

# Agricultural Legislation: The Presence of California Proposition 2 on YouTube

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## Abstract

*Animal rights movements continue to be a threat to the livestock industry in the United States. In 2008 California voters passed a proposition (2) which outlawed the use of battery cages for laying hens, gestation crates for sows, and veal crates for veal calves by 2015. Similar measures have previously been passed in Florida, Arizona, Colorado, and Oregon. As animal rights activists continue to pressure the livestock industry, it is important to look at their information outlets, especially those targeted toward young voters. The researchers used content analysis to determine the message content and campaign for Proposition 2 posted on YouTube. By using the search term "proposition 2 California," a usable sample of 103 videos were identified. Results indicate that when dealing with political legislation, agriculture has very little web presence on YouTube. In addition, it indicates that those in favor of the proposition use appeals and biased examples to deliver their message. In order to be relevant to young voters, agriculture advocates must begin using technology to reach non-agriculture audiences. Educators must also be preparing future communicators to embrace such technology in campaigns.*

## Introduction

Animal rights activists and organizations are increasingly becoming a threat to the livestock industry. Ballot initiatives sponsored by these organizations are being seen all over the country. States like Florida, Arizona, and Oregon have passed successful propositions which have hindered safe livestock husbandry (Proposition 2 – Improving Animal Welfare?, 2008; What Proposition 2 Really Means for Agriculture., 2008; Shinn, 2007). Additionally, Colorado has voluntarily agreed to phase out veal crates and gestation crates to avoid having to place the issue on a ballot (Shinn, 2007). On August 9, 2007, animal rights groups continued proposing livestock housing legislation by filing another state petition. This petition proposed legislation regulating livestock production in California (Sumner, Rosen-Molina, Matthews, Mench, & Ritcher, 2008), including the "Treatment of Farm Animals Statute" on the November 2008 general election ballot (Sumner et al., 2008; California Farm Bureau Federation, 2008b). Proposition 2, as it is popularly known, includes limits on minimum space requirements for the confinement of veal calves, gestating sows, and laying hens (Sumner et al.).

The heart of the language included in the proposition is as follows:

In addition to other applicable provisions of law, a person shall not tether or confine any covered animal, on a farm, for all the majority of any day, in a manner that prevents such animal from:

- (a) Lying down, standing up, and fully extending his or her limbs; and
- (b) Turning around freely (Sumner et al., 2008, p. 11).

Agriculture is California's number one economic industry (Benson, 2008), and the passing of Proposition 2 poses economic concerns on the future of California's economy. California produces very little veal, their pork industry is small, but their egg industry is expected to be greatly influenced by Proposition 2 (Lee, 2008b). California produces 5 billion eggs per year from 20 million laying hens. The value of California's egg production was \$213 million in 2006, and \$337 million in 2007 (Sumner et al., 2008). Predictions have been made that Proposition 2 will cause a near complete elimination of egg production in California by 2015, when the Proposition takes effect (Sumner et al.). This elimination would cause a decrease in local and state revenue taxes, along with the loss of thousands of jobs (Lee, 2008a). Many California egg producers may be forced to relocate or go out of business; resulting in a decreased ability for California consumers to buy safe, affordable, fresh, and locally grown eggs (California Farm Bureau Federation, 2008c). Proposition 2 is changing how animal products are produced in California; concurrently it is influencing where animal products will be produced in the future (Sumner et al.).

During the campaign, opponents of the proposition attempted to tell their side of the story through television and radio interviews; talks to local boards of supervisors, chambers of commerce, and rotary clubs; forum debates with proponents; and farm tours (Lee, 2008a). In addition, opponents had support from numerous major California newspapers including the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the American Veterinary Association, and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (Lee, 2008a; California Farm Bureau Federation, 2008c; California Farm Bureau Federation, 2008a). Despite strong arguments, the opposing side failed to communicate its message clearly. The *No on 2 Coalition* stated that they were unable to overcome "an emotional, manipulative, dishonest and often deceptive campaign by the backers of Proposition 2" (Lee, 2008b, p.1). Additionally, Leland S. Shapiro, DVM, from L.A. Pierce College said "We failed as an industry to educate the public about how we care for our animals. We've also failed to produce sufficiently versed agricultural ambassadors in our major universities that are capable of telling our side of the story" (2008, p. 1).

This study thus aims to explore one popular medium and its use by opponents and proponents of the proposition. If those in the agriculture industry did in fact "fail as an industry," it is important to understand how the use of media as compared to the competition, contributed to that failure. One popular medium used during this election was Internet videos. It may be that the online presence and campaigning was where the opponents of Proposition 2 failed to relay their message.

### **Internet Usage and Young Voters**

The 2008 election saw a record number of young voters participating in primaries and caucuses (Marcelo, Kennedy, Lopez & Barr, 2008). In addition, the advancements in communications and Internet technology along with the Get-out-the-Vote campaign targeted toward young voters predicted the 18-29 year old age group would be more involved in the 2008 election than ever before. Although the voting statistics for 2008 have not been made available, it is known that 44 million young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 were eligible to vote in the 2008 election, making up 1/5 of the total voting population (Marcelo et al.).

The voting trends for 2004 and 2006 among young voters were another supporting factor in the expected voter turnout for the 2008 election. Young voter registration and turnout increased in 2004

and 2006 (Marcelo et al., 2008). During the 2004 presidential election the young voter registration and turnout had the largest increase among all age groups (File, 2008). The 2000 presidential election recorded that 51% of all 18-29 year olds were registered to vote while 55% were registered in 2004 (Marcelo et al.). Of the 51% of 18-29 year olds registered to vote, 40% turned out to vote in 2000 while 46% of the registered 55% turned out to vote in 2004. Due to the increase in young voter populations, campaign strategists recognized the importance of young voters in the 2008 election. Strategists increased the number of campaign materials focused at persuading and mobilizing the young voter, especially online (Marcelo et al.).

In 2008, the Pew Internet and American Life Project reported that 42% of 18-29 year olds surveyed indicated that they learned about political campaigns from the Internet (Kohut, 2008). In that same year, it was reported that 46% of Americans used the Internet, email, and texting to access information about the election (Smith & Lee, 2008, Gueorgvieva, 2008). Additionally, 12% of 18-29 year olds surveyed reported that they had posted their own political information and opinions on the Internet (Smith & Lee).

In their book on millennial technology's impact on politics, Winograd and Hais (2008) discussed how the country would see the political process dramatically change through the millennial generation and its use of the Internet. This was evident in the 2008 elections. Candidates Clinton, Obama, Biden, and Edwards all announced their intentions to run through online video in 2007. During the primaries, Hillary Clinton used a weekly online podcast to engage her supporters by answering questions they posted to her site. By recruiting volunteers, raising money, and increasing their exposure at minimal costs, politicians and proponents of legislation have exploded onto the Internet (Gueorgvieva, 2008). A substantial section of the voting population is specifically turning to sites like YouTube to learn about political issues. Of Americans responding to the Pew study, 35% indicated watching online political videos on sites such as YouTube (Smith & Lee, 2008).

In 2006, Cornfield and Rainie from the Pew Internet and American Life Project stated that "YouTube is the new 'killer app' that will transform U.S. politics" (p. 3). The 2006 campaign delivered on that promise, with more politicians turning to the site to increase exposure. In fact, many lesser-known candidates came to the forefront due to the videos posted on YouTube (Gueorgvieva, 2008). Campaigns began hiring people to track such sites, as not only were positive videos going up for politicians and proponents of legislation, but critics and opposing viewpoints were posted as well. Due to this political video push, YouTube introduced YouChoose2008 as a sub-site for voter education on candidates and issues (Gueorgvieva).

The population's turn to YouTube for information is not surprising. YouTube has been referenced as one of the most popular sources for online videos in recent years (Rhoades & Ellis, 2008). In 2007, YouTube was identified as one of the most frequently accessed, fastest-growing sites on the Internet. YouTube contains over 40 million videos and is accessed by over 20 million people each month. Not only does the site make it possible for anyone to upload and share videos, but users can also build social relationships around common interests or political beliefs (Cheng, Dale, & Liu, 2007).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Messaging Appeals**

Messaging appeals have been referenced as the most important component in advertising (Srivastava & Sharma, 2008). Mueller (1986) defines an appeal as a "message designed to motivate the consumer to purchase" (p. 3). There are various different types of appeals; however, the appeals used

most often are feeling or emotion based appeals and logical or rational based appeals (Srivastava & Sharma; Zinn & Manfredi, 2000; Cronkhite, 1964). Srivastava and Sharma indicate that emotional appeals are “fallacies that persuade by appealing to emotions that are not relevant to the question at hand” (p.30). Emotional appeals are often used by advertisers as they have been proven to provide a connection with the consumer (Srivastava & Sharma). Emotional appeals tend to be subjective and very open to individual interpretation (Zinn & Manfredi). Advertisers can appeal to emotion through sexual imagery, fear, threats, promises, humor, and empathy (O’Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 2003).

The sexual appeal is an appeal that grabs the attention of consumers (O’Guinn et al., 2003). These appeals are often arousing and often prompt the consumer to create a link between arousal and the given brand. Fear appeals are negative in context and often make consumers feel that if they do not take the recommended action then negative consequences will arise (O’Guinn et.al.). Threat appeals are often similar to fear appeals, but generally go one step further by illustrating the negative consequences that could arise. Messaging appeals that use promises promote feelings of assurance and positive outcomes. Humor is an appeal used to “create in the receiver a pleasant and memorable association with the product” (O’Guinn et al., p. 380). Lastly, the emotional appeal of empathy provides the consumers with the ability to identify with and understand the feelings or difficulties of others.

Logical appeals are focused on traditional message processing and are designed to influence a consumer’s beliefs about a message (Albers-Miller, & Stafford, 1990). These appeals are generally persuasive in nature and provide arguments in the advertiser’s favor. While not generally used in service advertising, product advertising has been known to frequently use logical appeals (Albers-Miller & Stafford). Logical appeals use reason to show that something can be gained or loss, ask a rhetorical question, show irony, social modeling, and to present information (O’Guinn et al., 2003)

The logical appeal of gain or loss is generally used to show consumers desirable or undesirable outcomes in order to promote a product or service. Rhetorical questions are used in advertising to promote consumer responses by providing an answer within the questions being asked. Irony is an appeal that creates discrepancy between what the message says and what the message means. The messaging appeal of social modeling is frequently used to give a product or brand meaning by relating it to a favorable social context (O’Guinn et al. 2003). Lastly, the informative appeal seeks to inform consumers and provide them factual information.

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Social cognitive theory is an example of an important theory that surfaces in political advertising research. The theory suggests that by observing others’ behaviors, people develop rules to guide their own actions or previously learned behaviors (Nabi & Oliver, 2010). Social influences develop an individual’s beliefs, emotions, and cognition. Additionally, social influences map standard emotional reactions through modeling, instruction, and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986). When social cognitive theory is applied to media such as YouTube, the viewer’s behavior is influenced when attractive images are present within the message that catches the viewer’s attention (Nabi & Oliver). Bandura (1989) once said, “Because of the bidirectionality of influence between behavior and environmental circumstances, people are both products and producers of their environment” (p. 4). The use of social cognitive theory is an efficient approach to looking at how consumers react to advertisements based on their environment and demographic background.

The consideration of demographics is an important key to successful advertising. William Lazer (1994) defines demographics as “the study of the human population dealing with size, composition, and distribution of populations” (p. 4). Effective advertising involves the use of demographic data to gain the competitive edge against other advertisements (Lazer). A popular trend in advertising is the use of celebrities (Kahle & Homer, 1985). Different celebrities attract different demographic populations; if a message portrayed by a celebrity’s presence is consistent with the product message, and the message is structured to fit the targeted demographic population, an effective advertisement will be produced (Kahle & Homer). By looking at demographics, advertisers are able to target certain populations and create messages that will appeal to the consumer’s social cognition.

## **Purpose**

Due to its popularity, the Internet has increasingly become a venue for political advertisements by candidates and individuals. Because it reaches a multitude of people, it is important that communicators consider the Internet as a source of communication. Communicators and educators must be aware of competing messages and the sources used to reach the public. The goal of this research is to determine the agricultural presence in YouTube videos pertaining to Proposition 2. This information is critical to agricultural communicators and educators in order to establish the current effectiveness of agricultural campaigns. In addition, this information will provide agricultural professionals with the ability to improve their messaging techniques and resources. Having an understanding of how competing organizations use YouTube to interpret agriculture will provide a strategic outlook to promote agriculture and spread the agricultural message to citizens.

The following objectives directed this study:

- 1) To determine the origin and sponsorship of Proposition 2 videos on YouTube.
- 2) To determine the demographics used in Proposition 2 videos on YouTube.
- 3) To evaluate the messaging appeals used in YouTube videos surrounding Proposition 2.

## **Methods**

Researchers used content analysis methods to determine the presence of Proposition 2 videos on YouTube. Content analysis is a research tool used to establish the content of communication in a systematic and quantitative description (Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989). Videos and computer files are often researched using content or document analysis (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006).

The study sample was collected by typing “Proposition 2 California” in the search bar on the YouTube home page. Collected in late-fall of 2008, the search resulted in 111 video clips. Of these 111 videos, 103 of them were deemed usable and were evaluated for the research. The eight videos excluded from the research were unusable due to unrelated content and removal of the video before coding. As the study was interested in the effect of the videos on voting, those posted after the election were also removed from the sample. Two coders coded videos over a three-week period.

Information collected prior to watching a video included the title of the video, author, length, how many times the video had been viewed, the video category assigned by the author, video rating rated by viewers, video sponsor and producer, and how long the video had been online. Following the pre-viewing data collection, the researchers then watched each video and coded the video for the following information: the side of the proposition that the video covered; the main topics covered (whether farmer, animal welfare, human health, food safety, animal rights, factory farms, the environ-

ment, or other); if the video was animated or not-animated; the presence of a celebrity's opinion; and the number of people and the demographics of those delivering the message. In addition, coders evaluated the presence of appeals, both emotional based and logical. The emotional based appeals coded for included guilt, emotion, promise, empathy, humor, threat, fear, pride, and sex. The logical appeals coded for included rhetorical questions, self-reference, gain-loss, information, social modeling, and irony (O'Guinn et al., 2003).

Two coders underwent coder training. The training consisted of the two coders coding the same 10% of the sample ( $n = 10$ ). This established the coder's abilities to use a coding guide and accurately code a sample. As a result of the training, an inter-coder Holsti's reliability (North, et al., 1963) of 93% was obtained. A coding guide was used to insure that coders were coding accurately and consistently. After reaching coder agreement, the remaining videos were divided equally among the coders. Upon the completion of coding, data was entered into SPSS© and descriptive statistics were calculated.

## Results

A content analysis was performed by researchers on a sample of 103 videos. The video clips were posted to YouTube an average of 39.69 (minimum = 1, maximum = 300) days prior to the November 4, 2008 election. Videos averaged a length of 1.73 minutes (minimum = 8 seconds, maximum = 10.2 minutes), and had been viewed an average of 4,161.74 (minimum = 31, maximum = 19,4712) times.

Of the 103 video sample, "Pets & Animals" was the most popular category the videos were posted to with 58 videos or 56.3% of the total sample. "News & Politics" followed with 23 (22.3%) videos, then "Non-Profits & Activism" with 15 (14.6%), "Entertainment" with 3 (2.9%), "People & Blogs" with 2 (1.9%), and "Education" and "Music" each with 1 video (1.0%).

The first objective of the research was to determine the origin and sponsorship of Proposition 2 YouTube videos. There were various authors who posted the analyzed videos. However, the most frequent authors were animal rights organizations. Humane California authored a total of 35 (33.98%) videos, while Farm Animal Welfare authored 21 (20.39%) of the videos. Other authors included Animal News, centgov, Doggy TV, haydenvegan-PETA, Farm Sanctuary, Human Society, The Marin Humane Society, veterinarycrops, and several other individual authors. Animal rights organizations were also the most frequent sponsors of the videos. Of the 103 video sample, 71 (68.9%) of the videos were sponsored by animal rights organizations. Videos classified as being sponsored by "other" made up 29 (28.2%) of the videos. The sponsors classified as "other" included individuals, blogs, universities, political organizations, religious organizations, California for Safe Food Coalition of Public Health and Food Safety Experts, and unknown sponsors. Only 1 (1%) of the videos were sponsored by a farming/commodity organization (See Table 1).

The second objective of this study was to determine the demographics used in Proposition 2 videos. Coders first looked at the position of the video and determined if animation was present. The videos were broken down as follows: 89.3% (92) supported the proposition 3.9% (4) opposed the proposition and 6.8% (7) of the videos held a neutral position. Those with a neutral position tended to be authored by news organizations. The majority of the videos coded were not animated ( $n = 97$ , 94.2%).

**Table 1**  
*Sponsors of Proposition 2 Videos on YouTube*

| Sponsor                         | <i>f</i> | %    |
|---------------------------------|----------|------|
| Animal rights organizations     | 71       | 68.9 |
| Other                           | 29       | 28.2 |
| Celebrity                       | 2        | 1.9  |
| Farming/commodity organizations | 1        | 1.0  |

During the Proposition 2 campaign, many celebrities were seen speaking out in favor of the proposition; therefore, the researchers coded for the presence of celebrities’ opinions. If a known celebrity in the entertainment world was present in a video or if a celebrity’s position on the Proposition was discussed in a video then, the video was coded as containing celebrity influence. Results showed that 36.9% (38) of videos contained a celebrity’s opinions while 63.1% (65) did not possess celebrity influence.

Researchers coded for the demographics of the people delivering the message. Coders evaluated whether the message was delivered by a voice only, one person, more than one person, or no person (text). One person was featured delivering the message in 58 (56.3%) of the videos, 36 (35%) were delivered by more than one person, and 8 (7.8%) were delivered by a voice only. The age of the people delivering the message was also coded by the researchers. Videos that contained a variety of ages of people or those who did not contain people were coded as “none.” The age group of 40-50 year olds made up 36.9% (38) of the videos, the “none” category made up 34% (35) of the videos, and the 20-30 age groups composed 21.4% (22) of the videos. Researchers also coded for ethnicity. As with the age groups, researchers coded the ethnicity as “none” if more than one ethnicity was present amongst the people delivering the message or if no people were present in the video. People of Caucasian ethnicity were in 70 (68%) of the videos, 25 (24.3%) were coded as none, and 6 (5.8%) contained African Americans. Asian and Hispanic ethnicities were not represented in any of the videos. Gender of the people delivering the message within the video was also coded for. Females appeared 36.9% (38) of videos while males appeared in 32.0% (33), (See Table 2).

To evaluate what types of topics surrounding Proposition 2 were included in the sample, the researchers coded for the inclusion of topics such as farmers, animal welfare, human health, food safety, animal rights, factory farms, environment, and “other”. Coders marked all applicable topics for each video. For use in this study, animal rights was defined as giving humanistic rights to animals while animal welfare was defined as caring for animals properly, adequately, and without harm. Of the 103 video sample, 56 (54.4%) videos contained more than one topic. Animal welfare was included in 88 (85.4%) of the videos. In the sample, 27 (26.2%) videos covered food safety as a topic. Coded as “other” were 17 (16.5%) of the videos with topics including: characteristics of the proposition, fiscal impact, specialty meats, promotion, economics and job outlook affected by the proposition, religion, fraud, USDA & American Veterinary Medical Association, raising money for the proposition through an art show, proposition 8, and thanks for those who were supporting the proposition. Human health and the environment were both topic features in 16 (15.5%) of the videos in the sample. Animal rights were discussed in 5 (4.9 %) of the videos (See Table 3).

**Table 2**  
*Demographics of the People Delivering the Message*

| Demographic                                  | <i>f</i> | %    |
|--|----------|------|
| Age  |          |      |
| 40's – 50's                                  | 38       | 36.9 |
| None (no person in video or multiple people) | 35       | 34.0 |
| 20's – 30's                                  | 22       | 21.4 |
| Young Children                               | 4        | 3.9  |
| Teens  | 2        | 1.9  |
| 60+  | 2        | 1.9  |
| Ethnicity                                    |          |      |
| Caucasian                                    | 70       | 68.0 |
| None (no individual or multiple individuals) | 25       | 24.3 |
| African American                             | 6        | 5.8  |
| Other  | 2        | 1.9  |
| Asian  | 0        | 0.0  |
| Hispanic                                     | 0        | 0.0  |
| Gender                                       |          |      |
| Females                                      | 38       | 36.9 |
| Males  | 33       | 32.0 |
| Both genders                                 | 31       | 30.1 |
| None   | 1        | 1.0  |

**Table 3**  
*Topics Covered by Proposition 2 Videos*

| Topic          | <i>f</i> | %    |
|----------------|----------|------|
| Animal Welfare | 88       | 85.4 |
| Factory Farms  | 39       | 37.9 |
| Food Safety    | 27       | 26.2 |
| Other          | 17       | 16.5 |
| Human Health   | 16       | 15.5 |
| Environment    | 16       | 15.5 |
| Animal Rights  | 5        | 4.9  |
| Farmer         | 3        | 2.9  |

*Note.* Videos could be coded for multiple topics of the issue and thus could be counted more than once.

The third objective of this study was to evaluate the messaging appeals used in YouTube videos surrounding Proposition 2. Coders evaluated the messages for two different major categories of appeals including emotional/feeling based appeals and logical/rational based appeals. Each major category was coded for each video. All appeal types that were present in the videos were marked.

With 58.3% ( $n=60$ ) of the videos using guilt as a tactic, the appeals used made viewers feel as if they did not vote for the proposition, animals would be mistreated. Similarly, the 48.5% ( $n=50$ ) of videos that showed empathy reached out to viewers by showing images of sick and injured animals as well as cute chicks and goats to appeal to the emotions of animal lovers. Promises made by video narrators claiming if one voted for the proposition one would save animals and support family farmers were made in 44.7% ( $n=46$ ). Humor and pride appeals both appeared in 8 (7.8%) of the videos, while the sex appeal was used once (See Table 4).

**Table 4**  
*Feeling/Emotional Appeals Used in Videos*

| Appeal    | <i>f</i> | %     |
|-----------|----------|-------|
| Guilt     | 60       | 58.3  |
| Empathy   | 50       | 48.5  |
| Promise   | 46       | 44.7  |
| Threat    | 36       | 35.0  |
| Fear      | 31       | 30.1  |
| Emotional | 26       | 25.2  |
| Humor     | 8        | 7.8   |
| Pride     | 8        | 7.8   |
| Sex       | 1        | 1.0   |
| Total     | 266      | 258.4 |

*Note.* Videos could be coded for multiple appeals and thus could be counted more than once.

The logical/rational based appeal that occurred most frequently in the video sample was gain-loss with 75 (72.8%) of videos. Videos using gain-loss tried to show viewers logically what might happen if the Proposition failed or passed. The videos using gain-loss frequently showed the loss of quality of life for animals on farms that would occur if certain farming practices were not banned by the proposition. Of the sample, 25 (24.3%) of the videos contained an informative appeal where they were trying to share the statistics behind the cause. Irony was the least used appeal, appearing in 3 (2.9%) videos (See Table 5).

**Table 5**  
*Logical/Rational Appeals used in Videos*

| Appeal              | <i>f</i> | %     |
|---------------------|----------|-------|
| Gain-loss           | 75       | 72.8  |
| Informative         | 25       | 24.3  |
| Self-reference      | 16       | 15.5  |
| Social modeling     | 16       | 15.5  |
| Rhetorical question | 7        | 6.8   |
| Irony               | 3        | 2.9   |
| Total               | 42       | 137.8 |

*Note.* Videos could be coded for multiple appeals and thus could be counted more than once.

### Conclusions/Recommendations

Based on this study and previous research it is evident that YouTube is being used for all forms of politics, including campaigns toward legislation. Of the 103 videos, a large portion ( $n = 42, 40.7\%$ ) were posted at least one month before the November 4, 2008 election. This gave voters adequate time to access the videos before the election, including those who may have voted by absentee ballot. It is important as agricultural professionals to know the period in which many competitors post their messages to YouTube. This will allow agriculture groups in the future to get a jump-start and reach voters before the competitors.

The landside difference between videos for and against Proposition 2 is a very pertinent finding to this study. As in the election results, support of the proposition outweighed the opposition. Agriculturalists should take note of this difference and evaluate what the industry can do differently to reach voters. Using online resources more efficiently, producing creative messages, and structuring messages to fit the voter audience need to be further researched in order to insure that the agricultural industry makes improvements in the near future. Animal rights groups, like the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), will continue to fight for their cause. A statement released on January 22, 2009, from *Hoosier Ag Today* indicated that HSUS has acquired an office in Bloomington, Indiana, and is prepping to propose similar legislation there (Truitt, 2009). It is also important to note that of the few videos against the proposition, one contained a farmer providing negative commentary about the animal rights organizations, not a positive view that would make voters want to help such a farmer. If agriculturalists are going to use such venues they must help their constituents understand what is effective persuasion.

The most prominent author selected category for the YouTube videos in this sample was “Pets & Animals” ( $n = 58, 56.3\%$ ). These results are surprising as it might be assumed that “News & Politics” or “Non-Profits & Activism” would be the leading categories for this sample. “News & Politics” would be the most logical category for most videos due to the legislative content surrounding Proposition 2. Due to the large abundance of animal rights organizations both authoring and sponsoring the majority of the sample, “Non-Profits & Activism” would also logically rise to the top. Agriculturalists should remember that animal rights organizations generally try to disguise their activist-like nature. For example, many people are under the belief that the Humane Society of the United States is the

same organization as the Humane Society in their town that shelters pets. On HSUS's website one of their FAQs is "How is HSUS affiliated with my local humane society?" (The Humane Society of the United States, 2008, p.1). The presence of this FAQ indicates that the difference between HSUS and local Humane Societies is a question that often arises. This misconception works in favor for the activists because their true identity is not given away. Additionally, "News & Politics" was used less than "Pets & Animals" because it may not be as attractive to the majority of the younger populations. In the future, communicators should remember to select categories that will appeal to their audience.

Demographics portrayed in a message can directly affect how a message is received by a target audience (Kahle & Homer, 1985). The demographics observed in this research indicate that Caucasian females between the ages of 40 and 50 might be the most appealing to the Proposition 2 voting audience. Although the Caucasian race was found to be prominent in the sample, researchers found it interesting that more videos did not feature other ethnicities like Asian or Hispanic. With the large Hispanic and Asian population in California, it would be assumed that video authors would also want to make a deep connection with those groups.

Females were more often portrayed in the messages than men. It may be predicted that the female gender poses a more emotional connection with an audience, therefore eliciting emotional responses. The presence of the 40-50 year old age group is logically expected. Generally, people feel that middle-aged adults have more experience and are more credible than younger or aging adults. Focusing on providing demographics that relate to the target audience will provide a strong connection and activate one's social cognition.

Video topics discussed in the YouTube videos had unpredicted outcomes. With the majority of videos being sponsored by animal rights organizations, animal rights video topics would be expected. However, the opposite is true. Only 5 (4.9%) videos featured an animal rights topic. The majority of videos contained an animal welfare topic. Farmers are generally known as being animal welfare activists. This shows that animal rights organizations may mask their true desire to catch more support. By masking their animal rights goals it was easily achievable for the voting population to agree with supposed animal welfare measures. As agriculturalists plan and prepare messages, they must learn to think like the competitors and cover topics that are important to the consumer.

Appeals used in advertising are important for reaching and connecting with an audience (Srivastava & Sharma, 2008). If the viewers see themselves in the ad or feel emotionally connected with the ad, they are more likely to connect cognitively with the product or cause (Nabi & Oliver, 2010). This study found that the majority of the videos used emotional appeals over logical appeals when discussing Proposition 2. With over 266 emotional appeals appearing in the videos, it is clear these authors feel that connecting to an individual by making them feel empathy or guilt will lead to their support. With the majority of videos being for the proposition, it is not surprising that so many videos played on guilt about not helping animals and empathy for farm animals. The promise of better lives for the animals if voting yes was used to draw in support for the proposition. Not many videos took a logical approach beyond showing the gain or loss for animals depending on how the vote went. Agriculturalists trying to make their message heard must work to combat these appeals and learn how to emotionally connect with users to share their message. Agricultural communicators need to incorporate more emotional appeals into their campaign messages to effectively persuade voters.

As the mode of politics evolves in today's technological age (Gueorgvieva, 2008), agricultural communicators must be up to the challenge when campaigning against larger groups like animal rights activists. Educators must prepare students in the communication and agricultural education

classrooms, teaching them how to deal with competitors and how to communicate with voting constituents. Political campaigns tend to vary from the typical commodity campaign. Tactics used by anti-agriculture organizations are ruthless and effective. Researchers must explore how to combat competing messages that are so convincing and appealing to individuals' emotions.

It is important to note that this study is limited by the search terms used and the ever-changing nature of the Internet. Videos can quickly be put online or pulled offline, and thus some videos discussing Proposition 2 could have been missed. Researchers tried other terms to ensure for a complete sample. Other search terms such as "prop 2" resulted in a similar list of subjects so the researchers used the original search term. In addition, the ethnicities and ages of those reported are limited by the design of the coding sheet as videos with "none" or "multiple" ages or ethnicities were coded the same. Future studies should improve the coding sheet to distinguish between "none" and "multiple." This study should be replicated for this and other issues posted on YouTube and other social networking sites.

### About the Authors

Joy Goodwin is a graduate assistant in the Agricultural Education and Communication Department at the University of Florida. Emily Rhoades, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at The Ohio State University where she teaches courses in design and magazine production. She is a 10 year member of ACE.

This manuscript was presented at the 2009 American Association for Agriculture Education Conference in Louisville, KY.

### Keywords

content analysis, animal rights, animal welfare, legislation, YouTube

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