Persuasion in Society

Third Edition

Jean G. Jones
Herbert W. Simons

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CHAPTER 1

The Study of Persuasion

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Today's practice of persuasion is mired in controversies that mirror those in ancient Greece almost 2,500 years ago, and they are unlikely to go away any time soon. At issue still are questions of truth, justice, ethics, and power. These issues still matter, as we can see in The Daily Show's Jon Stewart's dogged pursuit of CNBC's Jim Cramer on March 12, 2009. The interview, rated by The Week in the number one slot when ranking Jon Stewart's five most hard-hitting interviews, took place at the height of the worldwide financial meltdown. In it Stewart confronts Cramer about his role in contributing to the situation as Cramer seeks to evade responsibility for knowingly offering bad investment advice to his viewers for the sake of personal gain:

Thinking It Through

To watch the full video on the Daily Show site, go to:
STEWART: This is the promo for your show:

—"In Cramer We Trust" promo plays—

STEWART: Isn’t there a problem with selling snake oil and labeling it as vitamin tonic and saying that it cures impetigo... Isn’t that the difficulty here?

CRAMER: I think that there are two kinds of people. People come out and make good calls and bad calls that are financial professionals and there are people who say they only make good calls and they are liars. I try really hard to make as many good calls as I can.

STEWART: I think the difference is not good call/bad call. The difference is real market and unreal market.... CNBC could be an incredibly powerful tool of illumination for people that believe that there are two markets: One that has been sold to us as long term. Put your money in 401ks. Put your money in pensions and just leave it there. Don’t worry about it. It’s all doing fine. Then, there’s this other market; this real market that is occurring in the back room. Where giant piles of money are going in and out and people are trading them and it’s transactional and it’s fast. But it’s dangerous, it’s ethically dubious and it hurts that long term market. So what it feels like to us—and I’m talking purely as a layman—it feels like we are capitalizing your adventure by our pension and

our hard earned money. And that it is a game that you know.... That you know is going on. But you go on television as a financial network and pretend isn’t happening.

CRAMER: Let me say this: I am trying to expose this stuff. Exactly what you guys do and I am trying to get the regulators to look at it.

STEWART: No, no, no, no, no. I want desperately for that, but I feel like that’s not what we’re getting. What we’re getting is... [shows video clip]

CRAMER: I would encourage anyone who is in the hedge fund unit “do it” because it is legal. It is a very quick way to make the money and very satisfying. By the way, no one else in the world would ever admit that but I don’t care.

UNKNOWN: That’s right and you can say that here.

CRAMER: I’m not going to say it on TV.

CRAMER: It’s on TV now.

STEWART: I want the Jim Cramer on CNBC to protect me from that Jim Cramer.

STEWART: I gotta tell you. I understand that you want to make finance entertaining, but it’s not an f—ing game. When I watch that I get, I can’t tell you how angry it makes me, because it says to me, you all know. You all know what’s going on. You can draw a straight line from those shenanigans to the stuff that was being pulled at Bear and at AIG and all this derivative market stuff that is this weird Wall Street side bet.

CRAMER: But Jon, don’t you want guys like me that have been in it to show the shenanigans? What else can I do? I mean, last night’s show—

STEWART: No, no, no, no, no. I want desperately for that, but I feel like that’s not what we’re getting. What we’re getting is.... Listen, you know what the banks were doing and yet were touting it for months and months. The entire network was and so now to pretend that this was some sort of crazy, once-in-a-lifetime tsunami that nobody could have seen coming is disingenuous at best and criminal at worst.

[...]

CRAMER: Well, I think that your goal should always be to try to expose the fact that there is no easy money.

STEWART: But there are literally shows called Fast Money.

CRAMER: I think that people... [Audience laughs] There’s a market for it and you give it to them.

STEWART: There’s a market for cocaine and hookers. What is the responsibility of the people who cover Wall Street? Who are you responsible to? The people with the 401ks and the pensions and the general public, or the Wall Street traders?

There is a name for discourse of this kind. It’s called “sophistic,” after the sophists of ancient Greece and Rome. As their name continues to suggest, the sophists tended to be seen as sophisticated or worldly wise, but also, in some quarters, as “sophistic” in the negative sense of putting rhetorical power and effectiveness above truth and
justice. The sophists made considerable fortunes for the coaching they offered to Athenians in the arts of oratory, but they got mixed reviews for their ethics. No Athenian was more scathing in his criticism than Plato, a student of Socrates who had earned a reputation in his own right as the “father” of Western philosophy.

Plato’s primary way of sharing his views was through his Socratic Dialogues, a series of scripted conversations in which the respected Socrates is cast as the questioner. In the dialogue on persuasion bearing the sophist Gorgias’s name, the conversation centers upon the issue of whether rhetoric, the art of persuasion, is corrupt (Plato, 2006). Gorgias evokes Socrates’ ire when he observes that the ability to impress an audience is the surest path to power:

By the exercise of the ability [to persuade], you will have the doctor and the trainer as your slaves, and your man of business will turn out to be making money for another; for you, in fact, who have the ability to speak and convince the masses.

(Gorgias, 452c; see also Americanrhetoric.com/platoafrican.htm; 1/Erben & Pieczka, 2006).

Gorgias’s student, Polus, adds that power is the greatest good. Socrates affects surprise at these seemingly superficial claims. Is there not, he asks, a difference between true knowledge and mere belief? Socrates does get Gorgias to concede that power can be used for both good and ill, but Gorgias and his fellow sophists continue to argue that ultimate success comes through knowledge of persuasion. They even boast at one point that knowledge of anything else is unnecessary, arguing for the position that it is a worthy goal to simply create the appearance of knowing more than the experts.

The discussion continues, and Socrates will have none of it. Sophistic rhetoric, he maintains, is an art of hoodwinking the ignorant about the justice or injustice of a matter, without imparting any real knowledge. This kind of rhetoric does great damage in the law tribunal by making the worse appear the better argument and allowing the guilty to go free (Plato, 2006).

Years later, Plato’s student, Aristotle, would offer a defense of rhetoric (Aristotle, 2004). Aristotle’s response to Plato (and to Socrates) concedes the dangers of rhetoric but rejects their alleged inevitability. His arguments can be summarized as follows: Rhetoric can be—indeed, often is—an instrument for giving effectiveness to truth. And truth is not always easy to come by. Still, those debating about issues of policy need eventually to come to a conclusion, and those brought before the court of law have the right to defend themselves. While philosophers like Socrates and Plato have the luxury of suspending judgment until they have arrived at universal principles, ordinary citizens will need help in their roles as decision makers in assessing alternative courses of action. In addition, as persuaders ordinary citizens will benefit from guidance in determining the best available means of persuasion for a particular audience or occasion. A solid understanding of rhetoric is therefore useful.

Both Plato’s critique of rhetoric and Aristotle’s defense of it contain a good deal of wisdom. Plato’s analysis paved the way for critiques of today’s sophistic practices in our corporate, legal, and political world that Plato himself could not have possibly imagined. Still, as you might have anticipated, this book gives Aristotle the edge in the debate with Plato. To be sure, persuasive speech can be used to deceive, mislead, exploit, and oppress. Clever persuaders can exploit what Aristotle called the “defects of their hearers.” Unwise actions can be made to appear wise by use of sham arguments, known as fallacies, which appear reasonable on first impression but fall apart on close examination. All this is possible, as Plato claimed in the Gorgias, but it is not inevitable. Persuaders can serve the interests of their audiences at the same time as they serve their own interests: they can achieve power with others and not simply power over others (Burke, 1969; Grunig et al., 2002).

Insufficiently appreciated by Plato was Aristotle’s key insight: Persuasion deals in matters of judgment, rather than matters of certainty. Matters of judgment cannot be settled by fact alone or by sheer calculation. On controversial issues, we expect honest differences of opinion. Even experts can legitimately disagree on what the facts are, which facts are most relevant, and, most important, what should be made of them.

Box 1.1 Jon Stewart: Philosopher or Sophist?
Had he practiced his brand of serious comedy in ancient Athens, where would Jon Stewart have stood in the sophist/Platonist debate? A modern-day Socrates but with a better sense of humor, he would surely have appreciated the importance of skillful questioning. However, it was the sophists, particularly Protagoras, who most influenced today’s courtroom practices, including the practice of cross-examination.

But then again the sophists were relativists on questions of truth. Protagoras is well known for his view that we humans “are the measure of all things”; we decide what counts, or measures up as “true.” When Stewart turns serious, as he did in the Cramer interview there is little question but that truth to him is not simply a human invention, or, as discussed in Chapter Three, a social construction. Stewart gives evidence of having been influenced by all sides in this three-cornered debate and to have taken the best from each.

FIGURE 1.2 Jon Stewart.
Reprinted with permission of AP Images Inc.
For example, when researching the effect of sun exposure on humans, scientific studies often take diametrically opposed positions. One concludes that due to the links between sun exposure and skin cancer, we should not leave the house without sunscreen on. At the same time, other studies show that we need to be exposed to the sun to be able to allow our bodies to absorb vitamin D (Jio, 2014). Or consider calcium in our diets. On the one hand, scientific studies proclaim that calcium is considered essential for maintaining strong bones and avoiding fractures, especially for older people. On the other hand, new studies are finding that calcium supplements may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease deaths (Kim, 2013).

As these examples demonstrate, the scientists offer judgments, and in these cases, conflicting judgments. There are at least two sides to most stories, a point repeatedly emphasized by the sophists. This is surely true of the sophist-Platonic controversy and it is no less true today than in ancient Greece. Now as then, say public relations experts L’Etoile and Piecza, “There is no simple way of providing moral and intellectual comfort to practitioners. Consequently, the fundamental ethical questions have to be confronted daily in routine practice” (2006).

But just because persuasion deals in matters of judgment rather than certainty, Aristotle did not view this as an invitation to impulsive or random decision making or to perpetual indecision. Nor was Aristotle of the opinion that any decision was as good as any other, any argument as good as any other. As much as audiences might be taken in by clever deceivers, for Aristotle truth still had a natural advantage over falsehood, and logic a natural advantage over illogic—all other things being equal. The power of truth and logic is best appreciated when we agree to them reluctantly, as in the following case:

At an inner-city junior high school for troubled students who had been boot ed out of other schools, an eighth-grade English class came to life when a student proposed that the school be put on trial for unfair rules. But the student who proposed the mock trial found himself in the role of the defense attorney for the administration, and he could not resist doing a convincing job in its behalf. Witness 1 for the prosecution was destroyed on cross-examination as he was caught over-generalizing. No, he admitted, the milk at the school is not always spoiled. In fact, it rarely is. Witness 2 was forced to concede that the school doesn’t really enforce its rule against bringing candy to class. Then the defense attorney caught the prosecution off guard by pressing an objection: The prosecution had been leading the witness. And so it went. When the deliberations were concluded, the seven student judges voted 6 to 1 for the administration.

(Michie, 1998).

WHY STUDY PERSUASION?

The study of persuasion has grown exponentially since Aristotle’s day—from oral communication to written communication, from the verbal to the non-verbal, from the unmediated to the mediated, from the obviously intended to the non-obvious, and from the public arena to the study of all or virtually all symbolic action or interaction, including the study of persuasion about persuasion. Persuasion’s increased scope places increased demands on practicing, analyzing, and understanding of persuasion. Let us consider each in turn.

Practice

Effective persuasion is a crucial component of personal and career success. But, complains business and political consultant, Frank Luntz:

The average CEO cannot communicate their way out of a paper bag. The average CEO only knows facts, figures, statistics and what to say on a balance sheet. And so there’s no resonance. There’s no empathy. There’s no understanding of the anger and frustration that some Americans feel towards corporate America.... The CEOs, they just speak from their head and it’s not coming from their heart.

(NOW, 2004)

And how important is persuasion in business? As Allied Signal’s CEO recently explained.

The day when you could yell and scream and beat people into good performance is over. Today you have to appeal to them by helping them to see how they can get from here to there, by establishing some credibility, and by giving them some reason and help to get there. Do all those things, and they’ll knock down doors.

(Conger, 1999)

Now, more than ever, persuasion is “the language of business leadership” (Conger, 1999).

The same is true of the professions. The “people professions”—law, sales, social work, etc.—could just as well be called “persuasion professions.” Moreover, virtually all professional associations require persuasion consultants. Within colleges and universities, the interdisciplinary nature of the subject is reflected by the variety of courses in different academic departments that bear upon it: “Public Opinion and Propaganda,” “Argumentation and Debate,” “Rhetoric and Composition,” “Media Literacy,” “Rules of Evidence in Criminal Law,” “Strategic Communication,” “Homiletics,” “Perception Management,” “Community Organizing,” and many others.
Beyond the private and professional levels, you may be interested in working for social and political betterment. Alone or in groups, you may be seeking more funding for environmental issues, intervention in areas where famine and genocide are occurring, racial and gender equality, or greater participation by students in university governance.

Having a solid understanding of how persuasion functions helps you determine the means that are most appropriate for achieving your goals. It helps you evaluate situations and weigh options. For example, if you are seeking donations for Doctors Without Borders, you are confronted with a dilemma. Should you ask potential donors for more than you expect them to give in the hopes of getting what you bargain for? Or, conversely, if you ask for a larger donation than you need, would you be risking outright rejection? And what if it is societal change you are after? Should you be a moderate who signs petitions or a militant who stages confrontations? Too often, these decisions are made purely on a gut level, without sober analysis of their consequences, and the study of persuasion aids you as you seek to make the better judgments.

Analysis

Persuading others is one side of the persuasion equation; the other is responding intelligently and discerningly to the armies of message makers who compete for your attention, your agreement, your involvement, and your money. Much as we may practice persuasion, most of us spend more time on the receiving end of persuasive messages. We are literally bombarded by them from the moment we are awakened by the alarm to the instant we fall asleep before the television set.

Think about the last time you visited a department store or even a supermarket. Virtually every product there was marketed, advertised, and merchandized to get you to buy it. The objects in these stores do more than serve your material needs; they're also symbols, especially for new generations of consumption communities in the United States and abroad. How often do we define ourselves and our friends by what we wear and what music we listen to and what shows we watch on television? (Barber, 1996, 2007).

Persuasion is the engine of our market-driven global economy. In 1995, Deirdre McCloskey co-authored an influential study in the *American Economic Review* estimating that persuasion—by salespeople, teachers, politicians, lobbyists, lawyers, and others—made up a quarter of America's gross domestic product (McCloskey & Klaiber, 1995). Since the publication of that influential study, that percentage has grown, as demonstrated when the same analysis was updated in 2013 by an Australian economist and showed that persuasion now accounts for 30 percent of US GDP (Antioch, 2013). In McCloskey's mind, this is a fact not to be feared, but to be faced, in that "a free society is a 'rhetorical society' where speech is used to persuade people about what to buy or whom to vote for, rather than violence" (McCloskey, 2013). "People always say advertising is manipulation," says McCloskey. "But if the only alternative to persuasion is violence, how else are we going to decide what car to buy except by people trying to charm us?" (McCloskey, 2013).

In our increasingly smaller but more complicated world, being an intelligent consumer of persuasive messages is not easy. Part of the problem is what psychologists call the "not me" phenomenon—otherwise known as the "third person" effect (Golan, 2008). Here is what the author of *The Power of Persuasion* has to say about "not me":

People tend to have a curious illusion of invulnerability to manipulation—a belief that we're not as vulnerable as others around us. In part this illusion derives from the subtlety of clever operators who make it hard to see that you're being manipulated. In part, it feeds off another "normal" illusion—that we're more capable and, so, better defended than other people. The illusion of invulnerability is a comforting notion for moving forward in an unpredictable and dangerous world. Unfortunately, however, the more immune we feel, the less likely we are to take precautions and, as a result, the more susceptible than ever we become.

(Levine, 2003).

When we combine the "not me" phenomenon with the contemporary problem of message density, we see that the problem is compounded. Today, persuasive messages are presented to us at dizzying speeds. Gigabytes of information are available at the click of a mouse. If we believe we are invulnerable to the persuasive impact of the messages we receive, and combine that with the number of messages we take in each day, we see that without a solid understanding of how persuasion functions, we are vulnerable indeed.

*Under the best of circumstances, persuasive messages present us with a dilemma.* On the one side is the need for human connection, as we don't want to go through life cynically distrusting every communicative act we encounter. On the other hand, there is quite obviously a need for vigilance in the face of unscrupulous persuaders; there is every reason to weigh and evaluate controversial assertions even when they emanate from those we trust. The study of persuasion provides us with the analytic tools we need to find a balance.
Thinking It Through

Consider for a moment the way institutions, belief systems, and cultural norms govern and guide us as we deal with our genders. From the moment a child is born, it is conditioned to live within gendered boundaries. Baby girls are dressed in pink, baby boys wear blue. As they grow, girls come to play with kitchen sets, baby dolls, and dress-up clothes, while boys play with work benches, trucks, and miniature sports equipment. By the time they are grown, most children have internalized their socially accepted gender roles and live within those boundaries without question, seeing them as unchangeable, "normal," and "natural." And they do that thinking that they are fully in charge of their lives.

Make a list of the things you've done today that are gender-specific. And then, imagine yourself as a member of the opposite sex, and make a list of what you would have done today in that instance. Most of all, notice how you've behaved in a gender-appropriate manner without even thinking about it. Notice how your "gender" is a central part of who you are.

We humans are both the creators and products of our societies in a never-ending cycle. The movements and campaigns of persuasion that our forbears once waged helped produce the very institutions, belief systems, and cultural norms that now govern at least guide our thoughts and behaviors. To be sure, historical change does not occur through persuasion alone, and in fact, a recent study of presidential influence brought news of how often American presidents have ruled by decree (Howell, 2003). Most often it is by a combination of forms of influence that major change occurs, not least the power of the "carrot" (incentives) and the "stick" (coercion) (Simons, 1972). Still, it is primarily by persuasion that ideas are introduced and hearts and minds changed.

Among the cultural truisms that people take for granted are those which at one time or other were the subject of considerable controversy. Americans are no longer British colonists. What's more, as much as they would like to think of themselves as members of the world community, they find it difficult if not impossible to transcend their American identities. Their economic system, republican form of government, commitments to freedom of speech, conceptions of themselves as a special people, and even their idea of nationhood can be traced to efforts of persuasion from centuries past.

We can begin to understand how discourse functions to create new and accepted ways of viewing the world by examining our own era, noticing the political and social issues that we confront and the means we employ to deal with them. Looking back over the recent history of American politics, we can recall some of the rhetorical catchwords that persuaded us to create new realities:

- "change we can believe in" that led us to "hope" that the outer of one political party would transform our world,
- "compassionate conservatism" that persuaded us to implement sweeping educational change so that "no child will be left behind,"
- the "war on terror" from which we did not "cut and run," because we wanted to have a "Mission Accomplished,"
- "global warming" fears that persuaded some of us to "go green," while others resisted the notion of "man-made climate change," and
- concerns about "illegal aliens," or should we say "undocumented workers," that persuaded us to change our attitudes toward immigration policy.

In all of these instances, the rhetoric is richly metaphorical, and each example takes on a reality as social truth. Each persuasive construction had real-world policy ramifications for the citizenry: the first African-American president was elected, soldiers were sent to fight in wars, our public schools were transformed as they incorporated regular testing to measure student progress, car manufacturers thrived or declined as buyers sought cars that made lesser impacts on the environment, and we constructed walls on our borders to manage issues of immigration.

But it is not just in issues of public policy that rhetoric has had an influence. Rhetorical constructions also helped us understand the changes in our day-to-day lives. Americans have become far more cosmopolitan, and increasingly dependent on the new information technologies. "Spanglish" is now a de facto American language, social networks are flourishing on the Internet, the "blogosphere" has proliferated, and nearly everyone has "friended" somebody else.

Thinking It Through

Consider how you have been persuaded to think differently about communication over just the last few years. What does it mean to have "friends" on social networking sites like Facebook? How does the definition of "friend" been transformed? How have you been persuaded to think differently about friendship?

Further, how has your communication changed thanks to your laptop computer, your cell phone, and your wi-fi connection? How would you feel, emotionally and physically, if you had to live for a day without your phone or your connection to the Internet? Would you be nervous and uncomfortable? How have you been persuaded that is necessary to maintain constant connection through technology, and how does this impact your life?

Then, as if unnoticed, "predatory lenders" have caused various "bubbles" to burst, leading to a worldwide "meltdown," with calls for a "bailout," antagonism between "Wall Street" and "Main Street," prompting most Americans to vote for "change."
In addition to knowledge of the role of persuasion in society, there is considerable
benefit in coming to grips with the psychological dynamics of persuasion. From an
examination of persuasion at work, one gets a better understanding of how human
beings attend to stimuli, how they order their environment, how thought and
emotion interact. Psychological theories of attention, perception, learning,
motivation, emotion, etc., have in turn contributed greatly to our understanding of
persuasion. Several chapters in this book bring psychological theories to bear upon
the subject.

Synthesis: Putting Together Rhetorical Practice, Analysis, and
Understanding

Understanding, practice, and analysis are closely interrelated. In order to become a
discriminating consumer of persuasive messages, you need to be aware of the
techniques that others may use to influence you. In order to persuade effectively,
you need to anticipate how consumers of persuasive messages are likely to respond.
And in order to respond perceptively or persuade effectively, you need to have a
general understanding of the nature of the persuasive process and the role of
persuasion in society. By the same token, our experiences as persuaders and
persuadees may help us to understand in small ways how persuasion has shaped
human choices and destinies during the major events of history, and we may also
come to a better understanding of the contemporary political process.

In some respects this text is a handbook. It provides principles by which you
may better persuade or more critically react to persuasive communication by others.
In addition, it is designed to provide insights about persuasion as it functions to
shape your world, independent of whether these insights lead you to change your
rhetorical practices or not. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this book is
designed to help you understand the ways in which you can make an impact on your
world. Ultimately, to seek to correct injustice or improve the lives of others requires
the ability to analyze rhetoric, to understand how persuasion works to create new
socially constructed “truths,” and to create ethically appropriate persuasive messages.

METHODS OF STUDYING PERSUASION

Depending on individual goals, the student of persuasion may choose among a wide
variety of research methods. Although scholars these days rely heavily on social-
scientific methodologies, for almost all of its long history, the field of persuasion has
been the province of the humanities. The ancient Athenians’ initial method of
instruction remains helpful to this day: it involved learning from role models and
practice, practice, practice. Every Athenian citizen knew Pericles’ funeral oration by
heart. They also knew the legend of Demosthenes’ struggle to overcome a stuttering
affliction by practicing aloud with pebbles in his mouth. Out of practice came theory,

the systematizing of lessons learned into generalized concepts and principles.
Drawing on the experiences of those who practiced the art, and on the critical
judgments of trained observers, Aristotle and others fashioned rhetorical principles
that have withstood the test of time remarkably well.

Method One: Rhetorical Criticism

Contemporary rhetorical criticism grew out of classical rhetorical theory, but has
moved well beyond it to include studies of forms and genres unimaginined by the
ancients. Consider these sample research questions about rhetorical artifacts:

What made Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address so memorable? Why is one blog so
much more persuasive than another? If I were to give a speech all over again, how
would I do it differently? If I could have my choice, which celebrity would I most like
to have representing my anti-bullying campaign? When is faculty advocacy in the
classroom legitimate and when is it unethical?

Or consider these questions concerning the words individuals speak: Since
stylistic simplicity is so highly valued in our culture, how is it that Martin Luther
King, Jr. is considered such a memorable speaker while having used a highly ornate
style? Why are most college course catalog descriptions so uninspiring and what can
be done to improve them? Why is being a “liberal” viewed by most Americans as an
elite lifestyle? What are the discursive dilemmas presidents face in trying to instill
public confidence in a shaky economy and which of their strategic alternatives is
likely to work best in this recession?

Each of these questions and thousands more like them constitute legitimate
starting points for critical analyses of rhetorical happenings. Critics or analysts (we
use the terms interchangeably) may be motivated by outrage at an apparent misuse
of language or logic or a pretension to objectivity that is belied by the facts. Their
critical impulse may spring from a pragmatic interest in persuading others or in
determining how others attempt to persuade them. They may have an irreverent
streak and thus be inclined to debunk claims and claimants to universal truth. They
may appreciate a rhetorical effort and want to know why it was so admirable. Or they
may simply be puzzle-solvers by temperament who enjoy unraveling some of the
mysteries of persuasion. In each case, they will attempt to make sense of the rhetorical
act or event, either as an object of interest in its own right or because it helps
illuminate some larger issue, problem, or theoretical question. Criticism serves
consummatory functions when it stops at evaluation or explanation of a rhetorical
effort. It performs instrumental functions when it focuses on persuasive discourse as
case-study material in service of a larger end such as theory building or theory testing.
Like the objects of their analyses, critics are themselves persuaders with cases to
present and defend. We may not entirely agree with the analysis, but we must respect
it if the case has been well argued.

This book provides numerous examples of rhetorical criticism. Today, analysis
of persuasion often is incorporated within a more inclusive term, critical studies, to
refer to criticism of all kinds bearing on persuasion. Studies of recurrent forms or patterns of discourse by linguists and sociologists, semiotic analyses of language-like objects and symbolic actions, studies in non-verbal communication, analysis by feminist theorists and scholars examining the intersections of race and culture, and more all contribute to our understanding of persuasion. Here we provide two examples of rhetorical criticism, the first of a course catalog description, the second an illustration of dilemma-centered analysis focused on the task of sounding confident about a shaky economy but not overconfident.

Case #1 A rhetorical analysis of the college catalog

Catalog Description

COM 390R Seminar in Contemporary Rhetorical Criticism. May be repeated for credit when topics vary. Semester topics have included dramaturgistic criticism, content analysis, and methodologies for movement studies. Prerequisite: Upper-Division Standing.

Hart (1997) analyzed this seemingly ordinary message to make two points. First, we are all experts of a sort on persuasion, having been exposed each day to a sea of rhetoric. As voracious consumers of messages, we develop implicit knowledge of their hidden meanings, undisclosed motives, and subtle strategies. We know, says Hart, that this is a catalog description; we would recognize it anywhere and be able to distinguish it from a chili recipe or a love letter or the lyrics to a rock song. We know, too, that descriptions such as these aren’t always trustworthy. The prose bears the marks of having been funneled through a bureaucracy. Before signing up for COM 390R, perhaps we ought to check with peers or with the instructor who will actually teach the course.

Hart’s (1997) second point is that even so simple a message repays close examination. For example, a good deal about persuasion can be learned by attending to its style. For one thing, the course description is telegraphic: Incomplete sentences and abnormal punctuation patterns suggest a hurried, businesslike tone, a message totally uninterested in wooing its reader. So, too, are its reasoning patterns telegraphic. Concepts such as “seminar,” “credit,” and “prerequisite” are never explained. The language is also formidable: excessive use of jargon, polysyllabic words, and opaque phrases (e.g., COM 390R).

Also revealing is what is not found in the text. Nobody runs or jumps here. No doing has been done. The absence of verbs suggests institutionalization, hardly what one would expect from what is essentially a piece of advertising. But this is a special sort of advertising, advertising without adjectives. And much else is missing. There are no extended examples to help the reader see what the course will be like, no powerful imagery to sustain the student’s vision of wonder while standing in the registration line, no personal disclosure by the author to build identification with the reader. It is almost as if this message did not care about its reader, or, for that matter, even care about itself. It does nothing to invite or entice or intrigue (Hart, 2004).

As Hart’s analysis demonstrates, rhetorical criticism is not simply about studying great speeches or persuasive essays, and the humanistic study of persuasive discourse is no longer the exclusive province of self-styled rhetoricians.

Case #2 A rhetorical analysis of discourse: shaky economy

Introduce here is a dilemma-centered framework for rhetorical criticism called the Requirements-Problems-Strategies (RPS) approach (Simons, 2007, 2000, 1996, 1994, 1970; Lu & Simons, 2006). These in brief are its basic concepts and principles:

Requirements (R)

By dint of their roles and of the situations they confront, persuaders are rarely free agents. The “demands” or “pressures” on persuaders constitute rhetorical requirements.

Problems (P)

Oftentimes these requirements come in the form of cross-pressures, necessitating difficult rhetorical choices. To the extent that these conflicting requirements are recurrent and predictable, they can assist the critic in understanding the persuader’s rhetorical problems.

Strategies (S)

In response to problems, and in an effort to fulfill requirements, political actors devise rhetorical strategies. Not uncommonly, the strategies they devise create new problems even as they ameliorate others. Besides posing problems, situations may present political actors with opportunities. Strategizing involves calculations about how to realize goals, minimize problems, and exploit opportunities.

Particularly as persuaders seek to thread their way through difficult dilemmas, they must be practiced at what Lyne (1990) calls the “art of the sayable.” Consider, for example, the difficulties the Obama administration faced when it inherited a recession that threatened to become a full-fledged depression. No one in the administration wanted to fuel the pessimism that comes with loss of jobs, homes, and credit, because optimism about the future is key to lending and spending; it is essential in getting a market economy back on track. Neither did they want to paint too rosy a picture out of fear of a boomerang effect, as President Bush had done with Iraq in declaring “Mission Accomplished.” So, as repairs were gradually introduced into the economy, the administration sought ways to bolster confidence incrementally. “Glimpers of hope” were upgraded to “signs of recovery.” Warning that “real recovery is months, if not years, ahead,” Obama reported that “the gears of our economic engine do appear to be slowly turning once again” (Sanger, 2009).

“There’s a kind of artistry to this, isn’t there?” said Robert Dallek, the presidential historian best known for chronicling how Lyndon Johnson, the consummate politician, never led the public out of its view that everything was falling apart. “You don’t want to come out and say the recession is over. You want to do a version of
Churchill's line about how this isn't the end, or the beginning of the end, but rather the end of the beginning."

(Sanger, 2009)

Rhetorical criticism, ultimately, seeks to examine how symbols are used to shape the audience. As these two cases display, the scope of artifacts worthy of study is vast: a critic can study a political speech, but might just as likely study a billboard, a song, a work of art, or a film. For example, the rhetorical critic would find it worthwhile to study what is communicated to girls and boys in the Disney film *The Little Mermaid*, where the star is a beautiful female who cannot walk, one who can only find love and mobility by giving up her voice. Given all of the possibilities, we strongly urge that you try your hand at doing rhetorical criticism, if for no other reason than that the act of applying principles covered in this book will help you to better assimilate them.

**Method Two: Social-Scientific Approach**

While the humanities in general and rhetorical analysis in particular contribute a great deal to our understanding of rhetoric, the more dominant approach to scholarly research on persuasion today involves the use of social-scientific methods. Although the contributions of humanists and social scientists are in many ways complementary, important differences may also be noted. First, many of the issues of concern to humanists are outside the pale of scientific inquiry. Questions of ethics, beauty, rhetorical artistry, etc., may be deemed important by social scientists, but they recognize also that such questions are not answerable by scientific methods. Second, whereas humanists retain faith in the subjective impressions of sensitive observers, social scientists attempt to replace personal judgments with impersonal, objective methods. Using what is sometimes referred to as the behavioral approach, social scientists subject theories and hypotheses to rigorous empirical tests. Third, humanists tend to regard persuasion as a highly individualized art and tend to be suspicious of extrapolations from scientific research to judgments about how human beings ought to persuade. Social scientists, by contrast, insist that their methods yield reliable generalizations which can be used with profit by would-be persuaders.

Social scientists have developed an array of methodologies useful in the study of persuasion, including focus group interviews, surveys, polls, and quantitative content analysis. Campaign decisions are often made based on focus group research and then tested for their effectiveness based on polls and surveys. These days, participants in the test-marketing of a newly designed campaign advertisement may be hooked up to a brain scanner the better to trace reactions to the ad through the brain's predominantly cognitive and emotional neural pathways (Heath & Heath 2007; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Westen, 2007).

For example, in one study, a group of 38 military veterans or active duty military who were now students at two different Nevada colleges participated in focus groups that have been designed to examine the college experiences and the attitudes of this population, with a goal toward creating a college climate that would enhance the success rates for military students. The groups were held over a number of sessions, with no more than eight participants per group, and the results brought varied perspectives that would likely not have come up through other forms of feedback-seeking activities such as surveys. While some of the results were to be expected (e.g., the older veteran students felt they had less in common with traditional, non-military students), there were some unexpected findings. Perhaps most interesting was that the veterans expressed a preference for anonymity, not wearing their uniforms on campus or identifying themselves as being part of the military. In fact, they did not want special attention:

Several students reported that they were often singled out by faculty (once they knew of their military background) to speak for veterans in general or that they were called upon to make comments or be used as an example. The majority of student veterans said these in-class experiences made them very uncomfortable and made a bad impression on their non-veteran student counterparts by making them appear to be seeking attention and by highlighting how different they were from other students.

(Gonzales, 2013)

Thanks to the military focus groups, the colleges were able to develop policies that were cost effective and useful, including things such as special training for faculty and special orientations that did not cause military members to spend time considering things that are useful to 18-year-olds, but not to experienced soldiers (Gonzales 2013).

In developing generalizations about the effectiveness of various types of persuasion, social scientists rely for the most part on research experiments conducted under carefully controlled conditions. This approach is behavioral in the sense of treating human judgments and actions as in some sense akin to the predictable, controllable behavior of lower-order animals in the laboratory. Social scientists systematically investigate variations in source (that is, the persuader), message, medium, audience, and context—in who says what to whom, when, where, and how. These communication factors are known as independent variables.

Determining their effects on dependent variables is the object of research. As McGuire has put it,

The independent variables have to do with the communication process; these are the variables we can manipulate in order to see what happens... The dependent variables ... are the variables that we expect will change when we manipulate the independent variables. Taken together, the independent and dependent variables define what we might call the "communication-persuasion matrix."

(McGuire, 1978)
Consider, by way of illustration, the following generalizations about the psychology of persuasion. Which do you think are true? Which are false? Which are so muddled or so simplistic that you simply cannot judge their veracity?

1. The best way to persuade people to stop a practice harmful to their health is to combine strong fear appeals with concrete and convincing recommendations.

2. It is generally effective to present both sides of an issue, making sure to indicate why you think the weight of the evidence supports your position.

3. Because opposites attract, it is generally best when using testimonials in advertisements to present sources as unlike the intended audience as possible.

4. The more you pay people to argue publicly for a position contrary to their own values, the more likely they are to change their values.

5. Very intelligent people are more likely to be persuaded upon hearing an argument than are people of very low or moderate intelligence.

6. Vivid descriptions of a single problem are nearly always more impressive than comprehensive statistics.

7. The only rule about how to persuade is that there are no rules.

Not all the generalizations can be true, for if Rule 7 is correct, the others are not, and if any of the others are true, then Rule 7 is not.

There is something to be said for Rule 7. It could be argued that persuasion is too much an individual thing. It is too subject to variations in goals, media, contexts, audiences, and subject matter. Although persuasion may be fun to speculate about, it is impossible to generalize about with any degree of reliability. Many humanists subscribe to Rule 7. Rule 7 is probably wrong, however, or at least in need of modification.

Although there are no ironclad rules that apply to all individuals in all situations, it is possible to formulate general guidelines for persuaders that typically apply. Often, it is necessary to factor in variations in goals, media, audiences, and the like when formulating generalizations. For example, Rule 1 is generally on target, except that people with low self-esteem tend to become overwhelmed by strong fear appeals—at least until they are repeatedly assured that help for their problem is truly available. Especially for them, clear, specific, and optimistic instruction on how, when, and where to take action is essential (Leventhal, et al., 2005).

For reasons that will be discussed in subsequent chapters, Rule 2 is generally accurate, at least as applied to intelligent, well-educated audiences, especially those who are undecided or in disagreement with your position. Rule 3 should probably be marked false. Sources perceived as similar to their audiences tend to be regarded as far more attractive (e.g., likable, friendly, and warm) than sources seen as dissimilar. Rule 4 is generally false, and for reasons that may seem counterintuitive (see Chapter 2). Rule 5 is generally false as well; moderately intelligent people tend to be most persuadable. As for Rule 6, the generalization tends to hold for most message recipients, although the combination of vivid examples and comprehensive statistics tends to be even more powerful (Brock & Green, 2005).

But experiments testing for the effects of the independent variables in Rules 1 through 6 do not always yield the same results. Life is complicated, and persuasion is especially so. Fortunately, a statistical technique called meta-analysis can be used to compare studies of the same or similar variables and to reconcile apparent inconsistencies (Cooper, et al., 2009). Ensuing chapters summarize findings from a number of these meta-analyses and report on social-scientific theories that attempt to make sense of behavioral research findings and guide the search for new knowledge.

From research of this kind, scholars have become better able to understand the dynamics of persuasion and to provide useful advice to persuaders. Still, we would caution readers not to apply behavioral research findings formulaically, the way a cook uses a recipe. Our hope is not only that you will familiarize yourselves with these findings, but that you will also profit from personal practice and observation, from analysis of the communication of others, from reading humanistic studies of rhetorically significant public events, and from an examination of other social science research that may apply more specifically to the particular rhetorical problems you face. (There is, for example, an extensive body of sociological literature on techniques of community organizing, a body of political science research on electoral campaign strategies, and so on.)

Moreover, as you become more familiar with the procedures used in behavioral research on persuasion, we urge you that interpret findings critically. From time to time we have offered our own criticisms, especially of the tendency of behavioral researchers to ignore situational factors.

Finally, we urge once again that you immerse yourselves in the details of the unique situation confronting you, carefully analyzing your own goals, your audience, your subject matter, and the context in which you will be communicating. Behavioral research provides a rough guide to practice, but it is only one means for acquiring rhetorical sensitivity—and a limited one at that.

**TOWARD A DEFINITION OF PERSUASION**

How might we define persuasion and distinguish it from “non-persuasion”? How if at all does persuasion differ from propaganda?

A useful way to construct a definition is to look for common characteristics in what language specialists refer to as paradigm cases—examples from ordinary discourse that almost everyone would agree are instances of persuasion. Probably all of us would agree that the following are paradigm cases:

- a politician presenting a campaign speech to attract votes;
- an advertiser preparing a commercial for presentation on television;
- a legislator urging support for a bill;
- peaceful picketers displaying placards to passers-by;
- a trial lawyer's summation up a case to a jury;
- a parent advising a child to dress more neatly;
- a college representative recruiting student applicants;
- a newspaper editorial complaining about anti-inflationary measures;
- a minister imploring parishioners to respect human dignity;
- an essayist decrying American materialism;
- a student appealing to a professor for a makeup exam.

From the foregoing cases it is possible to identify common elements that constitute defining characteristics of persuasion.

Human Communication
Each of the above cases involves acts of human communication, whether verbal or non-verbal, oral or written, explicit or implicit, face-to-face or mediated through contemporary technology. Occasionally, "persuasion" is used metaphorically to refer to nonhuman acts, as when we say, "The severity of the blizzard persuaded me to go indoors." For the most part, however, the term is restricted to exchanges of messages between human beings.

Attempted Influence
To influence others is to make a difference in the way they think, feel, or act. All of the paradigm cases given above involved attempted influence. The politician attempted to attract votes; the legislator sought passage of a bill; the student sought permission to take a makeup exam. In some contexts it may be appropriate to refer to "persuasion" as an effect already produced by messages, whether intended or not. For example, we might say, "She persuaded me without even trying." So long as the context is made clear, this deviation from dominant usage need not bother us greatly. Our conception of persuasion remains virtually the same.

Modifying Judgments
Message recipients—otherwise referred to here as receivers, audiences, or persuadees—are invited to make a judgment of some sort. Is this politician trustworthy? Does that legislator's proposal warrant public support? Whom should I believe: the prosecution or the defense? Is it really so bad to want material comforts?

The cases of persuasion noted above involve no complex mixture of motives, no masking of persuasive intent, no questions about whether they are attempts at persuasion or some other form of influence. If persuasive intent is not apparent from the context, it is made obvious by what is said and how it is said. These paradigmatic examples of persuasion rely, at least in part, on linguistic or paralinguistic (language-like) messages to promote an image, a point of view, or a proposed action of some sort.

In general, when the term persuasion is used in this book, it is with the paradigm cases in mind. Persuasion is defined as human communication designed to influence the judgments and actions of others. In these respects it differs from other forms of influence. It is not the iron hand of torture, the stick-up, or other such forms of coercion. Nor, in its purest sense, is it the exchange of money or other such material inducements for actions performed by the person being influenced (see Box 1.2). Nor is it pressure to conform to the group or to the authority of the powerful.
Addressed as it is to choice-making individuals, persuasion predisposes others but does not impose. It affects their sense of what is true or false, probable or improbable; their evaluations of people, events, ideas, or proposals; their private and public commitments to take this or that action; and perhaps even their basic values and ideologies. All this is done by way of communication. According to St. Augustine more than 1,500 years ago, the fully influenced person:  

likes what you promise, fears what you say is imminent, hates what you censure, embraces what you command, regrets whatever you build up as regrettable, rejoices at whatever you say is cause for rejoicing, sympathizes with those whose wretchedness your words bring before his very eyes, shuns those whom you admonish him to shun... and in whatever other ways his high eloquence can affect the minds of your hearers, bringing them not merely to know what should be done, but to do what they know should be done.

(Quoted in Burke, 1950/1969, p. 50)

As the above indicates, not all attempts at persuasion fall inside a neatly delineated core. There are many gray areas of persuasion, the so-called borderline cases in which the intent to persuade is not so clear. Seldom are persuaders fully aware of everything they are saying or doing when communicating a message, and what they communicate may have effects—welcomed or unwelcomed—beyond those the

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**Box 1.2 Toy Truck: Persuasion, Inducements, Coercion**

To illustrate the differences between persuasion, material inducements, and coercion, consider the following nursery school situation. Olivia covets a toy truck that Caleb has been sitting on. Here are some of her options.

**Persuasion**

 Aren’t you tired of being on that truck?
 That ball over there is fun. Why don’t you play with it?

**Inducements**

 If you let me play on that truck, I’ll play with you.
 I’ll stop annoying you if you let me play with that truck.

**Coercion**

 If you stay on that truck, I’ll stop being your friend.
 Get off the truck or I’ll tell Miss Mary.

In her role as persuader, Olivia identifies the benefits or harms from the adoption or non-adoption of a proposal but does not claim to be the agent of those consequences. In the cases of inducements and coercion, she is the agent. Inducements promise positive consequences; coercion threatens negative consequences.

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y intended. Moreover, the intent to influence another person’s judgments is often masked, played down, or combined with other communication motives.

We should note that persuasion is not always aimed directly at modifying attitudes or altering overt behavior. On any one occasion, in fact, its aim may be to modify a single belief or value. Thus, the trial lawyer in our example had only one goal, and that was to modify the jury’s beliefs about the defendant’s guilt or innocence; the minister focused solely on the value of human dignity.

For the most part, our use of the term “persuasion” is confined in this book to paradigm cases. That being so, few should question our use of the term or the definition we assigned to it. But paradigm cases do not constitute the whole of persuasion. Persuasion is practiced by advertisers, lawyers, politicians, religious leaders, and their ilk, but also practiced by others who might not ordinarily be thought of as persuaders. Is it appropriate, for example, to refer to the activities of scientists addressing other scientists as “persuasion”? Can our definition be applied to newscasters and educators or to poets and dramatists? And if representatives of professions such as these are labeled as “persuaders,” should this demean their status? We turn to questions of this kind in Chapter 3.

**Persuasion versus Propaganda**

Along with such terms as “rhetoric” and “persuasion,” the use of the term “propaganda” tends to reflect the attitudes of the language user. All are emotionally loaded terms that figure in disputes of one sort or another, as when a critic of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s practice of civil disobedience said, “That’s not persuasion; it’s coercion.” Propaganda differs from persuasion in that it is systematic, sustained, organized, and one-sided. Its aim is to win over large numbers of people.

But the same could be said of virtually all persuasive campaigns. What is missing from this list of defining features is the onus that “propaganda” has in contemporary culture. In an earlier age, “propaganda” was seen as a vehicle for carrying Truth to the masses (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001). These days it tends to have more negative connotations. Propagandists are not seen as simply one-sided; they are also seen as manipulative, controlling, self-serving, and exploitative. On top of that their logic is seen as defective. Says Sproule, for example, propaganda “represents the work of large organizations or groups to win over the public for special interests through a massive orchestration of attractive conclusions packaged to conceal both their persuasive purposes and lack of supporting reasons” (Sproule, 1994).

Note in Sproule’s definition the emphasis on concealment. In this view, propagandists operate in stealth. They masquerade as upstanding citizens. They achieve their aims not by direct expression but through innuendo, implication, suggestion, and planted disinformation. Thus has propaganda come to be regarded as unethical persuasion or, worse yet, as persuasion’s evil twin (Bennett & O’Rourke, 2006; Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001).
But these characterizations have their own problems. If propaganda’s aims and methods are always concealed, how are we to know it when we see it? Are we to trust in the discerning judgment of propaganda analysts? But they are not immune from propaganda in their analysis of propaganda and may, in the guise of objectivity, propagate in their own right. How are we to know? Moreover, reason dictates that we not treat all propaganda as equivalently evil. Labels aside, we might even be able to identify cases that meet with our approval. Few among us, for example, would oppose the use of one-sided, somewhat manipulative mass persuasion in support of world peace.

Reason dictates that we need to differentiate between types of propaganda, weighing the flat-out objectionable against the relatively benign (Rogers, 2007). In doing so, however, we ought not to assume that our systems of classification are free of bias. In Western democracies, for example, public relations and commercial advertising have come in for a great deal of criticism as being nothing more than tools of corporate power that blunt the power of democracy in the guise of defending it (Carey 1997; Rampton & Stauber, 2003). The problem is, though, that critiques of this kind tend to come from outsiders rather than insiders to these professions. Those who are closely entwined in the situation more often value the work that they do.

By way of another example, we might assert that many Westerners find clearly unethical the Chinese government’s propaganda in defense of its human rights abuses. But surveys of Chinese citizens find far greater satisfaction with their government than Americans express toward theirs (O’Brien, 2008) and, from their point of view, Western criticisms of Chinese government practices are highly objectionable forms of propaganda in their own right.

And even when serious analysis is attempted, propaganda analysts often characterize the least objectionable propaganda as “white” and the most objectionable as “black” (Rogers, 2007; Jowett & O’Donnell, 2006). Isn’t it time to evaluate those colorations and also inquire as to what prejudices lay behind the association of black with the negative and white with the positive?

These problems of classification are taken up again in later chapters. Suffice it to reiterate here the great lesson of contemporary critical studies of persuasion: that there is no escape from rhetoric, even in textbook pronouncements about the “nature” of rhetoric—or of propaganda, persuasion, and related terms (Billig, 2008). We return to this important principle in Chapter 3.

Ethical Perspectives of Persuasion

Imagine for a moment that you’d like to sell your car and you place an ad in the local newspaper. Three people respond to your ad and you make an appointment with each to show up at roughly the same time. You wanted all three to show up at the same time to persuade them that your car is a hot item, much in demand. This approach has a name: stacked competition (Cialdini, 2009). Is your approach ethical?

In the case of your approach to selling your car, a number of questions present themselves. What if one of the prospective customers loses patience and decides to leave? What if a second catches on to your game and expresses resentment? What if your car is really a clunker and you persuade the innocent third buyer to purchase it, only to have the individual sue you later for misrepresentation?

On the other hand, what if setting up a competition among prospective buyers gets you a good price? These considerations may not be irrelevant, but they should probably not form your entire judgment in the matter, either. What about your responsibility to the prospective buyers, or to agreed-on standards for doing business, or to your own conscience? And if you go on to focus on consequences, you might also ask yourself what the effects would be on society if practices such as these became the norm. Finally, because our self-concepts are formed from interaction with others, you might wish to consider what effect your actions are likely to have on you. Common to all these questions is a concern with the ethics of persuasion.

Each of us has at one time or another been victimized by persuaders. Politicians have pandered to us, advertisers have gullied us with their evasions and exaggerations, and even those we’ve loved and trusted have, on occasion, lied to us. When it has happened to us, we have generally deplored it, and often it has caused us great anguish.

Yet if we are honest, we would likely admit that there have been times when we have abused persuasion. We may have been deceptive or exaggerated the positive when it has seemed advantageous. That leads us to questions that go all the way back to Plato’s critique of the sophists. Are pandering, evasions, exaggerations, and even outright lying always unethical, or does the morality or immorality of deception depend on the situation?

Ethics, at the most general level, is concerned with how people should act. In considering a situation from an ethical perspective, we are less interested in what a person actually did or might do. Understanding how people act is primarily a question for psychologists rather than ethicists. However, we can evaluate a person’s actions, and try to determine if what they did do is what they should have done. It is the emphasis on the concepts of should and ought that distinguish the questions that arise when we look at persuasion from an ethical perspective.

Box 1.3 How Often Do You Attempt to Deceive Others?

How often do you attempt deception? Once a month? Once a week? All the time? Do males deceive more often than females? Do adults lie more often than children? Recent research shows that 60% of people lie at least once during a ten-minute conversation and told an average of two to three lies (Feldman, et al., 2002). But deception, according to Hopper and Bell (1984), can include not just outright, deliberate lying but also exaggerations, tall tales, bluffs, evasions, distortions, concealments, indirectness, and—a big category—self-deceptions. With this list in mind, how often do you attempt to deceive others?
THE ETHICS OF PERSUASION

In this concluding section of Chapter 1, we introduce several alternative perspectives on the ethics of persuasion. Here, as elsewhere in the book, our object is not to preach on ethical matters in persuasion but to provoke thought and inform your own choices. That's not to say that we'll pretend to neutrality on these matters. We've already tipped our hand on the sophist/Platonist controversy, and we've made clear our own activist inclinations. But we'd like nothing better than for readers to challenge our positions and make spirited defenses of their own. And so, we now turn to an introduction to the ethics in persuasion, one that will be engaged further in Chapter 15.

Utilitarianism

One way of dealing with ethical considerations and persuasion is to conclude that you are entitled to use questionable means only when your goals as a persuader are worthy beyond question. Thus, a medical doctor might feel justified in deceiving a patient for the patient's own good—for example, by exaggerating the negative consequences of what would happen if the patient does not get enough exercise, in order to persuade the patient to get off the sofa for health's sake. On similar grounds, a charitable organization might exaggerate its capacity to make a difference with the dollars its donors contribute. If these inflated estimates were exposed to the press, a spokesperson for the charity might respond that his group is exempted from responsibilities that fall on lesser entities because of all the good his charitable organization does in the world.

By the same token, if our ends are of dubious value, presumably we are obligated to refrain from using ethically questionable means. A former student reported that in his part-time job as a telemarketer to physicians, he could vastly improve his chances of getting through to them by posing as another doctor. But the student ultimately could not justify this deceit to himself and wound up getting another job.

Questions of this type arise repeatedly in the policy-making arena. During the congressional hearings in 1990 on whether the United States should take up arms to combat Iraqi aggression in Kuwait, a teenager testified to Congress that she saw Iraqi soldiers tear babies from incubators. That story was repeated many times in speeches by then President George H. W. Bush and was featured in the subsequent congressional debate on whether to support U.S. military action in the Gulf. The congressional committee was not told, however, that the teenager was the Kuwaiti ambassador's daughter; moreover, there is good reason to believe that the girl had not herself witnessed these alleged atrocities. Had he known she was the Kuwaiti ambassador's daughter, said Representative John Porter, the ranking Republican on the committee, he would not have allowed her to testify. But then again, he had heard other witnesses tell similar stories, and he thought there was strong evidence to support the charges (McArthur, 2003).

As in the above example, it is not uncommon that persuaders employ "the ends justify the means" as a rationale for achieving rhetorical success. But we only need to remember history to see the problems that can arise with this approach. The Nazi leadership believed in its ends and justified its use of hate campaigns that were built around polarizing symbols of identification and division. Politicians, public relations professionals, advertising executives, trial lawyers—and, yes, even some classroom speakers—are not above fabricating evidence or using misleading arguments. Once individuals have engaged in practices such as these, it is all too easy to rationalize them—to decide, for example, that a classroom speech is only an exercise and doesn't count in the real world or that fabricating evidence is justified because the speaker could always find evidence just like it if he had the time to dig it out of the library.

Moral standards for ethical persuasion can also be applied selectively and self-deceptively in conflicts between close friends and associates, and the tendency to apply moral standards inconsistently is all the more persistent because it is often done unconsciously. By deceiving ourselves about our own tendencies to deceive others, we manage both to protect our egos and to appear sincere to others.

Weighing ends against means, means against ends, and both against circumstances is most closely associated with the philosophical position on ethics known as utilitarianism. Its core principle is this: Act to promote as much good as possible. Given two or more alternatives, we should do what will provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Lying, ordinarily, does more harm than good, and so is presumed to be unethical. But there may be "white" lies that do little harm and a lot of good, in which case utilitarians would approve them.

Universalism

In contrast to utilitarianism, a second approach to the ethics of persuasion assumes that some practices are intrinsically virtuous and others are intrinsically objectionable, no matter what the objective or the circumstances. Universalist ethics may be derived from law or tradition or religion. For example, the Bible holds that we should never lie, slander, or bear false witness regardless of the good that might possibly come from such actions.

Philosopher Immanuel Kant held to the categorical imperative, the position that we should always act so that the principle of our actions is capable of being universalized. By that reasoning, lying is always wrong, even when it causes no harm in a particular situation, because if everyone were to lie, no one would believe anyone. Lying is wrong, in other words, because truth telling is a necessary condition of our having any meaningful verbal interaction at all (Solomon, 1984).

Of course, the issue with such an approach to the ethics of persuasion is that it does not entertain the circumstances of the particular situation, and instead gives privilege to the universal rule. Situations do in fact, though, and relationships matter. A universalist might have objected to the doctor who lied to his patient to promote her health on the grounds that the doctor has violated a universal injunction
against lying. In fact, however, the doctor might have added years to his patient’s life by persuading her to exercise. We can see how in some situations, the utilitarian and the universalist viewpoints would conflict.

**Dialogic Ethics**

A third approach to ethical persuasion may be derived from a view of communication as ideally _dialogic_. According to _dialogic ethics_, communication between two persons is facilitated when each treats the other as a _thou_, a person, rather than an _it_, an object to manipulate. Communication is imperiled, perhaps even destroyed, when the bonds of interpersonal trust are placed in question (Solomon, 1984). A list of ethical imperatives for the dialogic persuasive speaker or writer might include the following:

1. Practice inquiry before advocacy. Be open to a variety of points of view before you embrace any one of them.
2. Know your subject. If what you say isn’t based on firsthand knowledge, get the information you need from the library or from the Internet.
3. Be honest about your identity. Don’t purport to be an expert if you are not.
4. Try to tell the truth as you perceive it. Don’t deliberately mislead audiences about your true opinions on a matter.
5. Avoid fabrications, misrepresentations, and distortions of evidence.
6. Don’t oversimplify.
7. Acknowledge possible weaknesses, if any, in your position. Be honest about your own ambivalence or uncertainty.
8. Avoid irrelevant emotional appeals or diversionary tactics.
9. Appeal to the best motives in people, not their worst motives.
10. Be prepared to lose on occasion if winning means doing psychological harm to others and demeaning yourself in the bargain.

This, you might conclude, is a reasonable list, but as with any catalog of this sort, shouldn’t there be exceptions to it? For example, doesn’t politeness sometimes require a speaker to _not_ tell an audience what he or she thinks of them? Given constraints of time and the situation at hand, isn’t it often impossible to avoid oversimplification? Attorneys who are defending their clients in court may think it unwise to disclose the weaknesses in their positions, and when a client’s future is at stake, can we blame them? And so we see, as with the other approaches to ethics, limitations exist with the dialogic approach. Things are not as tidy as they may first appear.

**Situationalism**

Finally, a fourth approach to the ethics of persuasion comes from those who take the position that the questions of ethics are role- or situation-specific, thus bolstering the case for exceptions to the above list of ethical imperatives. For example, the car you want to sell had been in an accident, but has since been fully repaired. Do you tell prospective buyers about it? Do you admit the problem if you’re asked?

Assuming that ethical decisions should be role- or situation-specific, you might reason that evasion, and possibly even misrepresentation, are legitimate tactics for private car sales and even for business in general. A dialogic ethic is fine in the classroom or between friends, you reason, but it doesn’t apply to strangers and certainly not if you eventually end up selling your car to a used car dealer. You might further assume that used car transactions are a form of _game_ or _contest_, which is fair because both sides know, or at least should know, the rules. The game metaphor is consistent with the ethical position known as _situationalism_. This view of ethics enjoins us to pay particular attention to the special circumstances of a matter. Johannessen (2002) lists contextual factors as things like:

1. the role or function of the persuader for the audience;
2. the expectations held by receivers concerning such matters as appropriateness and reasonableness;
3. the degree of receiver awareness of the persuader’s techniques;
4. the goals and values held by receivers;
5. the degree of urgency for implementation of the persuader’s proposal; and
6. the ethical standards for communication held by receivers.

Situational ethics are often applied as a middle ground of communication ethics, between the poles of moral certainty on either side of it. In the case of the medical doctor who overstated the dangers of failing to comply with exercise recommendations, the situationalist might ask how dire is the situation for the patient and whether the doctor had tried a more honest and straightforward approach in the past. If the situation is dire and honesty hasn’t worked, then exaggeration might possibly be justified.

Situational ethics also prompts consideration of the institutions of society: Do they place persuaders in situations where, try as they might, it is impossible for them to act honestly and forthrightly and still survive? In Mexico, bribes to local police to get out of traffic tickets is commonplace, and are considered akin to tips given to a restaurant server in the United States. Police are paid low wages because the expectation is that they will increase their income through such practices. What in the United States would be seen as a serious ethical lapse is considered as simple payment for services south of the border.
A situational ethic invites attention to other institutions as well. Which among our society's cultural, religious, and educational institutions prompt independent thinking, and which of them prompt conformist, cult-like thinking? Does persuasive product advertising prompt another type of mindless conformity, in this case to the insatiable demands of the economic marketplace? To paraphrase Bernard Barber (1996, 2007), have we become enchained by our department store chains, our food service chains, and, worse yet, by the irresistible impulses inside us to buy, buy, buy? Nevertheless, because it emphasizes the particulars of each situation rather than general principles, the situationalist perspective could very easily slide into little more than a rationalization of our actions in different situations, rather than a guide as to what we should do in those situations.

**Putting It Together: Ethical Meta-Perspective**

The four perspectives reviewed here are offered to provide a starting place for you to create your own perspective on the perspectives. As you begin, you should probably consider that the perspective that on first glance seems most appealing to you will probably depend on whether you see yourself primarily as a persuader or as a persuadee. If as a persuader, then you will probably be more inclined to utilitarianism or situationalism, as you will want to focus on finding ways to create rhetorical success. On the other hand, as a persuadee, you are likely to be more inclined toward universalism or dialogic ethics, where the rules for conduct are solid and you will be treated as a valued human being.

In formulating your ethical meta-perspective of persuasion, we advise you to first acknowledge your own biases and then we encourage you to avoid just following the crowd. You should not assume, for example, that what's commonly done ought to be done. Having an ethical perspective means moving beyond description (what is done) to prescription (what ought to be done), to formulating a clear sense of what's right.

Recognize, too, that it is possible—at least some of the time—to be ethical and effective. Finally, be aware that the perspectives are not mutually exclusive; hence, it is possible to borrow from each. For example, the utilitarian who seeks to do more good than harm might look to a nuanced situationalism for an idea of the good or to the universalist "Thou shalt nots" of the Ten Commandments for a conception of doing harm. Even the universalist might concede that there are circumstances justifying adultery or even murder while insisting that adultery and murder are intrinsically evil. Even the situationalist might concede that appeal to circumstances is too often an excuse for irresponsible behavior. Ultimately, with regards to the ethics of persuasion there is no court of last resort to resolve the outstanding issues once and for all. Nevertheless we are duty-bound to confront the issues and to act in good conscience with respect to them.

**SUMMARY**

Rhetoric, the study of persuasion, has had an uneven past. Conceived by the ancient Greeks as the prime instrument of democracy, it has at other times been fashioned for ignoble purposes. Few people are unambivalent in their feelings about persuasion; none can do without it.

The study of persuasion serves three vital functions. First, it informs persuasive practice, enabling would-be persuaders to maximize their opportunities for social control. Second, it enables us to become more intelligent and discriminating consumers of persuasive communications. Third, and most important, it adds to our understanding about human psychology and the individual's place in society and culture. A communication practice, persuasion is intended to influence the judgments and actions of others but always by giving them the power of decision. Thus, persuasion predisposes but does not impose.

In paradigm cases, the intent to persuade is clear-cut; in the gray areas of persuasion, it is not. Although in this text, persuasion may sometimes be treated as an effect, whether intended or not, for the most part, it is referred to as a practice. Thus, persuasion is defined as human communication designed to influence the judgments and actions of others.

Persuasion is of vital importance in any society but especially in a democratic, market-driven society. In an age of global economics and increasing democratization, it may be only a slight exaggeration to say that one fourth of the world's GDP is persuasion. Your most immediate interests in persuasion are probably in mastering the art and science of persuading and also in becoming a more savvy persuadee. For these purposes, *Persuasion in Society* shifts back and forth between the these two perspectives. It also seeks to prompt us to thoughtful consideration of the ethics of persuasion no matter which side of the persuasion equation we are on. It asks this question: should we be forgiving ourselves as persuaders for practices we would condemn as persuadees?

The study of persuasion benefits from its being a branch of the humanities (here known as rhetoric) and also from its being an area of research in the social sciences. The former brings together rhetorical scholars (rhetoricians), media analysts, and other close "readers" of persuasive acts and artifacts in a critical studies approach to the study of persuasion. From these critical analyses may come assessments of a persuader's rhetorical artistry, logic, or ethics. Criticism is also tied to theory building and theory testing.

In addition, behavioral research contributes a great deal to what is known about how to persuade. Using experiments, social scientists test hypotheses about what works under controlled conditions. Subjected to systematic investigation are variations in source, message, medium, audience, and context—in "who says what to whom, when, where, and how." Determining the effects of these independent variables on message recipients' judgments and actions is the object of the research.
Behavioral research of this type is linked to social-scientific theory in the same way that criticism both informs, and is guided by, rhetorical theory.

From the time of Socrates, and maybe even before, thoughtful people have debated about rhetoric and persuasion, some decrying it as inherently tainted, others seeing that it can serve purposes both good and ill. *Persuasion in Society* takes a middle road and features a *reactive* approach to the practice of persuasion. The central image is one of bridging differences, where persuaders move toward persuasees psychologically in hopes that persuasees will be moved toward acceptance of their ideas or proposals for action.

**QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

1. How would you define persuasion? Which of the following cases would you include, and which would you exclude?
   - The blizzard persuaded me to go indoors.
   - The puppy's sad look persuaded me to surrender choice pieces of filet mignon.
   - The full moon persuaded us to make rapturous love.
   - On seeing the t-shirt on a passer-by, I was persuaded to buy one just like it.
   - The political candidate did her best but could not convince the voters to elect her.
   - The burglar threatened us with his gun.

2. How, if at all, would you distinguish persuasion from coercion? From the use of force? From pressures toward conformity? From harassment? From teaching? From information giving? From spontaneous expression?

3. Think back to a situation in which you were turned down for a request that you thought should have been granted, considering it an instance where your attempts at persuasion failed. In your opinion, what factors may have influenced the negative outcome?

4. Recalling Aristotle's distinction between issues of judgment and issues of certainty, identify one issue of judgment on which you think reasonable individuals might legitimately differ and another for which you believe the arguments on one side clearly outweigh the arguments on the other. Defend your view.

5. Analyze a course description for one of your courses. Does it communicate interest in persuading? Whether it does so or not, is it persuasive?

6. What items have you purchased recently, and how were you persuaded to buy them? Did you buy them with your credit card, thereby being persuaded to purchase something even when you didn’t at that moment have the money to pay for it?

7. How do twenty-first century marketing and advertising affect you? Are you a part of any consumption communities? What name-brand items do you have in your home, and what name-brand clothing do you wear? Why?

**KEY TERMS**

- Coercion
- Critical studies approach to persuasion
- Dependent Variables
- Dialogic Ethics
- Humanists
- Independent Variables
- Inducements
- Meta-Analysis
- Persuasion
- Propaganda
- Rhetoric
- Rhetorical Criticism
- Rhetorical approach to persuasion
- RPS model
- Situationalism
- Social-scientific approach to persuasion
- Sophists
- Universalism
- Utilitarianism

**REFERENCES**


CHAPTER 2

The Psychology of Persuasion: Basic Concepts and Principles

- Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes
- A Preview of Theories
- Persuasion by Degrees: Adapting to Different Audiences
- BVA Theory: Beliefs and Values as Building Blocks of Attitudes
- From Attitudes to Actions and the Role of Subjective Norms: The Theory of Reasoned Action
- The Role of Emotion: Westen’s Critique of Expectancy-Value Theories
- Priming Effects
- Two Systems Theories
- Persuasion as a Learning Process
- Persuasion as Psychological Unbalancing and Rebalancing
- A Neuroscience Approach to Persuasion
- Summary
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In our post-9/11 world, the case of President Bill Clinton's extramarital affair, impeachment, acquittal, and legal disbarment almost seems like ancient history. So much has happened since, and our world has been transformed in so many ways. That being said, the Clinton episode is a benchmark historical moment. Only two presidents have been impeached, and in the language of the U.S. Constitution, impeachment is serious, involving removal from office due to "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors."

Today, emotions about the case have cooled, most people have sorted out how they feel about it, and we can examine the situation with a more objective eye.

President Clinton has worked to redeem himself though his charitable global initiatives, and it is his wife, Hillary Clinton, who is engaged in the politics of our day. But when the situation was happening, things were much more complex. During that time, the American people had absorbed a great deal of information about the scandal that formed the core of their beliefs. They learned, for example, that Clinton had misled them for several months about his illicit relationship with the White House intern and that he had probably misinformed his close aides as well in an effort to derail the investigation by Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr. Beginning with the revelations contained in surreptitiously taped phone conversations between White House intern Monica Lewinsky and her supposed friend, and concluding with DNA evidence on Lewinsky's dress, the facts of Clinton's sexual involvement with Lewinsky became well-nigh incontrovertible.

Yet Americans' attitudes toward President Clinton's job performance and toward whether he should be removed from office stemmed not just from their beliefs about sex tapes, but also from their values. Were Clinton's transgressions important? Were they as important as the good job most people believed he had been doing in managing the economy and conducting foreign policy? Most Americans believed that President Clinton was untrustworthy, but placed a higher value on the job he was doing. They saw him as a "low virtue, high competence" president, and most liked what they saw (McGee, 1998).

Together, these beliefs and values strongly influenced Americans' attitudes toward President Clinton's performance and whether he should continue in office. Their attitudes, in turn, served as knowledge structures, called schemas, for the filtering of new information. These schemas performed, as it were, the work of a mental secretary, determining what new information would be allowed in the door, what importance it would be assigned, and how it would be interpreted.

Americans were polarized about the impeachment issue, making it unlikely that either side would be moved very much by new information or new arguments. Their attitudes toward the proposal to impeach ranged from hostile to enthusiastically supportive, with relatively few people on the fence. These attitudes influenced people's perceptions of the Senate trial as well as what they said to friends and co-workers.

But attitudes alone were not fully predictive of what people would say to their friends and co-workers about the Clinton affair. Another important predictor for many Americans (not all) was their subjective norms. Many persons' public actions (as opposed to their privately held attitudes) were influenced by what they believed was most socially acceptable: A great many Americans publicly dismissed the importance of the scandal even as they tuned in to CNN and MSNBC each night for the latest salacious details. Their public actions may have been attitude related, but their subjective norms played an important role as well.

Of course, some Americans thought hard about the Clinton-Lewinsky matter, whereas others were either unwilling or unable to perform the necessary mental labor. The former pursued what Petty and Cacioppo (1996) call the central route to
judgment making; the latter pursued a peripheral route, mostly relying for their judgments on cognitive shorthands (Cialdini, 2009). These shorthands, which are the rules of thumb that enable people to get on with their lives without protracted deliberation, included conclusions like: “Everybody lies about sex, so what’s the big deal?”

In the midst of all of this, we need to remember that being persuaded is a learning process, and that was certainly true in this situation. Americans learned to like or dislike Clinton on the basis of information, associations, and anticipated rewards and punishments. These constituents of the learning process were also at work as Americans contemplated the policy options of removal or continuation in office. And Americans not only learned information, but also learned whom they would trust. Typically, they tended to dismiss politicians as untrustworthy and, to some extent, trusted messages presented in the guise of entertainment (e.g., a late night comic’s jokes about the scandal) or news (e.g., CNN’s intensive coverage).

On August 17, 1998, President Clinton made a historic speech in which he admitted to the American people for the first time that he had misled them. It was Clinton’s task in the speech to persuade his many longtime supporters, who had found news of the affair and subsequent cover-up troubling, to find ways of understanding and perhaps forgiving his transgressions. At the same time, when speaking to those who had made no secret of their dislike for Clinton and revolution toward what he had done, he had to attempt to defuse some of their hostility and even create a sense of cognitive inconsistency between the Clinton they knew and despised and the Clinton they now saw on their television screens. To this day, scholars and critics are divided on whether or not Clinton succeeded at this dual task, but he did survive the trial, remain in office, and serve out his term.

The Clinton–Lewinsky scandal, then, has much to teach about the psychology of persuasion. Chapter 2 builds on this case study as it introduces psychological concepts and principles of persuasion.

**BELIEFS, VALUES, AND ATTITUDES**

Every field has its own jargon, and some fields use familiar terms in unfamiliar ways. In everyday life, “beliefs” range from religious faith to weather forecasts. Many people speak of their “values” as things they believe in. And “having an attitude” is sometimes used to mean being stubborn and hard to get along with. But persuasion specialists tend to treat these terms with more precision, and it is there we must begin.

Beliefs are what we each personally consider to be true or probable. We believe you will learn new things from this book, for example. We can’t say that’s true, but we believe it is highly probable. Furthermore, a distinction is made between believing in something (e.g., in the value of honesty) and believing that something (e.g., that your college football team is excellent). It is in the latter sense that belief is used in this book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.1</th>
<th>When seeking to persuade, we must adapt to the audience we are trying to reach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BELIEFS</strong></td>
<td><strong>VALUES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on what is:</td>
<td>true vs. false probable vs. improbable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example 1</td>
<td>• I believe that going to college will help me to get a better job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I believe that college is expensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I believe that going to college will help me think and learn on my own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example 2</td>
<td>• I believe that studying abroad will make me a more well-rounded person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I believe that travel is sometimes scary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example 3</td>
<td>• I believe that exercise is good for my health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I believe that watching team sports on TV is dull.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I believe that I’m not good at team sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example 4</td>
<td>• I believe these Nikes are stylish, designed for jogging, a bit pricey, but well made.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Values are our ideals; they determine what we see as right or wrong, they contain our judgments about the worth of things, and they provide the principles that guide us in how to conduct our lives. It is not unusual to speak of our values in exclusively positive terms, but here and in other treatments of persuasion we argue that values can include judgments of negative worth as well—for example, most people negatively value adultery.

Attitudes are more than just our momentary emotional states or moods. In fact, they are general evaluations, whether favorable or unfavorable. Robert Gass and John Seiter (2013) define a number of characteristics of attitudes: first, they are learned and not innate. Second, they precede and consequently influence our behavior. They are the link between what we think and what we do. Third, they involve intensity of feeling: We characterize them as "strong," "weak," or "neutral." And they are directed toward a specific thing: A person, an event, an idea, a proposal for action, or an action itself.

Finally, the term opinion is used here in various ways. Is opinion the same as a belief, a value, or an attitude? Here, it is an all-purpose term for verbalized judgments of every type.

A PREVIEW OF THEORIES

Much of this chapter is taken up with psychological theories of persuasion. Theories of every type attempt to summarize and explain a phenomenon while directing the search for additional knowledge. The heart of any scientific theory is a set of assumptions, basic concepts, definitions of those concepts, and explanatory statements or theorems that relate the concepts in a condensed and organized way.

Psychological theories of persuasion include assumptions and explanatory statements about what goes on inside the head of the message recipient.

Opinions differ among persuasion theorists as to whether persuadees process messages rationally. Aristotle maintained that reason was the human being’s most distinctive feature, and many theorists since have created rational choice models to explain how it is that humans calculate their own best interests. In general, say many of these theorists, our choices correspond to our expectations and values; hence, the name expectancy-value theories. For example, a proponent of this approach might argue that it’s true, isn’t it, that because most people value their lives they will choose lifestyles designed to prolong their lives.

Yet other theorists maintain that this is not the way choices are actually made (e.g., Bargh, 2006; Westen, 2007; Kahneman, 2011). These theorists point to the role of emotion in persuasion and of unconscious motives such as our propensity to rationalize after the event for decisions already made (e.g., Westen, 2007). They would only need to point to that quart of “chunky monkey” ice cream, filled with too many life-shortening and fat-filled calories, as evidence of the shortcomings of expectancy-value theories.

FIGURE 2.1 Expectancy-value theories suggest that we will make rational choices: we will eat healthy foods to prolong our lives. These theories omit the role of emotions and unconscious motives in our decision-making process, which are powerful persuaders that, for example, cause us to choose to eat a delicious bowl of ice cream, even as we fully understand that it is not the healthiest choice.
Skipping Class Rationalizations

Well now, it's about that time of the semester ... the time when students suddenly have the urge to disregard their boring lectures and frolic in the warm sunlight and fresh spring air. The hormones can't be helped, right?

We both know that's baloney. Anytime is a good time to skip class. You just need a good reason, right? Sure. You (or your parents, as the case may be) are spending boatloads of cash to go to this prestigious university, and it kind of hangs on your conscience that you don't feel like going. Behold, rationalizations to your rescue.

Here is your wonderful list of ways to skip class, and methods to rationalize them to yourself.

1 Sleep in
Rationalization: You are, in fact, recharging your mental batteries for the more demanding classes you will face later in the dayweek/semester/life. Besides, your professor EXPECTS people to skip that 9:00 am lecture. The professor probably didn't even show up himself. Why trouble yourself to get out of bed, trudge across campus, and find out? You can always claim later to be doing sleep studies on yourself for your Psych 101 class.

2 Surf the Internet
Rationalization: It's educational. The Internet is the greatest source of information in the world. You're also improving your computer skills, vital to working in the real world. Hell, we have friends who get paid to surf the net all day ... of course their bosses don't know that. Is it really your fault if you happen to get sidetracked by less informative pages on the web? The web is built to do that. Grrr, damn web. (Raise your arm and shake your fist at the computer now, and grrrr along with me.)

3 Clean your room
Rationalization: Cleanliness is next to godliness. Godliness is definitely more important than linear algebra or Augustan literature. Besides, you can listen to music when you clean. Real loud. Loud music has been proven in frat house studies to be conducive to the learning process. And hey, you do need to dig that linear algebra textbook out from under the pile of dirty clothes anyway.

4 Wander about the more beautiful parts of campus
Rationalization: You're not paying this much to go to school just to sit in boring classes are you? Of course not! You've got to get out and see the beautiful portions of campus that your tuition dollars are paying so much to maintain. Hey, by the way, there are attractive men and women out there too! You might want to go take a gander at them while you're wandering.

5 Take a trip into town
Rationalization: You're at a college far away from home (or even near to home, bear with us here and ignore the little details) ... This may be your only chance to visit a local community you may never see again. Have fun. Meet the locals. Mingle. Claim you are studying for that sociology class you're gonna take next semester.

Source: http://Chainletters.net/chainletters/skipping-class-rationalizations/

Still other persuasion scholars find a place for reason and unreason, logic and emotion, the thoughtful, self-aware human and the seemingly robotic human. Increasingly popular these days are two systems theories, designed to account for vast differences in the way most of us respond to persuasive messages, depending, for example, on our willingness and ability in any given case to weigh arguments carefully or rely on emotional or cognitive shortcuts (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, 1996; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Kahneman, 2011).

Their differences notwithstanding, all of these theories have a great deal to say to us about how to persuade and about how to make sense of persuasion by others.
PERSUASION BY DEGREES: ADAPTING TO DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

On any one occasion, a persuader might stop far short of producing wholesale changes in the thinking or behaviors of another and yet still consider the effort successful. Researchers tend to equate persuasion with attitude change, yet an exclusive focus on attitude change may obscure shifts in degree of attitude modification, and in underlying beliefs and values (Iyengar & Grady, 2005). You may not persuade your friend to become a vegan, but you might persuade her to give up red meat by appealing to her love of animals, and that might be counted as a success.

Gerald Miller’s (1980) threefold classification provides a useful way into understanding these phenomena but needs supplementation. Broadly speaking, he says, persuaders may succeed in (1) shaping a response, (2) reinforcing a response, and (3) changing a response.

1 Response shaping occurs when people acquire new beliefs on controversial matters or when they are socialized to learn new attitudes or acquire new values. Shaping may involve, for example, teaching a child to become a Lutheran, a Democrat, a capitalist, or a patriot. Political campaigns may shape voters’ attitudes toward previously unknown candidates.

Colleges and universities are key sites for response shaping, as they introduce students to new concepts and ways of seeing that had never before been entertained. It is therefore not an understatement to proclaim that a college education can be life-changing, as students leave very different people than they were when they first arrived on campus. The key characteristic of such shaping is that it leads to the formation of new beliefs, values, and attitudes.

2 Response reinforcing consists of strengthening currently held convictions and making them more resistant to change. A campaign on behalf of a charity might begin by transforming lip service commitments into strongly felt commitments (intensification), then transforming those commitments into donations of time and money (activation), then working to maintain strong behavioral support and discouraging backsliding (deterrence). All these are forms of response reinforcing (Figure 2.4). Says Miller (1980):

The response-reinforcing function underscores the fact that “being persuaded” is seldom, if ever, a one-message proposition; instead, people are constantly in the process of being persuaded. If an individual clings to an attitude (and the behaviors associated with it) more strongly after exposure to a communication, then persuasion has occurred as surely as if the individual has shifted from one set of responses to another. Moreover, those beliefs and behaviors most resistant to change are likely to be grounded in a long history of confirming messages, along with other positive reinforcers.

3 Response changing involves a wholesale shift of positions, more often in fits and starts than by way of a sudden, dramatic conversion. Tales of sudden conversions—whether from one political party to another, or one cigarette to another, or one religion to another—often neglect the processes leading up to them as well as lingering fondness for what we have given up. In reality, rather than undergoing dramatic conversions, humans are more likely to accept a range of possible options, all the while leaning toward one of them (Perloff, 2003). For example, many former opponents to gay marriage have completely changed their positions, but done so gradually, moving from opposition to first supporting civil unions, and then ultimately to accepting marriage equality. This process has occurred over time, and not without some discomfort, as these former opponents have come to meet and empathize with gay couples, seen more cultural acceptance of the LBGT community, and observed how changes in laws have not caused harm to heterosexual marriage.

If an audience is initially hostile, the first stage in response changing is defusion of their anger or suspicion. This may require a series of trust-building steps culminating only in their greater willingness to listen. Moving from left to right in Figure 2.5 is neutralization, bringing an audience from the point of moderate disagreement or dislike to a point of ambivalence or indecision. Yet a third stage on the way to response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagreement</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hostile Audience</td>
<td>-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3</td>
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</table>

Persuasion involves any movement made by the audience from the left to the right.

FIGURE 2.3 Persuasion takes place by degrees.

FIGURE 2.4 Response reinforcement.
changing is crystallization, getting those persons who were uncommitted because of mixed feelings to join with the persuader in support of a position or proposal.

As discussed in subsequent chapters, each of these stages calls for different strategies of persuasion. Greatly complicating the task of the persuader is the mixed audience, where some message recipients are in agreement, others on the fence, still others in disagreement. Even among relatively homogeneous persuadees—e.g., a group of smokers who have sought help in quitting—the beliefs and values that undergird their favorable attitudes may differ widely, and hence need to be addressed by the persuader in different ways.

**BVA THEORY: BELIEFS AND VALUES AS BUILDING BLOCKS OF ATTITUDES**

Let’s return to a fundamental premise of expectancy-value theories: that we humans act rationally in aligning our beliefs about the future with our values. Even if most humans fall far short of the ideal, isn’t the assumption of rationality going to prove useful for persuaders in considering what Aristotle called the “available means of persuasion” for adapting to different audiences? For that, we turn to the **BVA theory**, which argues that beliefs and values are the building blocks of attitudes.

BVA theory is a relatively simple expectancy-value formulation of our own design, drawn from Fishbein and Ajzen’s **theory of reasoned action** (1975) and theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Its core postulates are as follows:

1. Beliefs (B) include judgments that a given object possesses certain attributes.
2. Values (V) include judgments of the worth of these perceived attributes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).
3. Attitudes (A) combine our relevant beliefs (B) about an object with our value judgments (V) about the attributes that we associate with the object.
4. The stronger our beliefs about positively valued attributes, the more favorable should be our attitude toward that object.
5. The stronger our beliefs about negatively valued attributes, the less favorable our attitudes.

In shopping for a new car, for example, a buyer might be interested in things like efficiency, beauty, economy, speed, safety, and comfort. Car buyers typically have a variety of attributes in mind when considering different makes of cars, and the relative importance attached to each probably would not change much from one car to another.

Other car purchasers might assign different values to these attributes. According to BVA theory, prospective buyers’ attitudes toward any given automobile would depend on both their beliefs about whether the object possesses particular attributes and the value weightings they assign to those attributes. These may vary considerably as we can see in relation to a fictitious attitude object—the new XL7 Zippo sedan.

Buyer A may believe that the XL7 Zippo sedan is great looking, and fuel efficient and he has a highly favorable attitude toward the Zippo for just these reasons. Buyer B may agree that the Zippo possesses these attributes but views them neutrally or even negatively. Buyer C may value the attributes, but does not believe that the Zippo possesses them.

These variations in beliefs and values have great importance for persuaders. When shoppers enter a car lot, the first thing a salesperson seeks to do is “qualify” potential customers by figuring out what is important to them and, also, what might deter them from buying a particular car. This is because all good salespeople know that a sales pitch that might succeed with one customer could backfire with others. But a presentation specifically tailored to each prospective buyer could work wonders.

**Thinking It Through**

There’s a somewhat vulgar but very funny motto in the car sales business, and it is this: “There’s an ass for every seat.” What that means is there is no car that is so ugly or distasteful that no one would buy it.

Jean knows of a car dealer who accidentally marked the wrong colors on his order form. The car that was delivered to the showroom was bright green with a flaming red interior. The salespeople feared that no one would ever buy it.

But, one day, a portly old man with a long beard entered the showroom and fell in love with the car. He worked as a mail Santa Claus, and he strongly identified with his role. And so, with great delight, he purchased his “Christmas tree car!”
FIGURE 2.6  As this cartoon demonstrates, our beliefs, values, and attitudes are all important when it comes to purchasing a car.

Cartoonist Group, Image #419 by Nick Anderson.
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The degree to which beliefs are held and the degree to which values are positive or negative also enter into a buying decision. For example, in shopping around for a new sports car, a buyer might be drawn to the XL7 Zippo but have doubts about its fuel efficiency, because the fuel efficiency comes from making the car lighter and less safe. Or, the buyer might have second thoughts about whether to buy a car primarily because it is good-looking.

This car-buying scenario presents an example of the practicality of expectancy-value theories in strategizing about persuasion. They can be very effective for those persuasive situations where we can and should plan our approach in advance, and they can aid us, as persuaders, in thinking through the persuasive situation from the perspective of the other.

Our trimmed-down BVA theory is useful for another reason: It has considerable generality and can be applied to almost any situation. It matters not a whole lot, says Babrow (2001), what sorts of attitudes (A) we are trying to mold or modify. The point is that attitude will have cognitive (B) and evaluative (V) components.

Thinking It Through

You need to write this down to make it work. Think about a situation in your life where you need to persuade someone of something. It can be big or small. Apply BVA to the task. List the beliefs you think the persuadee holds concerning the subject. Then move on to their values. Finally, consider their attitudes. Put it all together and write out your persuasive presentation, just so that you can see it for yourself.

How does this BVA-inspired presentation differ from what you would have said if you'd not done this exercise? Did BVA increase your chances of persuading successfully, and if so, how?

Yet BVA theory may achieve its generality by being too simple. As every car salesperson understands, the beliefs and values that enter into a car-buying decision are often linked to customers' more deep-seated beliefs and values. For example, imagine that on his last visit to the showroom, Buyer A invites his dear old Aunt Matilda to join him and she asks:

Why do you want to invest so much money in a new car when so many people in Africa are starving? Can't you get by with a less expensive car? What does Consumer Reports say about this Zippo sedan? Isn't it more trustworthy than the word of that salesperson? I'll bet you've not even checked its consumer ratings out! And what is this obsession of yours with getting a sexy-looking car? Aren't you man enough to go without one? Where are your priorities?

As we can see, very quickly things can become complicated, and this is especially true when our elders decide to get involved! Thanks to Aunt Matilda, we can see that there are limits to the BVA theory. Some of the crucial questions that must be considered include the following:

1. Are people as aware as the theory suggests of their own beliefs, values, and attitudes, including small variations in degree of conviction?
2. Assuming that they are aware, are they as likely as the theory suggests to report candidly to others exactly what they're thinking and feeling?
3. Are people as calculating and organized in their decision making as BVA theory suggests?
4. Don't other attitudes come into play in a buying decision, including the buyer's trust in the salesperson? Are people as rational in their supposed calculations as this theory suggests?
FROM ATTITUDES TO ACTIONS AND THE ROLE OF SUBJECTIVE NORMS: THE THEORY OF REASONED ACTION

Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is a much more elaborate and highly quantified formulation of the problem posed earlier: How do beliefs about an object and evaluations of its attributes influence attitudes toward it? Also, what is the relationship between attitudes and actions, such as purchasing an XL7 Zippo sedan or using birth control pills?

One of the puzzles that Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) wrestled with in constructing their theory was evidence that a person's attitude toward an action or behavior (they used the terms interchangeably) did not always predict what action that person might eventually take. Buyer A might be favorably inclined toward purchasing the XL7 Zippo sedan and still not buy it. By contrast, a woman might have a negative attitude toward using birth control pills but still use them.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) concluded that the best predictor of behavior is intentions, which are a joint product of attitudes toward behaviors (AB) and subjective norms (SN). Just as AB has belief and value components, so SN is said to depend both on what we believe people whom we value highly would have us do and how desirable we are of complying with those norms.

Some of us are highly influenced by what other people we value would have us do; others are more self-reliant; still others of us vary in our willingness to accept the judgments of others. This might explain the case of the woman who had a negative attitude toward birth control pills but continued to use them; Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory predicts that subjective norms were at work in that people around the woman whom she values would have her use them and so she does. The point here is this: When attitudes toward a contemplated behavior are put together with subjective norms, the combination indicates more accurately how a person will act in a given situation.

**Thinking It Through**

How influenced are you by subjective norms? Can you think of a time when you followed them, and it worked out well for you? Conversely, when in your life have you followed those norms, only to see bad results?

THE ROLE OF EMOTION: WESTEN'S CRITIQUE OF EXPECTANCY-VALUE THEORIES

As with BVA theory, Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action assumes a rational actor (1975). But recent research on how we humans process information suggests otherwise. In the heat of the 2004 presidential contest, Drew Westen and his associates at Emory University confronted 30 Democrats and 30 Republicans with information about Democrat John Kerry and Republican George W. Bush at variance with the research subjects' beliefs (Westen, 2007). Rather than altering their beliefs, the subjects sought and found confirmatory evidence in support of their prior beliefs and ignored or reinterpreted counter-evidence.

Moreover, brain-imaging scans of the subjects as they participated in the questionnaire part of the study showed where in the brain these confirmation biases were coming from and how the biases were driven by emotions (Shermer, 2006). There was little activation of the parts of the brain normally engaged during reasoning, but the neural circuits hypothesized to be involved with emotion lit up.

Said Westen, "Essentially, it appears as if partisans twist the cognitive kaleidoscope until they get the conclusions they want, and then they get massively reinforced for it, with the elimination of negative emotional states and activation of positive ones" (Emory University, 2006).

For Westen, a Democrat, this news had important political implications. It evidenced, as he saw it, a disturbing pattern where Democratic candidates, consistently trying to counter emotional appeals by Republican counterparts with well-reasoned rebuttals, too often went down in defeat. This stood in contrast to the Republican approach, where they would tell a story that appeals to people's emotions (positive and negative) and win.

There have been exceptions—Bill Clinton understood it, Barack Obama seemed to. But the majority of progressives are still talking about policies and ideas hoping voters will see sense and vote accordingly. Barack Obama has fallen into this trap too. Progressives should be talking in stories that people can identify with and remember.

(Porter 2013)
Thinking It Through

Western’s research took place in the first decade of the twenty-first century. How have things changed, if at all, since then? What role has emotion played in more presidential campaigns? How, if at all, have recent candidates tried to tap into voters at a deep emotional level?

Western’s most powerful example of the Democrats’ rhetorical ineptitude was the first debate in 2000 between George Bush and Al Gore (2007).

Bush was seen as an emotional lightweight; Gore his intellectual better by far. Thus, when Bush lent his support to a Republican-sponsored Medicare bill in Congress that would place a greater share of the financial burden on senior citizens, Gore responded with an impressive array of statistics and a rather complex story about a man named George McKinney.

GORE: If I could respond to that. Under my plan I will put Medicare in an iron-clad lockbox and prevent the money from being used for anything other than Medicare. The governor has declined to endorse that idea even though the Republican as well as Democratic leaders in Congress have endorsed it. I would be interested to see if he would say this evening he’ll put Medicare in a lockbox. $100 billion comes out of Medicare just for the wealthiest 1% in the tax cut. Now here is the difference. Some people who say the word reform actually mean cuts. Under the governor’s plan, if you kept the same fees for service that you have now under Medicare, your premiums would go up by between 18% and 47%, and that is the study of the Congressional plan that he’s modeled his proposal on by the Medicare actuaries.

Let me give you one quick example. There is a man here tonight named George McKinney from Milwaukee. He’s 70 years old, has high blood pressure, his wife has heart trouble. They have an income of $25,000 a year. They can’t pay for their prescription drugs. They’re some of the ones that go to Canada regularly in order to get their prescription drugs. Under my plan, half of their costs would be paid right away. Under Governor Bush’s plan, they would get not one penny for four to five years and then they would be forced to go into an HMO or to an insurance company and ask for coverage, but there would be no limit on the premiums or the deductibles or any of the terms and conditions.

BUSH: I cannot let this go by, the old-style Washington politics, if we’re going to scare you in the voting booth. Under my plan the man gets immediate help with prescription drugs. It’s called Immediate Helping Hand. Instead of squabbling and finger pointing, he gets immediate help. Let me say something.

MODERATOR: Your—

GORE: They get $25,000 a year income; that makes them ineligible.

FIGURE 2.8 Western found that Al Gore’s cool and unemotional persuasive style contrasted poorly with George Bush’s persona of a nice guy with a sense of humor.

http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/2000/10/05/01-debate.html

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BUSH: Look, this is a man who has great numbers. He talks about numbers. I’m beginning to think not only did he invent the Internet, but he invented the calculator. It’s fuzzy math. It’s a scaring—he’s trying to scare people in the voting booth.

(Westen, 2007)

As Western saw it, Bush’s line about Gore claiming to invent the calculator was the memorable moment in the debate and Gore’s debate preparation set him up for it:

Bush delivered the one-liner with an affable style that stood in sharp juxtaposition to Gore’s non-verbal dismissiveness of Bush’s arguments (and, by extension, of his intellect). The line was unfair but Gore handed it to him, by attending to the facts and figures rather than to the stories Bush had been telling the public about Gore.

(Westen, 2007)

So, according to Western (2007), George W. Bush emerged from the exchange as a nice guy with a sense of humor and Gore as an unfeeling policy wonk. With that
single line about inventing the calculator, Gore's character was called into question and with it the value of his data, all of it reducible to "fuzzy math."

The larger problem of Democratic campaign rhetoric of 2000 candidate Al Gore and 2004 candidate John Kerry (who were both defeated by Republican George W. Bush) was that it had been based on an expected utility model of rational choice, said Westen (2007). The Democrats spent their time adding up the expected costs and benefits (or pros and cons) of alternative options and weighing in their probabilities, but that simply was not how voters made their decisions. While these Democrats placed their stock in "the marketplace of ideas," the Republicans had "a near monopoly in the marketplace of emotions." In politics, Westen concluded, "when reason and emotion collide, emotion invariably wins" (2007).

From these pithy quotes, we can conclude that Drew Westen is an expert phrase maker, but, if he is right, what inferences should we draw about persuasion generally from his research findings and subsequent theorizing? Said Michael Shermer, "The implications of the findings reach far beyond politics. A jury assessing evidence against a defendant, a CEO evaluating information about a company or a scientist weighing data in favor of a theory will undergo the same cognitive process" (2006).

**Thinking It Through**

Do you see Shermer's point? How do you feel about the idea that emotions trump reason and drive decisions in the courtroom, the lab, or the Fortune 500 company?

Yet Shermer (2006) also reminds us to use our capacity for reasoned skepticism. Here are some critical questions about Westen's argument that we might ask:

1. Has Westen overstated his case? Doesn't Westen himself appeal to reason in criticizing Democrats' reliance on reason? Elsewhere in his book, Westen concedes the value of a combination of reason and emotion, but this does not come through in his either—or rhetoric about reason versus emotion.

2. Might humans calculate their self-interests in a manner consistent with (rational) expectancy-value theories without being fully aware of their thought processes?

3. Could it be that things such as party loyalty, which Westen counts as "emotional" identifications, also serve as relatively rational cognitive shortfalls in our fast-paced, message-dense society?

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**PRIMING EFFECTS**

Westen's work on the non-conscious activation of emotions by the use of seemingly unobtrusive cues comports with a larger body of theory and research on priming. Bargh (2006) defines priming as the "non-conscious activation of knowledge structures," and later (Bargh & Huang, 2009) explains that "priming" refers to the passive, subtle, and unobtrusive activation of relevant mental representations by external, environmental stimuli, such that people are not and do not become aware of the influence exerted by those stimuli. This "non-conscious activation" can be an everyday occurrence, and also be a powerful component in persuasion.

To understand "priming," we need only turn to a research example, where psychologists at Yale University conducted an experiment to study its effects. Through a simple priming exercise, the researchers were able to alter college students' judgments about a stranger by handing them a cup of coffee. The stranger was actually a confederate of the researchers posing as a lab assistant who asked for a hand with a cup of either hot or cold coffee after arranging to be bumped into while also holding textbooks, a clipboard, and a large sheaf of papers. Those students who held a cup of iced coffee rated a hypothetical person they later read about as being much colder, less social and more selfish than did their fellow students, who had momentarily held a cup of hot coffee. Apparently they were unaware of the manipulation (Carey, 2007).

Priming is present in all aspects of life, but it should be especially familiar to students of journalism and mass communication, where priming effects have been demonstrated by researchers making seemingly slight alterations of newspaper headlines and news reports (Dillard & Pfau, 2002). In addition to mass communication scholars, social psychologists have made advances in the study of priming, suggesting from experimental research using simultaneous brain scanning that widespread social influence of little noticed objects, and not just words, along with neurological processing, produces priming effects. Says Bargh, "Nearly all forms of social representation can be primed, it seems—activated incidentally or unobtrusively in one context, to influence what comes next without the person's awareness of this influence" (2006).

For example, research has evidenced the powerful effects of singular versus plural pronouns. Said Bargh:

One of the more extreme examples of the "power of concepts" is the well-known study by Gardner, et al. (1999) in which priming Chinese participants with many first-person singular ("I, me") pronouns caused them subsequently to endorse more Western than Asian values (e.g., individualism over collectivism), while priming North American participants with first-person plural ("we, us") pronouns caused them to endorse more Asian than Western values. Such a simple priming manipulation is sufficient to "change" (temporarily, of course) the cultural values and orientation.
of Chinese and Americans. Similarly, in a study by Chen, Lee-Chai, and Bargh (2001), the same kind of pronoun priming manipulation altered how participants used their assigned power over another participant (i.e., selfishly versus altruistically). These findings seem amazing and mysterious, but I suggest this is to some extent because we find it hard to understand how a single concept such as "I" or "we" can have such dramatic influence over our behavior in these domains, especially when there is only weak at best semantic relation between prime and dependent measure.

(Bargh, 2006)

In other studies, it was found that business students were more likely to act competitively toward one another in the presence of a briefcase on a table as opposed to objects not normally associated with a business environment (Kay, et al., 2004). And a faint whiff of citrus was all it took in another study to get research subjects to tidy up more thoroughly than subjects not exposed to the smell of the cleaning liquid (Carey, 2007). Studies of this sort are similar in some ways to research on hypnotism and subliminal suggestion, except that the objects, the odors, and so on are open to awareness; what's unconscious (or "non-conscious") are the brain processes activating congruent social perceptions and behavior as a result of exposure to these stimuli. Says Carey:

The new studies reveal a subconscious brain that is far more active, purposeful and independent than previously known. Goals, whether to eat, mate or devour an iced latte, are like neural software programs that can only be run one at a time, and the unconscious is perfectly capable of running the program it chooses.

(Carey, 2007)

The recent research on priming effects underscores Westen's findings from neurological research on seemingly non-rational cognitive processing. But is it possible that we humans have evolved in such a way as to rely on careful reasoning some of the time and non-rational cognitive shorthands, including gut feelings, at other times? We turn to that question next.

**TWO SYSTEMS THEORIES**

Two systems theories posit that, when it comes to persuasion, there are two components operating. One part of our decision making comes from automatic, unreflective decision making; the other from our more rational and reflective self. Let's consider two of these theories in turn.

(1) **Elaboration Likelihood Model: Two Routes to Persuasion**

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) is an attempt to integrate a vast body of persuasion theory and research about an important insight: Persuasion is a concept not just of external cues but also of the thoughts that the persuader generates in response to external communications (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, 1996).

Fundamental to the ELM approach is the distinction between central and peripheral routes to persuasion.

The central route involves greater elaboration of thoughts than the peripheral route. People who process information centrally ask themselves probing questions, generate additional arguments, and possibly seek new information. Those who become persuaded after mental labor of this sort tend to be resistant to counterarguments and to remain persuaded months afterward. Attitudes formed or changed via the central route are also more easily called to mind and are more predictive of behavior.

But not everyone has the motivation or ability to engage in central processing. Indeed, none of us engage in central processing all the time. We couldn't possibly, even if we wanted to, given the demands on our psyches of the hundreds of messages to which we are exposed every day. Peripheral processing involves the use of cognitive shorthands, sometimes called heuristics (Chaiken, 1987). If central processing is mindful, peripheral processing is relatively mindless—but not entirely so. Sales customers traveling the peripheral route may be taken in by an attractive salesperson, the lure of a free gift, the appeal of a celebrity figure, or the number, rather than quality, of reasons presented to them. Such persuasive effects tend to be short-lived, however.

Central and peripheral processing are not mutually exclusive; much of the time, we use them in combination. Degree of involvement is a major determinant of which route we emphasize. When we truly care about a matter—for example, when we genuinely need information and know we need it—the lure of a free gift or an attractive salesperson isn't as likely to work on us. This has been demonstrated in numerous experiments.

These experiments have revealed that the degree to which a person is involved in an issue determines how much he or she thinks about the issue. For example, if you are told that a proposal to divide your university into undergraduate and graduate campuses has a good chance of being put into effect while you are enrolled there, you are more likely to generate pro- or anti-division arguments than if you believe that university division is a long way off (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996).

Whatever your prior predispositions, they are likely to intensify if you are led to anticipate that a message is important or will have significant consequences for you. For example, if you learn that a speaker favors adding a comprehensive exam in all majors as a condition for graduation at your university, and if, like most students, you aren't particularly excited about taking such tests, then chances are that you will rehearse counter-arguments to yourself even before you hear the speaker, and thus
become further entrenched in your opposition. If you're the unusual student who believes that tests of this sort are a good idea, you're likely to think of supporting arguments and thus strengthen your support in advance of hearing the speaker. If you expect that the speaker will be advocating these pre-graduation tests for use at some other university, however, it is a good bet that your opinions will moderate, rather than intensify, in advance of the speaker's presentation (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996).

High issue involvement also leads to greater attention to quality of arguments. In the study from which the foregoing example was taken, Petty and Cacioppo (1996) exposed half the students to eight powerful arguments and half to eight relatively weak ones. An example of a strong argument was that "graduate and professional schools show a preference for undergraduates who have passed a comprehensive exam." A weak argument was that "by not administering the exam, a tradition dating back to the ancient Greeks was being violated." As predicted, involved participants paid more attention to the quality of arguments, generating favorable thoughts and persuasion for the strong arguments and counter-persuasion based on internal counter-arguing for the weak arguments.

**Thinking It Through**

How do we decide that an argument is "weak" or "strong"? Who gets to say? What is your definition of "weak" and "strong" argumentation?

If, as a persuader, you believe you have strong arguments, you may wish to stimulate involvement by your audience. One way to do so, of course, is to make your message personally relevant to them, but you can do so as well by such simple expedients as using second-person pronouns (e.g., "you") as opposed to such third-person pronouns as "one" or "he" and "she" (Burnkrant & Umanava, 1989).

**Thinking It Through**

Check out your textbooks, including this one. Do they use second-person or third-person pronoun? Are WE talking to YOU?

Some people enjoy thinking about a wide range of topics, whereas others have what Cacioppo and Petty (1982) call a low need for cognition. For example, some people report thinking "only as hard as I have to" and say that they "like tasks that require little thought once I’ve learned them" (Petty et al., 1994). These people apparently are far less affected by the quality of an argument than are people with a high need for cognition (Cacioppo et al., 1983).

People cannot always be induced to care about what should be important to them, nor is there any guarantee that the central route to persuasion will lead to an attitude change. Other things being equal, central processors are likely to generate thoughts consistent with their initial predispositions (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). Still, if one side of an issue has demonstrably superior arguments going for it, those arguments are most likely to influence people via the central route—hence the vital importance in our society of facilitating central processing on highly consequential matters.

**2) Nudge Theory**

University of Chicago economist Richard Thaler and legal scholar Cass Sunstein are social planners with a keen sense of our foibles as human beings and a strong desire to "nudge" us into making wiser decisions. Like Westen, they see us as highly prone to make a decision by gut feeling.

![Image of a person eating a beer](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

"I have this gut feeling that I should have another beer."

FIGURE 2.9  As we all know, we often depend on gut feeling in making decisions, and often with uneven results.

Reprinted with permission of CorbisStock.com.
Like Bargh, Kay, and other "priming" researchers, Thaler and Sunstein recognize the importance of stimuli in our environments that can exert seemingly non-conscious influences. Moreover, even when we attempt to calculate our self-interest, we wind up basing our choices on biases of one sort or another—not just confirmation biases, but anchoring biases, status quo biases, optimism biases, and other rules of thumb such as representativeness biases that can get us and those around us into trouble. Here are some examples:

1 Ananchoring biases: Anchors are starting points for our thought processes. Asked to estimate the population of a medium-sized city like Milwaukee, Wisconsin, we tend to overestimate its size if we come from a large city like Chicago and to underestimate its size if we're from a relatively small city like Green Bay. We start with what we know, or at least think we know, and we do the same in calculating how large a donation to give to a charity or how much to spend on a birthday gift for a good friend. As you may have gathered from their book's title, authors Thaler and Sunstein (2008) believe that these decisions can be "nudged." For example, when charity solicitors ask for more, they tend to get larger donations. More about nudges shortly.

2 Status quo biases: College students tend to sit in the same seats all through a semester, even without a seating chart. It's what Thaler and Sunstein (2008) call the default option, the one requiring the least effort and the least attention. Of far greater consequence, their professors tend to stay with their initial asset allocations when they invest in a retirement savings plan, however ill-suited these allocations are to changing economic times.

3 Optimism biases: While students consistently overestimate the grades they'll receive, their professors are similarly overconfident about the student evaluations they'll receive.

Although the divorce rate in the United States has hovered around 50% for many years, rare are the bride and groom who predict that their marriage will end in divorce. Overconfidence reigns in drunken driving, in unprotected sex, in eating habits that end in obesity, and in estimates of immunity from harm. Paradoxically, we humans abhor losses of every kind but often do nothing to prevent them and a lot to bring them about.

4 Representativeness biases: These are the rules of thumb which we form and act upon our stereotypes. Geeks can't play college football. College football stars can't be good students. Say Thaler and Sunstein, "The idea is that when asked how likely it is that A belongs to category B, people ... answer by asking themselves how similar A is to their image of B" (2008).
This is not to say that we always act irrationally. In fact, none of the foregoing biases are wrong all of the time. But they are wrong with sufficient frequency that we would be ill-advised to ignore them.

As with the ELM model, for Thaler and Sunstein competence and motivation are important components of the reflective system (i.e., of central processing), but that reflective system is usually slower and more painstaking, and therefore tends to be in conflict with the more impulsive sides of our nature. As the airplane shakes on encountered turbulence, System I says, "We're about to die" while System II responds, "Planes are very safe." System I says, "Barking dogs are dangerous." System II says, "Barking dogs don't usually bite."

System I thinking works fine when we have mastered a skill like tennis or golf; then "too much thinking" often gets in our way. It stands in our way when we nibble on M&Ms unthinkingly while trying to lose weight and it gets us into big trouble when we use it to make big decisions, like which car to buy or which college to apply to. Subsequent chapters will offer further evidence on just how mindless big decisions can be.

It is good news, though, that we are "nudge-able." Oftentimes, successful nudges require little more than an application of the old James-Wilson principle: "What holds attention determines action" (Stephen & Pace, 2002; Winans, 1915). The M&Ms we've been nibbling on can be removed from the table. The celery hiding in the back of the vegetable bin can be placed on the table instead. Schools can increase consumption of healthy foods in their cafeterias simply by rearranging the display of what's available: fruit at eye level, for example, chips down below. A stunning example of how nudges can work was provided at Amsterdam International where images of large black houseflies were etched onto the base of each public urinal so as to catch and hold the users' attention, remind them of their duty to direct the flow as best they can, and in this way reduce the spillage. By one estimate, accuracy improved by 80% (Sunstein, 2008).

Nudge theory comes with an ethic of persuasion to be discussed further in later chapters. Suffice it to report here that the ethic nods in two seemingly opposite directions at once: (1) toward paternalism, with its traditional assumption that papa knows best and (2) toward libertarianism, with its assumption that people should be left as free from control or coercion by others as possible. Critics have assailed it from both directions: There can be too much nudging, and there can also be not enough. But what blogger Kip Esquire calls nudge theory's "soft paternalism" also raises the question of who is doing the nudging. Says "Kip's law," "Every advocate of central planning always—always—envisions himself as the central planner" (Esquire, 2008).
Persuasion and Incentives

Persuasion theorists agree that incentives are essential in getting people to act, but they often disagree about why people are motivated to act. Consider once again the purchase of Sagamento cheese at the supermarket deli. One possible explanation for the successfully concluded exchange is that the customer was "trained" to buy the cheese in a manner not unlike a pigeon in a psychological learning laboratory. The process of successively shaping appropriate customer responses by use of positive reinforcements is known as operant conditioning (Kinchloe & Horn, 2008; Skinner, 1953). But an alternative explanation is that the sales clerk and the customer had simply reasoned together until a rational decision to purchase the Sagamento had formed in the customer's mind.

Operant conditioning works by rewarding desired behavior and withholding rewards—perhaps even using punishments—until the desired behavior is forthcoming. But in a non-interactive situation, the persuader can only help the persuadee imagine a rosier future by adoption of the recommended action and perhaps a bleaker future unless the proposal is adopted. For example, when watching late-night television, it is not uncommon to see ads for breakfast at fast-food restaurants. We're not likely to get off the sofa and drive out at that moment, and, even if we did, the breakfast would not be available. But it will be in the morning, and the restaurant wants us to imagine starting our day without having to prepare breakfast; instead, we can enjoy their food.

Television and film are also used to dramatize potential rewards and punishments. Using a technique known as vicarious modeling, O'Connor (1972) was able to reverse the lifelong patterns of social inactivity of severely withdrawn children simply by having them view a 23-minute movie. Each scene of the movie showed a child such as themselves first watching a social activity, then joining in to everyone's enjoyment (see also Bandura, 1977; Saracho & Spodek, 2007).

As a general rule, the greater the incentive, the greater the likelihood of successful persuasion. But an exception to this rule is the principle of insufficient justification (Brehm, et al., 2002; Wicklund & Brehm, 1976). Here is how it works:

1. Encourage half the participants in your experiment to perform an objectionable action—perhaps role-playing a position repugnant to them or writing a counter-attitudinal essay. Be sure to provide insufficient justification for performance of the act. That is, don't pay them much, have the request come from an unattractive source, or require that a good deal of effort be spent on the task.

2. Compare the attitudes of the participants given insufficient justifications for performance of the act with those given sufficient justification—for example, those paid 10 times as much, those urged to participate by an attractive source, or those required to expend minimal effort.

The predicted outcome is counter to what we might expect, but typically is confirmed by research (Preiss & Allen, 1998). Surprisingly, counter-attitudinal action under conditions of insufficient justification for the action tends to lead people to modify their attitudes. What this means is that people work to bring their attitudes into line with their actions.

This is a reversal of the ordinary process of persuasion, where messages first alter our attitudes, and then go on to subsequently change our behavior (Brock & Green, 2005; Cooper & Scher, 1994). So what is going on here? Are people more favorably inclined toward performance of the objectionable action? Might they even come to argue on behalf of positions they initially found repugnant?

The results of these studies are fairly consistent. One possible explanation for why they turn out as they do is that people tend to infer their attitudes from their actions when they reason to believe that their actions are not the result of external causes. Another is that acting one way and feeling another under conditions of insufficient justification is cognitively dissonant and uncomfortable; we change our attitudes to get relief from the psychological pain of that dissonance. Want to know why volunteers for the unpopular war in Vietnam reported greater satisfaction with it (especially if they had been wounded in the war) than those who had been drafted? Try explaining it by way of the principle of insufficient justification.

FIGURE 2.11 Late night television breakfast ads are not intended to get us immediately out of the door. Instead, they help us to imagine a brighter morning where we can have a hearty breakfast without the effort of cooking it.

Courtesy of Getty Images.
Persuasion by Association

In some of the earliest research on animal learning, a previously neutral stimulus was paired with a stimulus known to evoke favorable or unfavorable reactions. Then the original stimulus was removed. In this way, then, the hungry dogs in Pavlov's animal laboratory learned to salivate at the sound of a bell previously linked with food. The phenomenon, known as classical conditioning, has widespread applications (Staats & Staats, 1963). Classical conditioning theorists have developed principles governing the acquisition of responses to new stimuli, their transfer to new situations, their extinction, and so on. One immediate application to persuasion is the menu so enticing that we can "almost taste the food." Much as we may scoff at dogs that salivate to the sounds of bells, how different are we who salivate to words?

Indeed, humans form all types of associations to objects, some conscious, others unconscious. Inferences about people are formed in this way. For example, in Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, Anna's husband is unimpressed with the attorney who has been recommended to him until the lawyer, without looking up from his desk, suddenly snatches a husslel in mid-air and crushes it in his hand. Inferences of this type are often spontaneous and automatic, according to Uleman and Bargh (1989), and they are by no means confined to judgments about other people. Try comparing oranges and grapefruit on the basis of the traits of sunny versus cloudy, intimate versus distant, faster versus slower, older versus younger, more intellectual versus less intellectual.

Don't think about the task very much; just let your mind go. Students confronted with this task frequently complain that the task is meaningless. Why should "sunny" attach to orange any more than to grapefruit? Yet overwhelming numbers of respondents report viewing the orange as sunnier, more intimate, and faster; the grapefruit as older and more intellectual (Dichter & Berger, 2002). Findings of this sort are not lost on persuaders, as the discussion in Chapter 12 on analyzing product advertising indicates.

PERSUASION AS PSYCHOLOGICAL UNBALANCING AND REBALANCING

Psychological inconsistency disturbs people, enough so that they will often go to great lengths to reduce or remove it. Numerous consistency theories have been put forward by psychologists, some referred to by that name, others labeled as balance theories, dissonance theories, or congruity theories (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). Psychological balance theories are therefore important to the study of persuasion because imbalances create motivation for attitude change, and persuaders may be quick to exploit them, even foster them. If we can create in you a feeling of conflict, you will likely work to reduce or eliminate it. And then, if we can suggest something that will supposedly resolve the imbalance, you'll be disposed to listen and consider...
it. You’ll be inclined to buy our product or adopt our plan, because you’ll want to do what it takes to get things back to a more even state.

One way to think about psychological inconsistency is to consider how it stems from perceived discrepancies between our attitudes toward other people, our attitudes toward objects, and the attitudes of others toward the same objects. For most of us, balanced states are preferable to imbalanced states. For example, if Wallace likes (+) pizza and Wallace likes (+) Kate, Wallace would find it psychologically consistent for Kate to like (+) pizza. But a sense of imbalance (psychological inconsistency) would be created for Wallace if Kate said she hates (−) pizza or if Kate reported liking (+) pizza but Wallace came to dislike it (−). Even discrepancies in degree of liking can be uncomfortable, according to some consistency theorists. For example, if Kate’s favorite food was pizza and Wallace liked it only a little, this too could be discomfiting for Wallace, perhaps leading him to think less of Kate, more of pizza, or both.

A NEUROSCIENCE APPROACH TO PERSUASION

What if we could figure out what happens in the brain when someone encounters a persuasive message? A new area of research is seeking to do exactly that via the application of neuroscience principles. In particular, neuroscience researchers are using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) of the brain, applying it while the persuasive messages are actually being received and measuring brain activity in that moment to see the impact of the message.

Functional MRI works by detecting the changes in the brain—when a brain area is more active it consumes more oxygen, and to meet this increased demand, blood flow increases to the active area (Devlin, 2007). fMRI can therefore be used “to produce activation maps showing which parts of the brain are involved in a particular mental process” (Devlin, 2007). Using this new approach, researchers are “using imaging to examine what happens in the brain when someone hears or reads a message designed to spur them to action, whether that’s to use more sunscreen, quit smoking” (Azar, 2010).

This scientific approach to studying the impact of persuasion is said to supplement and enhance traditional behavioral methods:

Because behavioral methods can only assess one measure at a time, it has not been possible to assess the simultaneous cognitive, affective, and social processes that may occur in concert during persuasion attempts or determine the relative priority with which each contributes to effective persuasion presented.

(Falk, 2010b)

To put it simply, there are limitations that come from research that depends on self-reports and surveys: memories fail, people may misunderstand and misinterpret the questions posed, etc. With a neuroscience approach, we can measure what the brain is actually doing at the moment the persuasive message is presented (Falk, 2010b). Furthermore, fMRI scans can be used in concert with traditional behavioral methods to offer even more validity to the findings.

For example, a recent study examined the impact of anti-smoking ads on smokers, and found through imaging that the rational arguments in the ads mattered more than the format of the ads, and that merely increasing ads’ sensory impact probably would not improve outcomes (Wang, 2013). This has direct impact on practical planning for future ads. As the researchers note, “since sensory effects are usually more costly to produce than well thought-through arguments, our observation may be of immediate utility to producers contemplating how to allocate their budgets (Wang, 2013).

In another study, California college students were recruited to participate in an experiment where they were shown persuasive messages about the importance of using sunscreen, and on follow-up the researchers were able to establish that the students did actually use more sunscreen in the week following the experiment by surveying them. On the surface, it seemed clear that the persuasion worked. What the research demonstrated, though, was that particular areas of the brain were engaged as the persuasive slides were viewed, and that the brain’s real-time response to persuasive communications complemented the self-report measures and provided additional predictive capacity (Falk, 2010a).

We only need to think for a moment to consider the potential impact of the neuroscience approach, and we can see it goes far beyond messages about smoking or sunscreen. Corporations and political campaigns, for instance, will likely become very interested in employing fMRIs as they seek to create persuasive appeals that they believe our brains cannot resist. As research advances in this area, we are truly entering a brave new world of persuasion!

SUMMARY

From its origins as a field of study, psychology has been divided between theories emphasizing similarities between humans and other animal species and theories emphasizing humans’ seemingly distinctive capacity for reason. It should not be surprising, therefore, that psychological theories of persuasion should divide in similar ways. One possible explanation for the successfully concluded exchange at the supermarket deli is that the customer was conditioned to buy a package of Sagemento not unlike a pigeon in a psychological laboratory being trained to hop on one foot, then the other. But an alternative explanation is that the conversants had simply reasoned together until a rational decision to purchase the Sagemento had formed in the customer’s mind. Less easy to explain in rational terms is our tendency to savor at meals offering mouth-watering desserts.
The theorists featured in this chapter were by no means unmindful of such features of human animality as the role of emotion in persuasion, of seemingly unconscious associations, as well as of incentives for action. Westen (2007) underscores the role of non-rational factors but by his own style of argument making implicitly acknowledges the role of rationality. Priming research dramatically attests to the influence of non-rational, indeed non-conscious influences on attitudes.

Two system theories, such as Thaler and Sunstein's nudge theory (2008) and Petty and Cacioppo's ELM model (1996) credit reason with making a great deal of difference to persuasees under some conditions, but they also recognize that there are times when humans respond automatically, habitually, even unconsciously. BVA theory pictures humans as distinctive by virtue of their capacity to derive attitudes from their beliefs and values but does not exclude the roles of emotions and unreason in the formation of beliefs and values. Likewise, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) see human action as a weighted combination of attitudes toward the behavior in question and subjective norms, the weight varying depending on how much importance is assigned in the given case to what valued others think. The product of this type of seemingly rational calculation, however, might be the decision to join a religious cult or a right-wing militia. Poorly supported group stereotypes can also influence the formation of beliefs and values, say the proponents of schema theory.

The persuasees in McGuire's (1968) theory vary between those who remain unpersuaded because they are critical of what they understand, those unlikely to be persuaded because of difficulties comprehending and recalling the message, and a middle-range group that is most persuasible because it is neither too critical to resist accepting the persuader's recommendations nor incapable of understanding them.

Again and again, reason is mixed with unreason and downright irrationality most clearly, perhaps, in theories of psychological consistency. Although the attempt to reconcile conflicting cognitions or attitudes seems rational, it can lead two friends to sever a relationship over something as trivial as the taste of pizza.

So what should the persuader make of all this? Explicit in some theories, implicit in others, are guidelines for selling an XL7 Zippo sedan, coaxing a deli customer into trying a package of Sagamanto, and convincing Americans that William Clinton should have been impeached and removed from office or continued as president and been celebrated for his accomplishments.

For example, if your goal is conversion, encourage people to role-play positions counter to their existing attitudes but offer minimal incentives to try out these roles. If your goal is a fully convinced ally who will remain supportive of your position in the face of counter-arguments, appeal to the message recipient by way of the central route to persuasion. But if it's a quick sell that you're after, consider providing cognitive shorthands (these will be discussed in far more detail in Chapter 7).

These same guidelines, offered to help you achieve success when you seek to persuade someone, should also serve as warning signals to you when someone is trying to persuade you. Beware, for example, that the innocent "eyes" you give to the deli salesperson's question may land you with far more Sagamonto than you really wanted. As for that sexy-looking XL7 Zippo sedan, why not? We only live once.

**QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

1. In light of your reading of this chapter, how different are humans from laboratory rats, dogs, pigeons, and so forth?
2. Share an instance from your life when you were persuaded primarily through rational choice. And then, share one where two systems theories best explained how you were persuaded to a decision.
3. How does the principle of insufficient justification represent a reversal of the ordinary process of persuasion? How might it be used to explain a soldier's reported satisfaction with service in an unpopular war? Can you think of other instances where this reversal might present itself?
4. Consider the definition of "intentions" in this chapter. They are the joint product of attitudes toward behaviors and subjective norms. Share a time in your life when you've experienced a conflict between your attitudes and subjective norms. How did you resolve it?
5. Michael Shermer offers the following comment on the research of Drew Westen: "The implications of the findings reach far beyond politics. A jury assessing evidence against a defendant, a CEO evaluating information about a company or a scientist weighing data in favor of a theory will undergo the same cognitive process." Discuss why should this be a cause for concern.
6. The best way to learn new terms is to try your hand at illustrating them with examples of your own. Try doing that with respect to the following:
   a. The relationship between beliefs, values, and attitudes.
   b. The relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, and public actions.
   c. The differences between central and peripheral processing.
   d. How the learning of an attitude (e.g., liking yogurt) might be influenced by new information, by associations, and by expected benefits.
   e. How the act of publicly expressing a commitment to a position may reinforce privately held attitudes.
   f. The differences between response reinforcement, response shaping, and response changing.
   g. How schemas influence information processing.
   h. The principle of insufficient justification.
   i. Balancing and unbalancing.
7 What is a theory? What is your theory about the relationship between logic and emotion in persuasion? How might research be used to test your theory?

EXERCISES

1. After reading this chapter, write your own statement about the role of reason and emotion in persuasion.
2. Select a controversial political or moral issue and identify the underlying beliefs, values, and attitudes on both sides of the question.
3. Select a contemporary blog that offers editorial opinion on an issue of current interest. In a group, analyze the blog through the lens of the psychological bases for persuasion that are presented in this chapter.
4. Find a journal article that incorporates one of the models or theories presented in this chapter and present its findings to the class.
5. Find a good example of social-scientific hypothesis testing or of rhetorical criticism. Recast the scientific essay in the genre of criticism or vice versa. Then, discuss what is gained or lost in each instance.

KEY TERMS

- Anchoring biases
- BVA theory
- Classical conditioning
- Confirmation biases
- Elaboration likelihood model (ELM)
- Expectancy-value theories
- Heuristics
- Insufficient justification
- Nudge theory
- Operant conditioning
- Optimism biases
- Priming
- Psychological balance theories
- Representativeness biases
- Response changing
- Response reinforcing
- Response shaping
- Status quo biases

WEB LINKS

- Subjective norms
- Theory of reasoned action
- Two systems theories
- Vicarious modeling

REFERENCES


