.g., message relevance, prior knowledge, available time).

The ELM and its variants are powerful *theories* that continue to have a profound influence on our views about persuasion (Kahle and Homer 1985'; Pham 1996', 1998; Shavitt et al. 1994*). Nonetheless, these dual-process *theories* are not without limitations. For example, they

focus quite exclusively on factors that affect the supply of cognitive resources that are adequate for thoughtful message analysis. Yet logically, whether this supply of resources is truly adequate for deliberative message processing would also seem to depend on the resource demands imposed by the message (e.g., its complexity). This suggests that a better understanding of persuasion may require consideration of both the supply of and demand for resources that operate in a given situation.

Resource-Matching Theory

The proposition that understanding persuasion requires consideration of both the supply of cognitive resources that a person devotes to message processing and the demand for resources that a message effectively requires if it is to be processed thoroughly serves as the foundation for resource-matching *theory* (Anand and Sternthal 1989). This *theory* posits that persuasion is a function of the commensurability between the supply of and demand for cognitive resources, with greater persuasion emerging if the levels of cognitive resources are comparable.

The logic that underlies this thesis is that most messages, particularly commercial ones, are designed to be persuasive and therefore contain materials that support the advocacy in a compelling manner. Therefore, allocating a level of resources that meets and neither falls short of nor exceeds the level required for adequate apprehension and scrutiny of the message should produce favorable judgments. If the cognitive resources a person devotes to message processing is less than what the message requires, persuasion is likely to be impoverished because either the compelling message material cannot be processed in its entirety or the message is likely to be processed superficially. Or, if the resources a person devotes to processing exceed the level that the message effectively requires, message recipients may generate many advocacy-consistent thoughts, but they also are likely to devote their excess resources to producing thoughts that may question the message assertions or to producing idiosyncratic, advocacy-irrelevant thoughts that tend to be less favorable compared with those prompted by the message (Keller and Block 1997; Meyers-Levy and Peracchio 1995; Olsen 1997').

Although not recognized at the time it was formulated, resource-matching *theory* appears to be applicable only in conditions that prompt resource-intensive, systematic message processing (Meyers-Levy and Peracchio 1995). This follows because when more lax, heuristic processing occurs, the resource demands required for thorough message processing are immaterial because, by definition, message recipients are unlikely to engage in extensive message processing but instead process only a subset of the message cues that imposes low resource requirements. Thus, though resource-matching *theory* addresses a notable oversight of dual-process *theories* such as the ELM by recognizing that the resource demands imposed by a message also play a role in persuasion, the *theory* is valid only in systematic processing conditions. Furthermore, it is silent about other questions that surround dual-process *theories*, including the issue of how systematic processors distinguish between strong and weak message claims and what leads to the perception that such claims are strong and well-supported rather than weak.

The Influence of Alternative Types of Elaboration on Persuasion

Insight into the preceding questions is offered by another *theory*, which posits that people's elaboration during message processing can consist of two types (Hunt and Einstein 1981). The first type of elaboration, item-specific, focuses on the particulars of specific features presented in a message and clearly connects these features with the *advertised* brand, product, or context. For example, on viewing an *advertisement* for an athletic shoe that touts the shoe's foot-cushioning

air chamber, an ad recipient who engages in item-specific elaboration might generate thoughts about the air chamber and that this particular brand possesses this feature.

A second type of elaboration, known as relational, entails focusing on similarities that may help categorize or otherwise connect individual concepts (e.g., similar brands) or pieces of information. Returning to the athletic shoe *advertisement*, relational elaboration might consist of thoughts that categorize the product as a basketball shoe, reflecting a relational inference that connects the shoe's athletic appearance with, say, a National Basketball Association logo displayed in the *advertisement* and perhaps with the presumed injury prevention benefit that the air chamber might afford basketball players.

The distinction between these two types of elaboration is important because each contributes differentially to alternative forms of memory (e.g., recall versus recognition; Meyers-Levy 1991; Tavassoli 1998) and, of more relevance here, to judgment formation or persuasion (Malaviya, Kisielius, and Sternthal 1996). Specifically, it appears that only if people engage in ample levels of both types of elaboration will they be able to infer with reasonable certitude whether a product's presumably favorable features are truly unique to it (Dhar and Sherman 1996).

To clarify, item-specific elaboration enables people to represent the specific features possessed by a target product (e.g., the target shoe contains an air chamber), which, in commercial messages, are generally chosen because they are likely to be regarded positively. However, strong inferences about the uniqueness of these feature should be possible only when relational elaboration also occurs, because this enables people to relate and compare the specific features with those typically possessed by members of the same product category. Thus, in the case of the athletic shoe, an ad recipient might compare the target brand's (item-)specific air chamber to the features believed to be typical of most basketball shoes--knowledge prompted by the relational inference that the target brand is a member of the basketball shoe category. From this comparison, the ad recipient might infer with reasonable certainty that the target brand's air chamber and the benefit it presumably offers are novel and distinguish the brand from the competition. As such, the ad recipient may judge the brand favorably.

This *theory* and its recognition of qualitative differences in the types of elaboration people may generate clarifies the process of persuasion (West, Brown, and Hoch 1996) and provides important insight into how people may construe claims as being relatively strong or weak. Nonetheless, the *theory* maintains a prevailing yet increasingly questionable assumption: that persuasion evolves exclusively from people's cognitions about the content or components of a message.

Experiential Bases of Persuasion

Fairly recent *theory* has emerged that points to a third general mechanism for determining judgments. Unlike the more familiar systematic and heuristic routes to persuasion, which suggest that judgments reflect people's cognitions about message content, this *theory* proposes that judgments may be mediated instead by sensations or feelings that are triggered by the very act of engaging in processing (Strack 1992; Wanke, Bohner, and Jurkowsch 1997). Judgments that are based on these sensations may require only the most meager level of cognitive resources, as suggested by experiential processing having been demonstrated most frequently in conditions in which cognitive capacity is severely constrained (e.g., subliminal or extremely brief stimulus exposure, divided attention). When people employ an experiential processing strategy, assorted process-generated feelings, such as a sensation of heightened (reduced) familiarity induced by enhanced (degraded) access to perceptual data (Jacoby et al. 1989; Witherspoon and Allan

1985'), have been shown to influence judgments. This suggests that other well-documented phenomena, including the truth, mere exposure, and false-fame effects, also may be examples of experientially derived judgments, because each appears to involve variation in the perceived familiarity of stimuli (e.g., Hawkins and Hoch 1992; Jacoby et al. 1989; Law, Hawkins, and Craik 1998; Seamon et al. 1995; Zajonc 1968).

Other research, however, indicates that the effect of process-generated experiential responses on judgments need not be limited to severely resource-constrained conditions. For example, studies indicate that when people engage in resource-intensive processing, they often experience sensations of either contentment or frustration, depending on whether they are able to achieve closure over ambiguous or conflicting data. These process-generated sensations or experiences also can affect people's judgments (Berlyne 1963; Garbarino and Edell 1997; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989; Peracchio and Meyers-Levy 1994; Peracchio and Tybout 1996; Pham 1998). In summary, this *theory's* suggestion that there may be three rather than two routes to forming judgments significantly alters conventional views about persuasion and suggests new avenues of inquiry. However, of all the *theories* discussed, this one may be in most need of greater specification and refinement. For example, it remains unclear exactly how process-generated experience influences judgment. Some researchers speculate that people simply "read" their bodily sensations and use them to derive judgments without engaging in inferential activity, whereas others conjecture that such effects are inferential and reflect people's misattributions about the causes of their sensations (Bornstein and D'Agostino 1994; Mandler, Nakamura, and Van Zandt 1987).

Accessibility and Diagnosticity as Determinants of Judgments

Although the *theories* discussed to this point have focused on the mediating processes that are believed to underlie judgment formation, other research has sought to identify what information is likely to inform judgments, irrespective of the judgment formation mechanism employed. This work suggests that judgments are likely to be influenced by information that is relatively accessible and, therefore, comes to mind readily at the time of judgment formation (e.g., Baker and Lutz 1988; Kisielius and Sternthal 1986; Lynch, Marmorstein, and Weigold 1988). In addition, data that are perceived to be diagnostic or relevant to the issue at hand are likely to affect judgments (Baker and Lutz 1988; Lynch, Marmorstein, and Weigold 1988). Although these insights undoubtedly are useful in anticipating the inputs to judgments, such theorizing is limited by the lack of specification of the factors that determine diagnosticity (Alba, Marmorstein, and Chattopadhyay 1992; Feldman and Lynch 1988).

Context Effects and Attitude Correction

None of the persuasion *theories* reviewed to this point has said much about whether, when formed, judgments are subjected to further consideration or possible adjustment in an effort to eliminate any biases in the initial judgment that may become evident. However, a burgeoning stream of research that has examined issues such as the influence of the contextual information surrounding messages suggests that judgment correction processes may take place (Gilbert 1991; Martin and Achee 1992; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1997). This work reveals that contextual and other (often irrelevant) data can affect judgments (Alba, Marmorstein, and Chattopadhyay 1992; Hsee and Leclerc 1998; Schmitt and Zhang 1998; Shapiro, MacInnis, and Heckler 1997). In most cases, this effect is one of assimilation, such that the concepts or meanings made more accessible by the context are related positively to the judgments.

At the same time, people will undertake to correct these context effects on their judgments only if three conditions are met. First, the message recipient must become aware that the contextual data may have influenced his or her views about the persuasive message inappropriately, which sometimes occurs because salient features of a judgment task or communication context bring the influence to mind (Schwarz and Clore 1983). Second, the person must be able to identify a "naive *theory*" that might account for why, how, and to what extent the biasing data could have had this effect (Petty and Wegener 1993). Third, the message recipient must possess and be willing to expend the cognitive resources required to engage in a correction process (Martin, Seta, and Crelia 1990). If any of these conditions are not met, the presumably spontaneously occurring assimilation effect of context on people's initial judgments remains intact. Conversely, if such conditions are met, people will attempt to partial out the inappropriate influence on their initial assessments. Yet, because the process of correcting and partialling out bias is imperfect and presumably prone to overadjustment, a contrast effect may occur, in which case, people's updated judgments become fairly extreme and are in the opposite direction of the interpretation implied by the contextual data (Martin and Achee 1992; Schwarz and Bless 1992'). Because this correction process is presumed to be highly resource-demanding, contrast effects are believed to be most likely to occur when many cognitive resources are available and used in rendering judgments (Martin, Seta, and Crelia 1990).

This body of *theory* offers a richer and more adaptive view of persuasion, because it suggests that even after they are initially formed, people's judgments are highly constructive and malleable, albeit open to biases that can occur from the process of correction. Whether people engage in judgment correction when processing follows a relatively resource-constrained route and what factors may prompt such correction remain open questions. In addition, it is uncertain when adjusted judgments are overcorrected rather than reflecting an accurate removal of bias.

An Integrative Framework of Advertising Persuasion

Although the preceding *theories* offer valuable insights into the processes that can influence *advertising* persuasion, they pose a significant challenge: It remains unclear when each of the processes we have discussed may operate and how these divergent *theories* can be integrated to gain a more unified understanding of persuasion. In this section, we propose an integrative framework that addresses these issues. This framework, which is depicted in Figure 1, represents not so much a new *theory* but rather an organizational scheme that orders the many competing *theories* into a coherent, contingency-based view of persuasion.

Although our framework is somewhat similar to one proposed by MacInnis and Jaworski (1989), their framework consists of six alternative processing strategies. Moreover, some of their strategies appear to reflect similar or common fundamental mechanisms, as well as shared antecedents and outcomes. In addition, MacInnis and Jaworski's framework does not provide any contingency for judgment correction or incorporate the many competing *theories* that our framework does. Consequently, the integrative framework that we develop appears to provide a more parsimonious and comprehensive account of our current understanding of *advertising* persuasion than do others that predate it.

The remainder of the material in this section discusses our framework in some detail. This discussion of the framework is organized around the two fundamental stages in the persuasion process: judgment formation and judgment correction.

Judgment Formation

In general, for judgments and any sort of persuasion to occur, message recipients must engage in some sort of mental operations upon exposure to a persuasive message (Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Strack 1992). Using extant literature as a basis, we suggest that the particular mental operation or processing strategy that a message recipient adopts depends on the amount of resources that he or she is willing and/or able to devote to message processing. The allocation of resources is determined by characteristics of the message recipient (e.g., his or her message involvement, expertise, need for cognition), the *advertising* message (e.g., its complexity, inclusion of pictures, use of music), and the context in which the message is received (e.g., the programming, editorial, and *advertising* context; Forgas 1995; Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Overall, any of three processing strategies can be employed. As dual-process *theory* maintains, a systematic strategy is used when the level of resources deployed is substantial, and a heuristic strategy is employed when it is moderate. In addition, we suggest that a third strategy, experiential processing, will be employed when a meager level of resources is devoted to message processing and judgment formation. Moreover, as the amount of resources allocated to processing increases, the processor should place a premium on the accuracy of the judgments that are formed (Payne, Bettman, and Johnson 1993).

Regardless of the strategy that mediates judgment formation, two factors are assumed to affect which data are used for forming judgments. Information that is used for judgments will tend to be more accessible and perceived to be more diagnostic or relevant to the issue at hand compared with alternative data (Baker and Lutz 1988; Lynch, Marmorstein, and Weigold 1988). Yet the degree to which information is accessible and the criteria people use for assessing diagnosticity are likely to be influenced by the processing strategy they use. As people adopt a more resource-intensive processing strategy, their access to information that is less salient and requires greater resources to process will increase. Furthermore, because people place less priority on judgment accuracy when they invoke less resource-intensive strategies, the criteria used for determining the diagnosticity of information should become more lax.

In the three sections that follow, we delineate three judgment formation strategies and describe the processes that are believed to mediate each strategy. At the same time, we propose that, consistent with certain dual-process *theories* (Eagly and Chaiken 1993'), when the resources allocated to processing can support a more resource-intensive strategy, the mediating processes associated with less resource-intensive strategies can operate concurrently with those evoked by the more resource-intensive strategy.

The systematic processing strategy. Message recipients are likely to adopt a systematic processing strategy if they place a premium on forming accurate views, are motivated and able, and have ample opportunity to process messages extensively and critically. In such cases, the cognitive resources people devote to processing the message content are sizable, and message persuasiveness is believed to be influenced by the perceived strength and diagnosticity of the message information. Such strength and diagnosticity may be determined by the extent to which message recipients identify unique benefits of the object or issue in question.

We further suggest that message recipients may identify these unique benefits only if they engage in ample amounts of both item-specific and relational elaboration of the message (Malaviya, Kisielius, and Sternthal 1996). Item-specific elaboration of the individual message claims is necessary if the content of the claims that *pertain* to particular product attributes is to be represented richly in memory and associated with the product being *advertised*. Yet to decide whether certain item-specific attributes are truly unique, the recipient also needs an appropriate

basis for comparison. Relational elaboration can provide this information, because it may entail identifying data about other same-category products and their values on (i.e., potential possession of) the relevant attributes. Thus, a comparison of these two types of information, engendered by item-specific and relational elaboration, can enable message recipients to determine how truly unique and personally valuable the purported product benefits are.

To clarify these processes, imagine an *advertisement* for a 35 millimeter (mm) camera that discusses several positive but common features, as well as one feature that truly distinguishes the camera from others in its category. Let us suppose that this latter feature, which *pertains* to the extremely wide span afforded by the camera's lens, is touted in the headline, and to enhance consumers' appreciation of this lens, the *advertisement* also displays two pictures. Both are photographs taken of the same scene, but the one claimed to have been taken by the target camera captures a markedly greater portion of a beautiful panoramic vista. The content of the *advertisement's* headline, together with the demonstrably wider frame captured by the target camera, are likely to prompt viewers to engage in item-specific elaboration about the lens and the wide-frame photos that it enables the target camera to take. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the two contrasting photographs is likely to prompt relational elaboration about the features possessed by other 35 mm cameras, in particular, the frame width that these competing products generally capture. Together, such item-specific and relational elaboration are likely to lead ad recipients to infer that the target camera provides wider frame shots than do similar cameras and, thereby, cause these recipients to perceive the *advertisement* as making strong, potentially diagnostic claims. To the extent ad recipients value this feature in a camera, they are likely to judge the target camera favorably.

At the same time, whether this outcome occurs depends critically on a second factor, namely, the magnitude of item-specific and relational elaboration that the ad recipient generates. The preceding outcome should occur only if ample amounts of both of these types of elaboration occur, which is probable if the overall level of cognitive resources that the ad recipient devotes to ad processing is comparable to the level that the *advertisement* effectively requires for it to be processed thoroughly.

Suppose that the material about the camera's lens is buried amid a list of many other camera features, and the two contrasting photographs are both small in size and surrounded by lengthy and technical *advertising* copy. Here, the resources needed to engage in sufficient item-specific and relational elaboration about the *advertisement* might exceed the level of resources that even a systematic message processor could devote to ad processing. In this case, impoverished levels of either or both types of elaboration would likely ensue, which could reduce the perceived strength of the *advertisement's* claims by preventing ad recipients from drawing an inference about the uniqueness of the target camera's lens. Conversely, if the *advertisement* consisted of only a simple headline that touted the lens, with the two photos placed directly below it, the level of cognitive resources needed to process this extremely simple *advertisement* might be exceeded greatly by the level that ad recipients expend. In this event, though ad recipients could form the inference that the claim about the target camera's lens is unique, the impact of this inference on judgments might be overshadowed by potentially less favorable thoughts and inferences that ad recipients could produce as they expended their excess resources engaging in idiosyncratic elaboration. In either of these cases, viewers' judgments would be less favorable than they would be had the resources devoted to message elaboration matched those that were required for its thorough, but not excessive, processing.

In summary, the proposed framework posits that message recipients will adopt a systematic processing strategy when they place a premium on forming accurate assessments and are willing and able to devote a sizable level of resources to message processing. When this occurs, the persuasive impact of a message is likely to be a function of the extent to which the levels of both item-specific and relational elaboration that occur enable ad recipients to form inferences about the uniqueness of the product, which elevates the perceived strength and diagnosticity of claims presented in a message, as well as the extent to which the amount of resources devoted to ad processing is commensurate with the amount required to appreciate the ad content fully. The heuristic processing strategy. In other cases, ad recipients may not be willing or have the ability to process a communication and its implications extensively. Here, people might be interested in producing a judgment that only suffices, that is, one that is reasonable but may not be the most accurate or held with full certainty. In such cases, ad recipients devote a rather moderate level of cognitive resources to processing message information and thereby invoke a heuristic processing strategy (Chaiken, Liberman, and Eagly 1989; Petty and Cacioppo 1986). When a heuristic strategy is employed, ad recipients tend to process messages selectively, such that the resources they expend during processing generally correspond to those needed to process the more easily apprehended (e.g., salient) message or contextual cues (Meyers-Levy and Peracchio 1995). From these cues, ad recipients generate simple inferences, which represent deductions or generalized rules of thumb that have been derived from prior experiences. The affective implications of these heuristic inferences then are used as a convenient basis of judgment (Fiske and Neuberg 1990). Thus, the favorableness of people's judgments reflects the favorableness of the heuristic inference that they happen to generate.

To exemplify this process, let us return to our *advertisement* for the target camera. Suppose that the camera has a Japanese brand name that appears prominently in the *advertisement's* headline, where it is displayed in an unusual typeface that represents the brand's trademark. The ad recipient who uses a resource-frugal heuristic strategy might simply note the Japanese brand name displayed at the top of the *advertisement* and derive the simple inference that the camera must be made in Japan and feature the generally reliable technology characteristic of most other Japanese products (Maheswaran 1994). Given the favorable associations tied to this inference, the ad recipient is likely to produce a judgment of the target camera that is favorable but held with limited certainty.

It is noteworthy that, though the heuristic inference produced in the preceding example appears to reflect relational elaboration, because the ad recipient's judgment involves relating the camera to the category of goods made in Japan, other ad recipients who adopt a heuristic processing strategy may attend to the same brand name cue but generate a heuristic inference and judgment that reflect largely item-specific elaboration. This might occur, for example, if the ad recipient simply likes the artistry of the brand's trademarked unusual typeface and, from this, draws a favorable inference about the brand (Schumann, Petty, and Clemons 1990).

This distinction in the types of elaboration that may underlie the heuristics people employ is potentially important, because certain consequences may follow. Specifically, unlike heuristic judgments that are grounded in relational elaboration and require forging connections between disparate items, those prompted by item-specific elaboration seemingly involve a more direct process (e.g., Zajonc 1968) that entails less complex reasoning and uses somewhat fewer cognitive resources. This would imply that heuristic responses derived from item-specific elaboration may be produced faster than those mediated by relational elaboration (Gronlund and

Ratcliff 1989'). Furthermore, in contrast to heuristic judgments mediated by relational elaboration that reflect affective inferences about the general tendencies of a class of items (e.g., Japanese-made products), those based on item-specific elaboration reflect affective inferences about a specific item. Inferences of the latter sort are likely to be more idiosyncratic, which implies that heuristic judgments derived from item-specific elaboration may be more variable and extreme in their favorableness (Fiske and Neuberg 1990; Linville 1982').

In conclusion, we suggest that people adopt a heuristic processing strategy when they are willing or able to expend only a moderate level of resources for processing data and they strive to form views that are more efficient than accurate. In such cases, judgments tend to be based on the favorableness of convenient relational or item-specific heuristic inferences drawn from easily processed message information or contextual cues. Furthermore, we speculate that the type of inference underlying such judgments (i.e., relational or item-specific) may influence the speed of forming, the extremity, and the variability of such judgments.

The experiential processing strategy. In perhaps the majority of processing conditions, the amount of cognitive resources that people are willing or able to devote to processing is so meager that only the most fleeting and scant message processing occurs. This may be because the message is regarded as too trivial to warrant even a modicum of resources or the exposure is so brief or degraded that its presence may go virtually unnoticed (e.g., banner *advertisements* on the Internet, barely audible radio *advertisements*). In such cases, the resources people expend on processing are so minimal that they may be unable to attend to any substantive or even superficial content of the message, as they would if a heuristic strategy were employed. Rather, people are likely to attend to serendipitous sensations or feelings that might be generated from the process of processing the *advertisement*. These might include a vague sensation of familiarity caused by prior exposure to an item (Hawkins and Hoch 1992; Jacoby et al. 1989) or a sensation of competence generated by the apparent ease with which obviously degraded items are noticed (Witherspoon and Allan 1985'). Regardless of their true cause, such feelings may serve as a basis for judgment if they are misattributed or assigned to the target object (Bornstein and D'Agostino 1994') or some attribute of the object (Mandler, Nakamura, and Van Zandt 1987').

To exemplify this process, consider again the camera *advertisement* discussed previously. Imagine that this *advertisement* is placed on the back cover of a magazine. Moreover, a few pages before this target *advertisement*, suppose that the ad recipient observed an *advertisement* for another product produced by the same manufacturer and that this other *advertisement* also displayed the same unusual trademarked typeface used in the target *advertisement*. The ad recipient who glances at the typeface in this preceding *advertisement* and then attends, even so briefly, to it again in the subsequent target *advertisement* might experience a sensation of familiarity on exposure to the target camera *advertisement*. In turn, the mildly positive feelings that may be associated with this sensation (Mandler 1982') might be either assigned automatically to the target camera or misinterpreted by the ad recipient as reflecting his or her impression of the camera. In either case, the ad recipient should produce a relatively favorable judgment of the camera; this judgment reflects the operation of the experiential processing strategy.

Although the use of an experiential strategy on judgments may be imagined most easily when people employ extremely meager resources at the time of processing, this mechanism also can potentially influence people's judgments in more resource-intensive conditions (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989'). This is because, as we noted previously, mechanisms for forming judgments in

more resource-constrained conditions may co-occur with more effortful processes invoked in resource-intensive conditions. To illustrate, suppose that in our preceding example of how camera judgments were formed using a systematic processing strategy, the resources needed to process the *advertising* message exceeded the level that the ad recipient could allocate, and this caused the ad recipient to feel a sense of frustration about the inefficient message processing. The negative feelings spawned by such concurrent experiential processing could cause the ad recipient's otherwise relatively favorable judgments to be somewhat deflated.

In conclusion, though ad recipients are likely to invoke an experiential processing strategy when a minimal level of resources is devoted to processing, experiential processing can occur and sometimes influence judgments in more resource-intensive conditions. To the extent that this processing strategy occurs, judgments can be influenced by the autonomic sensations that people experience from the process of their message processing.

Judgment Correction

After people are exposed to a communication and form an initial judgment, a second stage of the persuasion process is initiated. It ensues regardless of the strategy used for forming judgments. As suggested in Figure 1, this stage determines whether people will attempt to correct their initial assessments for biases that they perceive may have influenced their previous views. People generally are inclined to correct their judgments because they prefer to hold views that are reasonably accurate and free from bias (Petty and Wegener 1993), which may be caused by irrelevant (e.g., contextual) data, inappropriate inferences (e.g., inaccurate deductions derived from heuristics), or having overlooked crucial factors (e.g., the true cause of their sensations). In most cases, the influence of the biasing source on judgments is believed to be assimilation, whereby judgments assume a value that is related positively to the implications of this source (Martin and Achee 1992).

At the same time, people will not always attempt to correct their initial judgments. Rather, they will do so only if certain conditions are met. The ad recipient must recognize the presence of a potential biasing source and identify a naive *theory* that specifies the nature of the assumed influence. That is, the person must have some intuition about why, how, and to what extent the biasing data might have influenced his or her judgment (Petty and Wegener 1993). Furthermore, the ad recipient must possess ample cognitive resources to carry out not only the preceding steps, but also those involved in the actual correction process (Martin, Seta, and Crelia 1990). The resources needed to engage in the latter process tend to be substantial, because the person must bring to mind a representation of his or her initial assessment and then partial out only the portion of it that is believed to constitute the bias. If a person's cognitive resources are inadequate for performing any of the preceding tasks, the initial judgment is retained. Even when judgment correction is attempted, there is no guarantee that it will result in more accurate or valid judgments. Sometimes adjustments will be inadequate, whereas in other cases, people will overcompensate for biasing influences. In these latter cases, people's judgments will exhibit a contrast effect, such that the net favorableness of their corrected judgments assumes a value that is opposite the direction of their initial assessment (Herr 1989'; Meyers-Levy and Sternthal 1993').

To clarify this judgment correction process and illustrate how an *advertiser* might attempt to influence it, consider the following example: As we discussed previously, assume that an *advertisement* for a target camera appears on the back cover of a magazine and that an ad recipient who encounters it processes it systematically. Despite the *advertisement's* ostensibly

strong claims, however, the ad recipient's initial assessment of the camera is not particularly favorable. This occurs because this recipient immediately recognizes that the camera manufacturer lacks any experience in producing photographic equipment, and this realization causes him or her to be skeptical about the camera's quality. Now suppose that, anticipating this issue, the manufacturer actually places *advertisements* for several of the company's other well-regarded products in the magazine. The logic underlying this ad placement is that, despite such immediate skepticism, for ad recipients who are prone to engage in substantial thought about the new camera, the other *advertisements* might heighten ad recipients' access to thoughts about the manufacturer's ability to produce high-quality goods. Ideally, this would prompt ad recipients to realize that their initial judgment of the target camera could be erroneous. Moreover, assuming that these other *advertisements* heighten awareness of a bias and that all other criteria for judgment correction are met, the ad recipient may be prompted to adjust his or her initial judgment, such that it becomes more favorable. If overadjustment for the bias occurs, the ad recipient's corrected camera judgment may display a contrast effect, rendering it particularly favorable.

Many questions about judgment correction still must be resolved. In the next section, we discuss some questions about the judgment correction process and the alternative judgment formation strategies, focusing on those that seem to most warrant research attention.

Issues Requiring Further Inquiry

Although the proposed framework fosters progress by synthesizing and integrating our current knowledge about the persuasion process, many questions remain. Here, we identify several of these questions but focus in particular on areas that appear to be most in need of further research attention. These include identifying specific determinants of the processing strategy that people are likely to use and clarifying several key issues *pertaining* to the use of the experiential processing strategy and the judgment correction process. We organize our discussion in this section in a manner similar to that employed in the previous section.

Judgment Formation Processes

Specific determinants of people's processing strategy. The proposed framework suggests that the processing strategy people adopt during judgment formation depends on the amount of cognitive resources they devote to message processing, which can be influenced by a variety of factors that are associated with the message recipient, content, and/or context. Specifying the precise identity of these factors and the contingencies that determine the effects of such factors on the resources deployed during processing represents a critical avenue for further investigation.

For example, one factor that appears to merit further attention concerns the influence of a message recipient's mood on the processing strategy he or she selects. Although much research has indicated that people who are in a positive, as opposed to either a neutral or negative, mood tend to adopt a less resource-intensive (i.e., heuristic) processing strategy (Mackie and Worth 1989*), more recent work suggests that these people could employ an alternate, more resource-intensive strategy if the use of this strategy does not jeopardize their presumed desire to maintain a positive mood (Wegener, Petty, and Smith 1995'). Findings such as these suggest the need to specify more fully the contingencies that surround the influence of mood, as well as other factors that are believed to affect which judgment formation strategy people use.

Another issue in need of inquiry is how ad recipients' goals during processing might affect the processing strategy they adopt. For example, it seems plausible that, if people process several messages with the goal of determining which product espoused by the different messages they

actually prefer, they may initially adopt a heuristic processing strategy. This follows because a heuristic strategy is likely to enable such people to eliminate some products from their consideration set quickly and thereby conserve resources that they ultimately might devote to more resource-intensive processing of the remaining products. In contrast, people who process the same messages with the goal of forming an independent assessment of each of the products may be prone to adopt a more resource-intensive (i.e., systematic) processing strategy because they have no particular desire to identify any of the products as relatively unfavorable and, thus, as candidates for elimination.

The systematic processing strategy. Although extensive research has examined the persuasion process that operates in systematic processing conditions, understanding of this process could be refined in several ways. One key issue involves the intersection between item-specific and relational elaboration and resource-matching *theory*. A key concept in our framework is that, in conditions that foster systematic processing, people will tend to form highly favorable judgments, provided they engage in ample or adequate item-specific and relational message processing that enables them to identify a product's specific features, compare these features to appropriate referents, and, on the basis of this comparison, identify the actual uniqueness of the product features. Yet it is unclear exactly how people form product judgments when the level of cognitive resources they have available for message processing falls short of what is needed to engage in the preceding processes. Will people perform these processes in an abbreviated fashion by assessing the apparent uniqueness on only a subset of the most salient product features? Or will they use the limited relational and/or item-specific elaboration they generate to derive heuristic-based judgments of the product (Malaviya, Kisielius, and Sternthal 1996)?

Another unanswered question that *pertains* to resource matching is whether judgments will differ when the cause of the mismatch between supplied and required resources can be attributed to different sources. In situations in which ad recipients recognize that such a mismatch exists, they may perceive that the cause of the mismatch is either under their own control (e.g., the recipient is unmotivated to expend the resources required to process a message fully) or externally controlled (e.g., despite the ad recipient's ample motivation to expend the required resources, he or she is unable to process the *advertisement* fully because of its extremely fast pace). It seems possible that their judgments may be less favorable in the latter case, because ad recipients might resent or feel frustrated by their lack of control over processing when an external attribution is made.

Questions also remain about exactly what is meant by the hypothesis that an "ample" or "adequate" level of relational and item-specific elaboration is needed to assess the uniqueness of the products' features. Does this mean that equal amounts of both types of elaboration must occur or, as seems more likely, that different amounts of each type of elaboration will suffice as long as these amounts are calibrated to the demands of the particular message's content? Furthermore, if the latter option is accurate, how might judgments be formed if the level of one type of elaboration is adequate but the level of the other type is excessive? These and many other issues require better specification.

The heuristic processing strategy. Although much research has investigated the persuasion process that operates when a heuristic processing strategy is used, it has focused primarily on identifying the particular heuristics people use in rendering judgments and the factors that influence the use of a heuristic processing strategy. We suggest that greater progress might be made if the heuristics we know that people use were analyzed more finely and classified in a

manner that potentially sheds light on exactly how they differ and when they are likely to be employed.

To exemplify, in our previous discussion, we proposed that the heuristics people employ for judgment formation can be classified into those that are derived from either relational or item-specific inferences. Classifying heuristics in this manner may offer valuable insight into certain characteristics of the judgments that result from such types of heuristics. As we noted previously, compared with heuristics derived from relational elaboration, those based on item-specific elaboration seem likely to require the use of fewer cognitive resources, engender faster judgments, and result in more extreme judgments (Gronlund and Ratcliff 1989'). Furthermore, if heuristics derived from item-specific elaboration require the use of fewer cognitive resources, we might predict that segments of consumers who have been found to deploy their cognitive resources more sparingly (e.g., males rather than females; Meyers-Levy and Sternthal 1991 *) may be more likely to base their judgments on less resource-demanding, item-specific inferences rather than relational heuristic inferences. Similarly, perhaps *advertisements* placed in media that tend to prompt the use of fewer resources (e.g., radio as opposed to magazines) foster judgments that are based on item-specific rather than relational heuristic inferences.

The experiential processing strategy. The notion that judgments can be based on fleeting process-generated sensations or experiences represents an idea that has received increased research attention only recently. Therefore, further study is required about many issues that *pertain* to the persuasion process that ensues when such an experiential strategy is employed.

One of the most critical issues relates to why such experiential-based persuasion should be distinguished from persuasion that occurs by the heuristic processing strategy. We have suggested that this distinction is warranted because these two strategies appear to operate by different mechanisms and have unique antecedents and consequences. Nonetheless, research that directly addresses and clarifies these presumed distinctions is greatly needed.

Along these lines, consider an example that may apply to the different consequences of these two judgment formation strategies. Compared with people whose judgments are based on heuristic inferences drawn from some message cue, those whose assessments are based on process-generated sensations might be more inclined to pursue judgment correction. The logic for this hypothesis rests on the intuition that most people are likely to regard a sensation that arises serendipitously from seemingly inconsequential factors, such as how the data happened to have been presented and thus were processed, as a more unjustifiable basis for forming a judgment than a logic-based heuristic (Simonson 1989'). That is, heuristic inferences should be perceived as more "rational" and, therefore, appropriate bases of judgment because they frequently represent generalizations about how, on average, certain factors appear to operate.

A particularly promising approach that might be taken to advance our understanding of persuasion that occurs through an experiential processing strategy is to follow up on clues offered in the implicit memory literature. Implicit memory refers to the unintentional, nonconscious retrieval and use of previously acquired information that is manifested by people's enhanced performance on certain tasks (Roediger 1990'). Although the primary focus of this burgeoning literature is on how implicit processes affect memory, implicit processes also seem to affect people's responses to many nonmemory tasks (Greenwald and Banaji 1995), including judgments (Zajonc 1968). Thus, this body of work offers much promise in helping us identify previously unconsidered autonomic sensations and new measures that tap implicit processes, both of which may shed light on the influence of experiential, process-generated input on people's judgments.

Research also is needed that indicates when and how process-generated sensations may influence judgments when mechanisms associated with the use of more resource-intensive processing strategies co-occur. For example, it is unclear whether and when the influence of a factor that prompts a sensory experience (e.g., repeated exposure to an item that prompts a sensation of familiarity) will exert a significant influence on judgment if, say, a heuristic inference also is activated by this factor and implies that a different judgment should be produced.

Finally, future inquiry is needed to clarify whether and what events might lead a person who initially invokes an experiential strategy to alter his or her strategy and employ a more resource-intensive one (Maheswaran and Chaiken 1991 *). For example, suppose that a person who adopts an experiential strategy generates a sensation that he or she believes could be attributed either to an exogenous factor that is its true cause or to his or her judgment of a product. If both attributions appear equally plausible, will this person assign the sensation to both potential causes, or will he or she discount both of these causes but be motivated by the uncertainty associated with this situation to employ a more resource-intensive processing strategy?

Judgment Correction Process

Inquiry into the judgment correction process is a relatively new and highly fertile area of study. Thus, many important questions must be addressed. For example, do systematic processors, who expend many resources when forming their initial judgments, sometimes feel so confident of the validity of their judgments that they fail to consider whether judgment correction is warranted? What marketing-relevant factors can trigger people to perceive that their initial judgments are biased and in need of correction? Furthermore, how do people form and select naive *theories* that specify the direction of the purported bias in their judgments?

Related to this latter issue, it is unclear what people do when they perceive that their judgment may have been biased and possess adequate resources to correct these judgments, yet lack a naive *theory* that identifies the presumed direction of the bias. Will they refrain from correcting their judgment, even though they believe it is biased and want to produce a reasonably accurate judgment? Likewise, how will people respond if they have access to, say, two equally plausible naive *theories*, but these *theories* imply that judgment bias occurred in opposing directions (e.g., one implies an assimilation effect and the other a contrast effect)?

Another particularly thorny question concerns when, if ever, judgment correction takes place among persons who employ either a heuristic or an experiential processing strategy for judgment formation and who therefore hold judgments that may be in most need of correction. These two strategies are employed expressly because people's cognitive resources are constrained and a sizable level of resources is needed to perform judgment correction, so it is not apparent when such people will attempt to correct their judgments. Will correction occur if the correction task is simplified, such that fewer resources are required (e.g., the biasing agent and its influence on judgment is made obvious; Schwarz and Clore 1983)? Or will it occur only if some factor causes the initial low to modest allocation of resources to give way to more substantial resource allocation?

It is also unclear whether judgments that are subjected to a correction process become transformed qualitatively. Perhaps the certainty with which corrected judgments are held, how labile they are, or how predictive they are of behavior is altered. For example, it may be that judgments that have undergone correction, and thus have been subjected to more extensive processing, are held with greater certainty, making them more enduring and predictive of behavior than those that have not been reassessed and adjusted for potential bias. Alternatively,

such judgments might be held with less certainty, be more labile, and be less predictive of behavior because people who engage in judgment correction become more cognizant and suspicious that other potential extraneous influences, which they did not detect and thus could not adjust for, could have exerted a biasing influence on their views.

Finally, resource-matching *theory* suggests that people whose supply of available resources exceeds the level that is required for message processing typically expend and possibly deplete their excess resources generating relatively unfavorable thoughts that tend to be idiosyncratic or extraneous to the message. Yet if these excess resources are consumed in this manner during the judgment formation stage, it remains unclear how sufficient resources ever exist to engage in judgment correction. This too must be addressed.

Implications for Advertising Strategy

Beyond advancing our theoretical understanding of persuasion, the proposed framework also can serve as a useful tool for practitioners to guide and inform their *advertising* decisions. The *theories* about how *advertising* and persuasion operate that are captured by our framework differ considerably from those reflected in the intuitive *theories* held by many *advertising* practitioners. For example, as Kover's (1995') examination of such implicit *theories* indicates, many copywriters appear to assume that if persuasion is to occur, *advertising* first must break through consumers' presumably vegetative media viewing state and media clutter and then deliver a message that target consumers necessarily will respond to actively and emotionally in a resource-intensive manner. This view contrasts considerably with the *theory* and empirical research outlined in our framework, which suggests that persuasion frequently occurs through far less resource-intensive heuristic or experiential processing mechanisms.

The disparity between *theories* embraced by academic *advertising* researchers and marketing practitioners in part reflects the unfortunate rift that continues to separate these two constituencies. We suspect that many copywriters and other groups of practitioners may be prone to dismiss the proposed framework's implications because the evidence supporting the alternative heuristic and experiential processing strategies, as well as other (e.g., judgment correction) mechanisms, was obtained using what are likely to be perceived as unrealistic academic research methods. These include the use of nonrepresentative student subjects, sometimes crude or unfinished *advertising* stimuli, and *advertising* presentation procedures that often encourage study participants to devote unrealistically high levels of attention or resources to *advertisements* (Kover 1995'; Wells 1993').

Although academic research methods undeniably possess some limitations, we do not agree that the aforementioned aspects of the research methods significantly compromise the validity of the alternative, persuasion mechanisms described in the framework. Although we acknowledge that the use of student subjects may impede concluding how nonstudent consumer segments will respond to particular ways of breaking through *advertising* clutter (e.g., presenting an unexpected chain of events versus depicting an unfamiliar reality) or the particular means by which *advertising* copy might try to connect emotionally and communicate with consumers (e.g., appealing to the target consumers' desire for peer approval versus their desire to perceive themselves as sexy), target-specific, execution-related issues such as these are not the sort of issues that academic research commonly explores. In addition, they are not pertinent to the more general issue of whether *advertisements* potentially can persuade through heuristic and experiential mechanisms, for which breaking through to and presenting communications that truly connect with consumers are quite immaterial. Moreover, though academic research methods

can induce study participants to expend unrealistically high levels of resources in processing *advertisements*, this could not have been the case in the studies that support the potential use of heuristic and experiential processing strategies. Had participants devoted high levels of resources to processing, it would have reduced the likelihood of finding that *advertising* persuasion occurred through these mechanisms, because these mechanisms tend to operate when limited resources are devoted to ad processing.

In summary, we believe that, despite the limitations of the research on which our framework is based, several valuable practical implications follow. In this section, we discuss some of these implications, focusing in particular on two *advertising* variables: the use of pictures in *advertisements* and media selection. We begin by examining these variables as they might be used when, for reasons related to the message recipients, content, or context, the targeted consumers are expected to employ a systematic, heuristic, or experiential processing strategy.

Implications for Systematic Processing Conditions

Using *advertising* pictures. The theorizing embodied in our framework suggests that, in conditions in which consumers are expected to engage in systematic processing, *advertising* pictures can influence persuasion in at least three ways. First, they can supply such viewers, who evaluate *advertising* messages critically, with visual testimony that may provide *advertising* claim substantiation (Edell and Staelin 1983). Thus, in conditions that should prompt systematic processing, it seems advisable for *advertisers* to employ *advertising* pictures that compellingly support the *advertisement's* content. Second, research suggests that *advertising* pictures can potentially affect the type(s) of elaboration that systematic processors evoke (Malaviya, Kisielius, and Sternthal 1996). Specifically, pictures that offer detailed images of product features can induce item-specific elaboration, whereas those that portray product usage occasions may foster relational elaboration. Therefore, to encourage those who are likely to engage in systematic processing to draw strong inferences about a product's unique benefits, *advertisers* should choose pictures that are likely to evoke the type of elaboration that complements the sort already prompted by other elements of the *advertisement* or *advertising* context. Third, different types of *advertising* pictures can affect persuasion by influencing the cognitive demands an *advertisement* imposes and, thus, the degree to which resource matching is likely to occur. For example, *advertisements* that contain full-color pictures as opposed to pictures that are in black and white or that use color only for select items pertinent to the ad content impose greater demands on people's resources (Meyers-Levy and Peracchio 1995). This implies that, when targeting people who are expected to process data systematically and allocate many resources to processing, *advertisers* might elevate persuasion by employing full-color pictures in *advertisements* that otherwise are not very cognitively demanding. However, they should use black-and-white or color-highlighted pictures when the *advertisements* possess characteristics that make them fairly effortful to process.

Media selection. The proposed framework also can offer guidance in making decisions about the media placement of *advertisements* when the target consumer is likely to employ systematic processing. *Advertisers* must be cautious about placing their messages in extremely cluttered *advertising* milieus or ones that contain competing material (Keller 1991'). Such contexts could subvert *advertisers'* efforts to promote resource matching, because the cognitive resources that viewers might be expected to allocate to a target message could be diverted or otherwise occupied by the contextual material. At the same time, the framework suggests that media decisions can be made strategically. That is, contextual materials can be selected to effectively

prompt a type of elaboration that complements the type evoked by material within a target message. For example, if an *advertisement* invites relational elaboration, an *advertiser* might place it in a medium that features other *advertisements* for different and diverse product categories, because such a context is likely to invite complementary item-specific elaboration (Malaviya, Kisielius, and Sternthal 1996). If a target *advertisement* invites item-specific elaboration, a medium that features other *advertisements* for same- or related-category products might be more advisable, because this context is likely to prompt complementary relational elaboration (Malaviya, Kisielius, and Sternthal 1996).

Implications for Heuristic Processing Conditions

Using *advertising* pictures. In conditions that favor the use of a heuristic processing strategy, *advertising* pictures can serve as easily processed cues that prompt heuristic inferences, which can be used to determine ad recipients' judgments. For example, *advertising* for products that lack any particular noteworthy qualities often includes large and appealing pictures, because such pictures may stimulate a positive heuristic that imparts a favorable aura to the product (e.g., an *advertisement* for Kool-Aid might consist of a colorful photo of a charming child next to a pitcher of the drink). Furthermore, certain executional techniques that are likely to support a positive image may be put to good use. For example, research suggests that, for those people inclined to use heuristic processing, the use of full or partial color in *advertisements*, rather than black and white, may promote more positive feelings (Meyers-Levy and Peracchio 1995). Likewise, showing the focal product in an *advertising* picture from an upward-looking angle may prompt a heuristic that imparts the product with a sense of power or superiority (Meyers-Levy and Peracchio 1992). However, when promoting a product that possesses a true selling point, it would seem more advisable to employ an *advertising* picture that prompts a heuristic inference about this advantage. For example, an *advertisement* that contains a series of *advertising* pictures that vividly show people using the product in different contexts might foster the heuristic inference that the product's versatility renders it superior.

Media selection. The proposed framework also provides implications about the placement of *advertisements* when conditions are likely to promote heuristic processing. It suggests that, when selecting media, *advertisers* must attend to the quality associated with the medium that is employed and the products *advertised* in that medium. For example, in conditions favoring heuristic processing, an ad recipient might take note of a watch promoted in a newspaper insert for Kmart and, using a heuristic associated with the store image, infer that the product is fairly mundane and of modest quality, whereas a person who views the same watch in an insert for Bloomingdale's could infer that the watch is trendy and possesses better-than-average quality. Similarly, other decisions regarding media selection may affect a product's positioning or an *advertiser's* efforts to reposition it. Car *advertisers* that wish to reverse the view that their cars are mundane and lacking in innovation might find it useful to launch an *advertising* blitz within a single well-chosen magazine, because this might prompt the heuristic inference that the manufacturer must have changed the car radically, thus making it worthy of this high level of *advertising* (Friestad and Wright 1995).

Implications for Experiential Processing Conditions

Using *advertising* pictures. Although little research has explored applied implications for persuasion in conditions that favor the use of the experiential processing strategy, several plausible implications can be offered about people's experiential responses to aspects of *advertising* pictures. For example, *advertising* pictures frequently showcase a target brand's

trademark, and the ease with which this trademark is processed might be facilitated if it featured more concrete or representational versus abstract art (Caudle 1989'). Moreover, if such processing of the trademark induces a sensation of familiarity with the brand, this person may form a preference for the brand because the familiarity may be attributed to the brand's presumed top-market status. In contrast, suppose that a novel photographic technique that an *advertiser* uses to picture a brand's new product feature hinders an ad recipient's ability to apprehend this new feature. In this case, the processor might interpret his or her hindered apprehension of the focal product feature as an indicator of the new feature's limited appeal, thereby lowering the persuasive impact of the *advertisement* (Clore 1992).

Media selection. Factors associated with both the medium and the context in which an *advertisement* is presented can similarly affect ad recipients' ease of ad processing and, thus, the degree of *advertising* persuasion that should occur in conditions that favor the use of an experiential processing strategy. An appeal that is delivered through telemarketing by a speaker with an unusual foreign accent may slow and frustrate the ad recipient's processing of the appeal. If the ad recipient assigns these negative sensations to his or her regard for the advocated good, the persuasive impact of an otherwise compelling appeal could be undermined. At the same time, placement of a highly visual target *advertisement* within a medium that features many *advertisements* with strong visual appeal may facilitate ad recipients' processing of the target. In turn, this heightened fluidity with which the target *advertisement* is processed might benefit persuasion if it is perceived as signifying the target brand's appeal.

Implications for Judgment Correction

Using *advertising* pictures. Important implications regarding the use of *advertising* pictures during the judgment correction stage follow from the framework. Imagine an *advertisement* for a car that focuses verbally on the car's exceptional safety record and displays a picture of the car in a background that depicts either a formidable-looking tank or Fort Knox. Which *advertisement* will produce greater persuasion? The *theory* incorporated in our framework suggests that the answer differs depending on whether conditions prompt the target audience to engage in resource-intensive processing (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal 1993'). The strong safety connotations implied by the pictorial content in both *advertisements* are likely to be assimilated spontaneously into all ad recipients' initial judgments of the car's safety. Moreover, ad recipients expected to expend cognitive resources frugally are unlikely to attempt to correct their judgments for this influence because they are likely neither to be aware of the bias nor to possess the resources needed for correction. The same may be true for persons who are prone to engage in relatively effortful processing and who view the *advertisement* displaying the tank, because the tank might not be especially noteworthy, given its membership in the same general category of transportation vehicles. However, judgment correction is likely to occur among relatively effortful processors if they view the *advertisement* that displays Fort Knox. This follows because the picture of Fort Knox, which belongs to a decidedly different category than a car, is likely to heighten ad recipients' awareness of a potentially biasing influence on judgments, and these ad recipients are likely to possess sufficient resources to engage in judgment correction (Herr 1989'). Such correction could prompt significant judgment deflation, particularly if overcorrection ensues and results in a contrast effect.

Media selection. Implications *pertaining* to judgment correction and media issues also follow from the framework. One issue of debate among *advertisers* is whether *advertisements* should be aired in programming that is likely to prompt negative emotions. Consistent with extant

theorizing, a concern would be that the negative feelings generated by the programming would be assimilated spontaneously with the *advertisers'* products, leading to relatively unfavorable product judgments (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1997). Thus, despite some companies' desire to support programming that relates important, albeit affectively negative, issues (e.g., the Holocaust, the plight of runaway teens living on the streets), questions exist about the possible negative effects of such activities and whether anything can be done to limit their impact. The proposed framework offers guidance in addressing this issue. Operating on the seemingly reasonable premise that, barring other influences, audiences attracted by such serious, thought-provoking shows may be inclined to engage in effortful processing and have access to ample resources for judgment correction, possibilities exist for prompting judgment correction by igniting ad recipients' awareness of the inappropriate influence of the negative emotions spawned by the programming on their judgments of the *advertised* product. For example, a sponsor of such programming might find it advisable to place repeated *advertisements* in the program that blatantly acknowledge the negative nature of the material and underscore the company's dedication (e.g., resources donated) to addressing such negative issues or problems (Clore 1992; Schwarz and Clore 1983). Such *advertisements* are likely to heighten the recipients' awareness of their own negative feelings toward the issue. By drawing attention to the negative feelings being elicited by the programming, these *advertisements* make it likely that the audience will recognize the potentially biasing influence of these feelings on their perceptions of the company's products. This could prompt them to engage in judgment correction, and possibly overcorrection, which could heighten product judgments significantly.

Conclusion

The proposed framework and the *theory* that it incorporates underscore the view that persuasion does not rest within an *advertising* message per se but rather depends on the particular mental processes that an ad recipient invokes. In this article, we have attempted to identify and elucidate the nature of these many mental processes and organize our understanding of these processes by appropriately aligning them with the use of any of three judgment formation strategies and/or a judgment correction process. Furthermore, we have sought to clarify when these strategies are likely to occur by presenting a contingency-based integrative framework that offers a rich, unified, and more coherent understanding of persuasion. Finally, we have sought to advance our understanding of persuasion by identifying some of the high priority issues that require additional investigation, and we have tried to foster appreciation of the framework and its *theories* as a powerful practical tool by illustrating some of the applied implications that may be derived from this material. We hope that these efforts, in particular the integrated perspective we offer of our current understanding of persuasion, will spark renewed interest in this complex yet ever-fascinating area of inquiry.