

Challenge or Empower: Revisiting Argumentation Quality in a News Editorial Corpus

What does argumentation quality mean for news editorials ?

News editorials are said to shape public opinion, which makes them a powerful tool and an important source of political argumentation.

Editorials rarely change anyone's stance on an issue completely. So, what does argumentation quality mean for editorials?

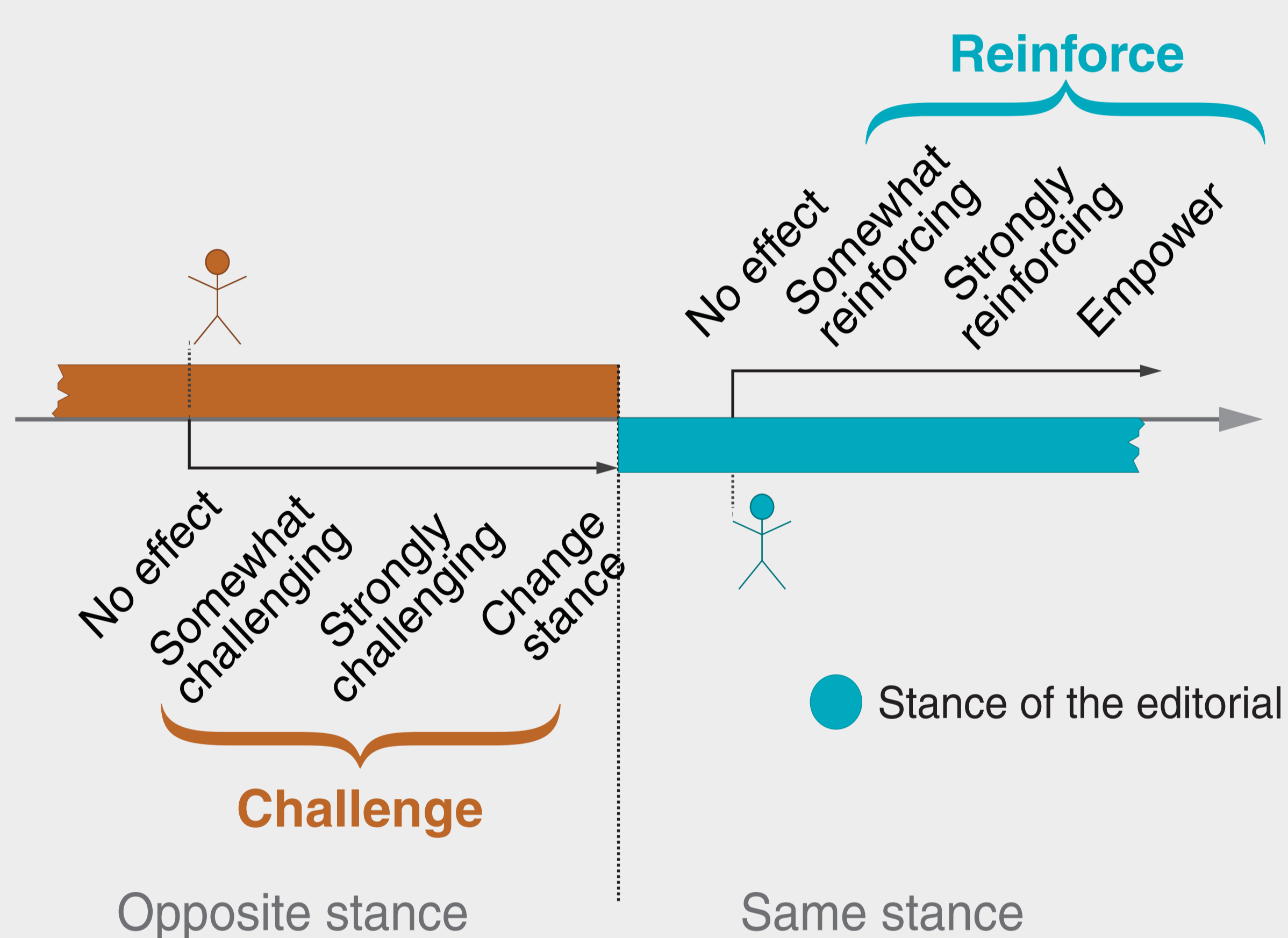
New notion of argumentation quality for news editorials is presented in this paper. It is based on whether an editorial brings readers of opposing beliefs closer together or rather increases the gap between them.

Main Contributions

- A new notion of argumentation quality for news editorials:
 - 1 We capture the effect of an editorial on people with different political orientation.
 - 2 We capture the quality of an editorial based on the combined effect on readers with different political orientation.
- A corpus with quality assessments of 1000 news editorials, each annotated by 3 liberals and 3 conservatives.
- An analysis revealing that more than 5% of all editorials fulfill our notion of high quality, whereas only 1% really changed the stance of the reader.

A new notion of argumentation quality for news editorials

1 Effect of an editorial on a reader



2 Quality of an editorial

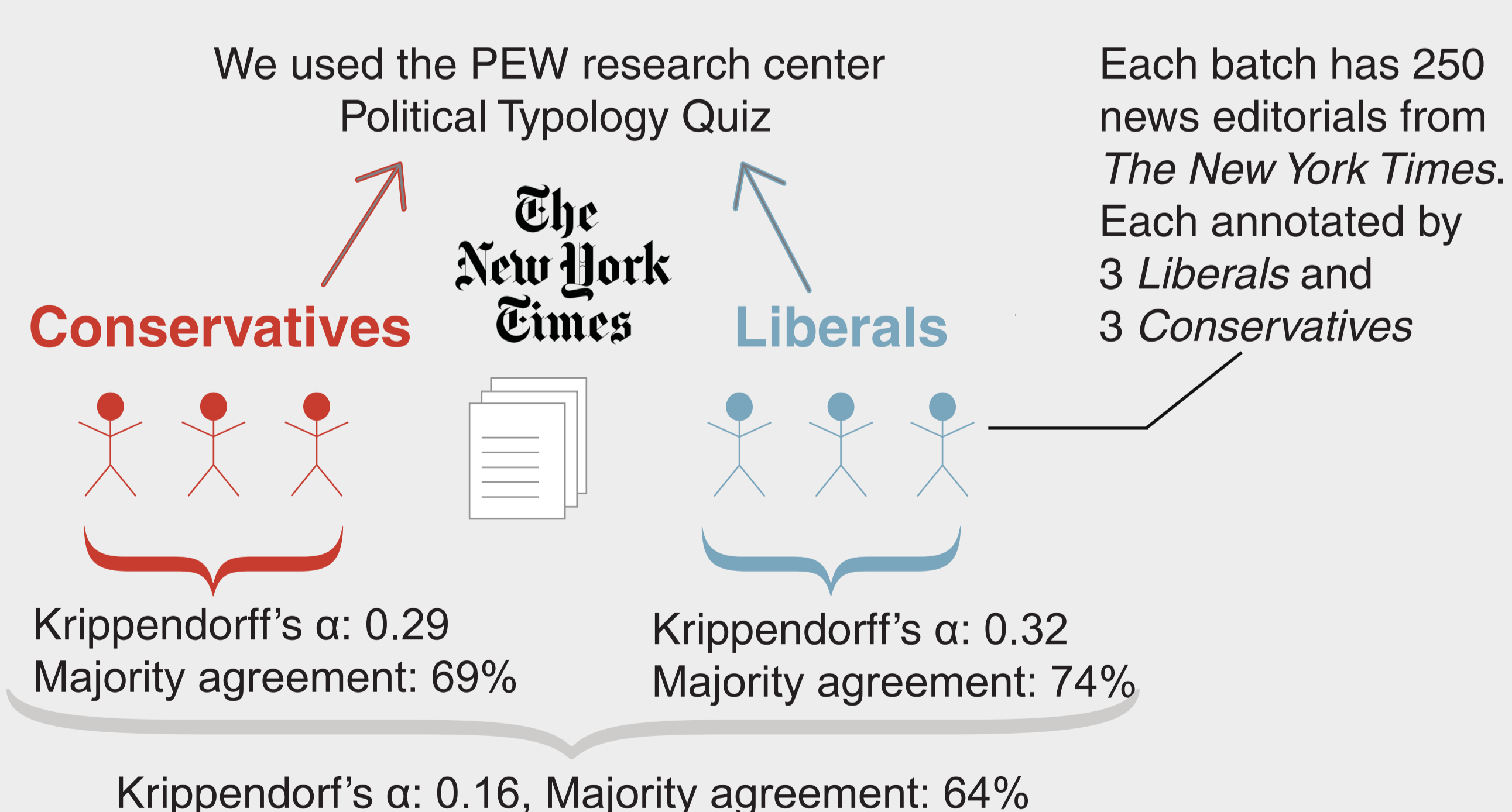
| | Group A | | |
|---------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Challenge | Reinforce | No effect |
| Group A | High quality <i>new persuasive</i> | High quality <i>new persuasive</i> | Medium quality <i>persuasive</i> |
| Group B | | Medium quality <i>new</i> | Low quality <i>(new)</i> |
| | No effect | | Low quality |

new Editorial presents a new argumentation (in parenthesis, if only for one side).

persuasive Editorial presents a persuasive argumentation.

Group A has a set of beliefs and Group B has an opposite set of beliefs.

A corpus of 1000 New York Times editorials annotated by Liberals and Conservatives



| | Strongly challenging (change stance) | Somewhat challenging | No effect | Somewhat reinforcing | Strongly reinforcing (empower) |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Liberals | 71 (33) | 269 | 708 | 1402 | 550 (509) |
| Conservatives | 72 (35) | 275 | 1282 | 798 | 573 (461) |
| Overall | 143 (68) | 544 | 1990 | 2200 | 1123 (970) |

1000 annotated news editorials, a total of 6000 annotations

Readers with identical beliefs largely agree on the effect of editorials

| | Group A | | |
|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Challenge | Reinforce | No effect |
| Group A | 4 (1%) | 37 (5%) | 19 (2%) |
| Group B | | 338 (44%) | 296 (38%) |
| | No effect | | 76 (10%) |

Selected findings:

- The overall agreement is lower than the agreement within each group
- The proportion of readers changing their stance after reading is significantly <1%
- The ideology of the New York Times seems to be reflected in the annotated corpus: The editorials reinforced the stance of many annotators with liberal ideology, while they often had no effect on annotators with conservative ideology.

