

COMMUNICATION STUDIES 104: PERSUASIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING



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Communication Studies 104: Persuasive Public Speaking

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Detailed Licensing

Licensing

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1.1: Why Persuade?

When your instructor announced on the syllabus or in class that you would be required to give a persuasive speech for this class, what was your reaction? “Oh, good, I’ve got a great idea,” or, “Oh, no!”? For many people, there is something a little uncomfortable about the word “persuasion.” It often gets paired with ideas of seduction, manipulation, force, lack of choice, or inducement as well as more positive concepts such as encouragement, influence, urging, or logical arguments. You might get suspicious if you think someone is trying to persuade you. You might not appreciate someone telling you to change your viewpoints. On the other hand, you might not think you have any beliefs, attitudes, values, or positions that are worth advocating for in front of an audience.

However, if you think of persuasion simply as a formal speech with a purpose of getting people to do something they do not want to do, then you will miss the value of learning persuasion and its accompanying skills of appeal, argument, and logic. Persuasion is something you do every day, in various forms. Convincing a friend to go see the latest movie instead of staying in to watch TV; giving your instructor a reason to give you an extension on an assignment (do not try that for this speech, though!); writing a cover letter and resume and going through an interview for a job—all of these and so many more are examples of persuasion. In fact, it is hard to think of life without the everyday give-and-take of persuasion.

You may also be thinking, “I’ve given an informative speech. What’s the difference?” While this chapter will refer to all of the content of the preceding chapters as it walks you through the steps of composing your persuasive speech, there is a difference. Although your persuasive speech will involve information—probably even as much as in your informative speech—the key difference is the word “change.” Think of it like this:

INFORMATION + CHANGE = PERSUASION

You will be using the information for the purpose of changing something. First, we try to change the audience’s beliefs, attitudes, and actions, and second, possibly the context they act upon. In the next section we will investigate the persuasive act and then move on to the barriers to persuasion.

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1.2: What is Persuasion?

What does persuasion mean to you? Can you think of any times that you have tried to persuade someone to do something? Some examples may include college students trying to persuade their instructors to provide them with an extension on an assignment, to accept an already late project, or to change a poor grade. College students persuade their friends to take specific classes or recommend specific instructors. They may even persuade one another to live in a specific part of town, attend a particular party, or eat at a certain restaurant.

Persuasion is a facet of communication that is seen across many interpersonal and familial relationships. Parents may try to persuade their children to clean up their room, pick a certain major, or abide by a curfew. Romantic partners persuade one another to decorate their home in a particular way, apply to a new job, or move to a new city. Persuasion is also pervasive in professional environments. Potential employees need to persuade future employers of their skills and abilities to secure a job offer. Conversely, employers need to persuade potential employees of the benefits of working at their organization to ensure they accept the job. Many professions, including advertising, sales, and politics are dependent on the ability to leverage persuasion to achieve desired outcomes.

We also need to consider the channels of persuasion that are influencing our choices. The advent of print media (e.g., newspapers, magazines), electronic media (e.g., radio, television, the Internet), and, more recently, social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) provide additional avenues through which persuasion occurs. These mediated sources of persuasion include specific appeals to buy products or services (e.g., advertising), as well as the more nuanced persuasion to adopt and promote a particular lifestyle, behavior, or popular opinion abounding on different platforms.

This all suggests that persuasion is utilized in almost all areas of our lives. However, most of us have never specifically thought about how much time we spend persuading others and being persuaded ourselves. It is important to realize, however, that this does not mean you are already persuasion experts. You have likely learned quite a bit about what works and what does not by trial and error; however, there is a long, rich history of the academic study of persuasion. Scholars across philosophy, psychology, communication, advertising, political science, health, and others have systematically studied persuasion for centuries. Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher who lived nearly 2,400 years ago, wrote extensively about how to persuade others. Around 300 years later, Cicero, a Roman statesman and philosopher, wrote several books on his beliefs about persuasion and rhetoric. Another 100 years after that, Quintilian, a Roman educator and rhetorician, opened a school on rhetoric and oral persuasion. More recently, social scientists have conducted thousands of experiments over decades to study persuasion and have developed rich theories to describe, explain, predict, and control persuasion phenomenon.

This open-educational resource is designed to survey the social-scientific approach to persuasive communication; thus, it will focus on the social science theory, research, and application of persuasion. This study of persuasion naturally begins with a discussion of the social scientific concept of persuasion itself.

Definitions are typically used to clarify a concept. These definitions provide distinctions about what is included in a concept and what is not. Definitions, however, can be troublesome as it is always possible to provide objections to any given definition. Some people may find a specific definition too broad, while others may find that same definition too narrow. This is because there are always gray areas in which the application of the concept is arguable (see O'Keefe, 2016). For example, with any concept, there are some cases that almost everyone agrees are cases of the concept (for example, ketchup is a condiment), and there are some cases that almost everyone agrees are not cases of the concept (for example, a burger bun is not a condiment). There are also some cases that fall into a gray area wherein many people disagree (for example, is hummus a condiment? or is it a dip?).

O'Keefe (2016) argues that, instead of definitions, focusing on the shared features of paradigm cases of a concept can be used to clarify the concept. These paradigm cases are "the sorts of instances that nearly everyone would agree were instances of the concept in question; they are straightforward, uncontroversial examples" (O'Keefe, 2016, p. 2). Identifying the common features of paradigm cases provides the opportunity to understand a concept's ordinary application without requiring the rigid distinctions required in a definition.

A paradigm case of persuasion would therefore be shared features that are usually involved when we say that someone has persuaded someone else. O'Keefe (2016) provides five common features of paradigm cases of persuasion:

#1: When we say that one person has persuaded someone else, we are usually referring to instances in which there was a successful attempt to influence.

The concept of persuasion inherently includes the notion of success. For example, it does not make sense to say, “I persuaded her, but I failed.” It does make sense to say, “I tried to persuade her, but I failed.” This distinction indicates that simply saying “I persuaded her” implies a successful attempt to influence her.

#2: When we say that one person has persuaded someone else, we are usually referring to instances in which one person intends to persuade the other.

The concept of persuasion inherently includes the notion of intent. For example, if I say “I persuaded Casey to take Intercultural Communication,” you will likely conclude that I intended to procure that outcome. If I instead said “I accidentally persuaded Casey to take Intercultural Communication,” you would likely conclude that I did not intend to do so. The inclusion of the word “accidentally” is necessary to negate intent, which implies that usual use of the term assumes that the persuasion was deliberate.

#3: When we say that one person has persuaded someone else, we are usually referring to cases in which the person being persuaded has some measure of freedom (e.g., free will, free choice, and/or voluntary action).

The concept of persuasion inherently includes the notion of freedom of choice for the person being persuaded. For example, if I steal my roommate’s textbook to study for an exam, one would not say that I “persuaded” my roommate to lend me their textbook. By contrast, asking my roommate to borrow her textbook by convincing her that doing so was necessary for me to pass my exam is ordinarily recognized as an instance of persuasion.

When the person being persuaded has minimal or questionable freedom, it becomes debatable whether it is an instance of persuasion or not. For example, if I told my roommate that if she does not lend me her textbook I would evict her from the apartment and she complies, is this an instance of persuasion? There is no simple answer to this question, but this is an example of a borderline case of persuasion because the person’s freedom is not as obvious as the paradigm case example.

#4: When we say that one person has persuaded someone else, we are usually referring to instances in which the influence was achieved through some mode of communication.

The concept of persuasion inherently includes the notion that communication was used to achieve the outcome. For example, if I pushed my roommate down the stairs to get them to clean up a mess they left in the kitchen, this would not be an instance of persuasion. If I talked to my roommate and convinced them to go downstairs to clean up the mess they left in the kitchen, this would be considered persuasion. These two examples are distinct because the second uses communication, whereas the first does not.

#5: When we say that one person has persuaded someone else, we are usually referring to instances in which the person being persuaded has a change in mental state (that may or may not lead to a change in behavior).

The concept of persuasion inherently includes the notion that the person being persuaded has had a change in mental state. Some paradigm cases may be described only as changes in a mental state. For example, I could say “I persuaded Alex that adding a Communication Minor was helpful for his career goals.” This statement implies a change only in what Alex thinks about adding the minor. Some paradigm cases may be described as behavioral changes, which imply an underlying change in a mental state. For example, I could say “I persuaded Alex to add a Communication Minor.” This statement indicates that Alex changed his behavior, which has an underlying assumption that Alex’s thoughts towards adding the Communication Minor also changed as a precursor to the behavior change. This indicates that even when a persuader’s eventual goal is to influence what someone does, persuasion is usually accomplished by first changing what someone thinks. Persuasion thus ordinarily means that one person has influenced another by influencing their mental state, not directly influencing their behavior.

In persuasion theory and research, the relevant mental state has traditionally been an individual’s attitudes. Even when the ultimate goal is to persuade someone to change their behavior, the presumption is that that goal will be achieved by changing the person’s attitudes. As we will see later on when we examine individual persuasion theories, there are a wide variety of mental state precursors to behavior change beyond just attitudes.

What is Persuasion?

O’Keefe (2016) connects these five paradigm cases of persuasion into something that looks roughly like a definition of persuasion: “a successful intentional effort at influencing another’s mental state through communication in a circumstance in which the [person being persuaded] has some measure of freedom” (p. 4). This definition does not eliminate the gray areas of the concept of persuasion as it leaves open questions around how much success is needed or how intentional the effort needs to be. These shared features of paradigm cases of persuasion can, however, clarify the concept of persuasion and thus center the

study of persuasion on instances that meet these criteria.

References

O'Keefe, D. J. (2016). *Persuasion: Theory and Research (Third Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

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1.3: A Definition of Persuasion

Persuasion can be defined in two ways, for two purposes. The first (Lucas, 2015) is “the process of creating, reinforcing, or changing people’s beliefs or actions” (p. 306). This is a good, simple straightforward definition to start with, although it does not encompass the complexity of persuasion. This definition does introduce us to what could be called a “scaled” way of thinking about persuasion and change.

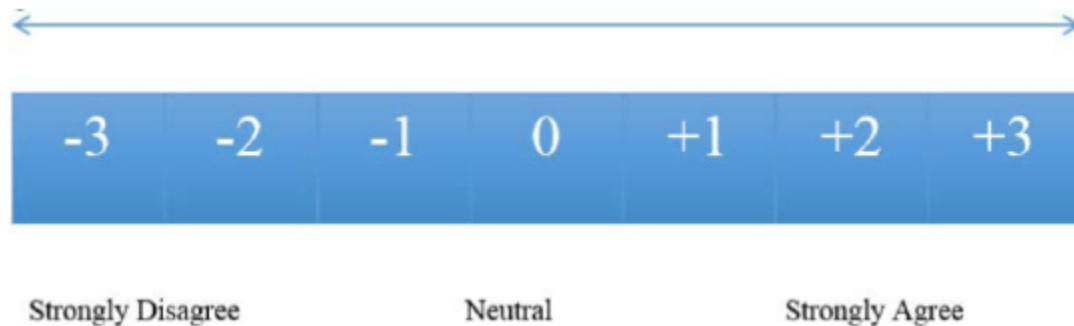


Figure 13.1 - Persuasion Continuum

Think of persuasion as a continuum or line going both directions (see Figure 13.1). Your audience members, either as a group or individually, are sitting somewhere on that line in reference to your central idea statement, or what we are going to call a **proposition** in this chapter. In your speech you are proposing the truth or validity of an idea, one which the audience may not find true or acceptable. Sometimes the word “claim” is used for proposition or central idea statement in a persuasive speech, because you are claiming an idea is true or an action is valuable.

For example, your proposition might be, “The main cause of climate change is human activity.” In this case you are not denying that natural forces, such as volcanoes, can affect the climate, but you are claiming that climate change is mainly due to pollution and other harmful things humans have done to the environment. To be an effective persuasive speaker, one of your first jobs after coming up with this topic would be to determine where your audience “sits” on the continuum in Figure 13.1.

+3 means strongly agree to the point of making lifestyle choices to lessen climate change (such as riding a bike instead of driving a car, recycling, eating certain kinds of foods, and advocating for government policy changes).

+2 means agree but not to the point of acting upon it or only acting on it in small ways.

+1 as mildly in favor of your proposition; that is, they think it’s probably true but the issue doesn’t affect them personally.

0 means neutral, no opinion, or feeling too uninformed to make a decision.

-1 means mildly opposed to the proposition but willing to listen to those with whom they disagree.

-2 means disagreement to the point of dismissing the idea pretty quickly.

-3 means strong opposition to the point that the concept of climate change itself is not even listened to or acknowledged as a valid subject.

Since everyone in the audience is somewhere on this line or continuum, persuasion in this case means moving them to the right, somewhere closer to +3. Thinking about persuasion this way has three values:

- You can visualize and quantify where your audience “sits.”
- You can accept the fact that any movement toward +3 or to the right is a win.
- You can see that trying to change an audience from -3 to +3 in one speech is just about impossible. Therefore, you will be able to take a reasonable approach. In this case, if you knew most of the audience was at -2 or -3, your speech would be about the science behind climate change in order to open their minds to its possible existence. However, that audience is not ready to hear about its being caused mainly by humans or what action should be taken to reverse it.

Your instructor may have the class engage in some activity about your proposed topics in order for you to write your proposition in a way that it is more applicable to your audience. For example, you might have a group discussion on the topics or administer surveys to your fellow students. Some topics are so controversial and divisive that trying to persuade about them in class is inappropriate. Your instructor may forbid some topics or steer you in the direction of others.

You might also ask if it is possible to persuade to the negative, for example, to argue against something or try to move the audience to be opposed to something. In this case you would be trying to move your audience to the left on the continuum rather than to the right. Yes, it is possible to do so, but it might confuse the audience. Also, you might want to think in terms of phrasing your proposition so that it is favorable as well as reasonable. For example, “Elderly people should not be licensed to drive” could be replaced with “Drivers over the age of 75 in our state of should be required to pass a vision and health test every two years to renew their drivers’ licenses.” The first one is not clear (what is “elderly?”), reasonable (no license at all?), or positive (based on restriction) in approach. The second is specific, reasonable, doable, and positive.

It should also be added that the proposition is assumed to be controversial. By that is meant that some people in the audience disagree with your proposition or at least have no opinion; they are not “on your side.” It would be foolish to give a speech when everyone in the audience totally agrees with you at the beginning of the speech. For example, trying to convince your classroom audience that attending college is a good idea is a waste of everyone’s time since, for one reason or another, everyone in your audience has already made that decision. That is not persuasive.

Those who disagree with your proposition but are willing to listen could be called the **target audience**. These are the members of your audience on whom you are truly focusing your persuasion. At the same time, another cluster of your audience that is not part of your target audience are those who are extremely opposed to your position to the point that they probably will not give you a fair hearing. Finally, some members of your audience may already agree with you, although they don’t know why.

To go back to our original definition, “the process of creating, reinforcing, or changing people’s beliefs or actions,” and each of these purposes implies a different approach. You can think of creating as moving an audience from 0 to +1, +2, or +3. You only really “create” something when it does not already exist, meaning the audience’s attitude will be a 0 since they have no opinion. In creating, you have to first engage the audience that there is a vital issue at stake. Then you must provide arguments in favor of your claim to give the audience a basis for belief.

Reinforcing is moving the audience from +1 toward +3 in the hope that they take action (since the real test of belief is whether people act on it). In reinforcing, the audience already agrees with you but need steps and pushes (nudges) to make it action. Changing is moving from -1 or -2 to +1 or higher. In changing, you must first be credible, provide evidence for your side but also show why the audience’s current beliefs are mistaken or wrong in some way.

However, this simple definition from Lucas, while it gets to the core of “change” that is inherent in persuasion, could be improved with some attention to the ethical component and the “how” of persuasion. For that purpose, let’s look at Perloff’s (2003) definition of **persuasion**:

A symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice. (p. 8)

There are several important factors about this definition. First, notice that persuasion is symbolic, that is, uses language or other symbols (even graphics can be symbols), rather than force or other means. Second, notice that it is an attempt, not always fully successful. Third, there is an “atmosphere of free choice,” in that the persons being persuaded can choose not to believe or act. And fourth, notice that the persuader is “trying to convince others to change.” Modern psychological research has confirmed that the persuader does not change the audience directly. The processes that the human mind goes through while it listens to a persuasive message is like a silent, mental dialogue the audience is having with the speaker’s ideas. The audience members as individuals eventually convince themselves to change based on the “symbols” used by the speaker.

Some of this may sound like splitting hairs, but these are important points. The fact that an audience has free choice means that they are active participants in their own persuasion and that they can choose whether the speaker is successful. This factor calls on the student speaker to be ethical and truthful. Sometimes students will say, “It is just a class assignment, I can lie in this speech,” but that is not a fair or respectful way to treat your classmates.

Further, the basis of your persuasion is language; even though “a picture is worth a thousand words” and can help add emotional appeal to your speech, you want to focus on communicating through words. Also, Perloff’s definition distinguishes between “attitude” and “behavior,” meaning that an audience may be persuaded to think, to feel, or to act. Finally, persuasion is a process. Successful persuasion actually takes a while. One speech can be effective, but usually other messages influence the listener in

the long run.

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1.4: Constructing a Persuasive Speech

In a sense, constructing your persuasive speech is the culmination of the skills you have learned already. In another sense, you are challenged to think somewhat differently. While the steps of analyzing your audience, formulating your purpose and central idea, applying evidence, considering ethics, framing the ideas in appropriate language, and then practicing delivery will of course apply, you will need to consider some expanded options about each of these steps.

Formulating a Proposition

As mentioned before, when thinking about a central idea statement in a persuasive speech, we use the terms “proposition” or claim. Persuasive speeches have one of four types of propositions or claims, which determine your overall approach. Before you move on, you need to determine what type of proposition you should have (based on the audience, context, issues involved in the topic, and assignment for the class).

Proposition of Fact

Speeches with this type of proposition attempt to establish the truth of a statement. The core of the proposition (or claim) is not whether something is morally right and wrong or what should be done about the topic, only that a statement is supported by evidence or not. These propositions are not facts such as “the chemical symbol for water is H₂O” or “Barack Obama won the presidency in 2008 with 53% of the vote.” Propositions or claims of fact are statements over which persons disagree and there is evidence on both sides, although probably more on one than the other. Some examples of propositions of fact are:

Converting to solar energy can save homeowners money.

John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald working alone.

Experiments using animals are essential to the development of many life-saving medical procedures.

Climate change has been caused by human activity.

Granting tuition tax credits to the parents of children who attend private schools will perpetuate educational inequality.

Watching violence on television causes violent behavior in children.

William Shakespeare did not write most of the plays attributed to him.

John Doe committed the crime of which he is accused.

Notice that in none of these are any values—good or bad—mentioned. Perpetuating segregation is not portrayed as good or bad, only as an effect of a policy. Of course, most people view educational inequality negatively, just as they view life-saving medical procedures positively. But the point of these propositions is to prove with evidence the truth of a statement, not its inherent value or what the audience should do about it. In fact, in some propositions of fact no action response would even be possible, such as the proposition listed above that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in the assassination of President Kennedy

Propositions of Definition

This is probably not one that you will use in your class, but it bears mentioning here because it is used in legal and scholarly arguments. Propositions of definitions argue that a word, phrase, or concept has a particular meaning. Remembering back to Chapter 7 on supporting materials, we saw that there are various ways to define words, such as by negation, operationalizing, and classification and division. It may be important for you to define your terms, especially if you have a value proposition. Lawyers, legislators, and scholars often write briefs, present speeches, or compose articles to define terms that are vital to defendants, citizens, or disciplines. We saw a proposition of definition defended in the Supreme Court’s 2015 decision to redefine marriage laws as applying to same-sex couples, based on arguments presented in court. Other examples might be:

The Second Amendment to the Constitution does not include possession of automatic weapons for private use.

Alcoholism should be considered a disease because...

The action committed by Mary Smith did not meet the standard for first-degree murder.

Thomas Jefferson's definition of inalienable rights did not include a right to privacy.

In each of these examples, the proposition is that the definition of these things (the Second Amendment, alcoholism, crime, and inalienable rights) needs to be changed or viewed differently, but the audience is not asked to change an attitude or action.

Propositions of Value

It is likely that you or some of your classmates will give speeches with propositions of value. When the proposition has a word such as “good,” “bad,” “best,” “worst,” “just,” “unjust,” “ethical,” “unethical,” “moral,” “immoral,” “beneficial,” “harmful,” “advantageous,” or “disadvantageous,” it is a proposition of value. Some examples include:

Hybrid cars are the best form of automobile transportation available today.

Homeschooling is more beneficial for children than traditional schooling.

The War in Iraq was not justified.

Capital punishment is morally wrong.

Mascots that involve Native American names, characters, and symbols are demeaning.

A vegan diet is the healthiest one for adults.

Propositions of value require a first step: defining the “value” word. If a war is unjustified, what makes a war “just” or “justified” in the first place? That is a fairly philosophical question. What makes a form of transportation “best” or “better” than another? Isn’t that a matter of personal approach? For different people, “best” might mean “safest,” “least expensive,” “most environmentally responsible,” “stylish,” “powerful,” or “prestigious.” Obviously, in the case of the first proposition above, it means “environmentally responsible.” It would be the first job of the speaker, after introducing the speech and stating the proposition, to explain what “best form of automobile transportation” means. Then the proposition would be defended with separate arguments.

Propositions of Policy

These propositions are easy to identify because they almost always have the word “should” in them. These propositions call for a change in policy or practice (including those in a government, community, or school), or they can call for the audience to adopt a certain behavior. Speeches with propositions of policy can be those that call for passive acceptance and agreement from the audience and those that try to instigate the audience to action, to actually do something immediately or in the long-term.

Our state should require mandatory recertification of lawyers every ten years.

The federal government should act to ensure clean water standards for all citizens.

The federal government should not allow the use of technology to choose the sex of an unborn child.

The state of Georgia should require drivers over the age of 75 to take a vision test and present a certificate of good health from a doctor before renewing their licenses.

Wyeth Daniels should be the next governor of the state.

Young people should monitor their blood pressure regularly to avoid health problems later in life.

As mentioned before, the proposition determines the approach to the speech, especially the organization. Also as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the exact phrasing of the proposition should be carefully done to be reasonable, positive, and appropriate for the context and audience. In the next section we will examine organizational factors for speeches with propositions of fact, value, and policy.

Organization Based on Type of Proposition

Organization for a proposition of fact

If your proposition is one of fact, you will do best to use a topical organization. Essentially that means that you will have two to four discrete, separate arguments in support of the proposition. For example:

Proposition: Converting to solar energy can save homeowners money.

- I. Solar energy can be economical to install.
 - A. The government awards grants.
 - B. The government gives tax credits.
- II. Solar energy reduces power bills.
- III. Solar energy requires less money for maintenance.
- IV. Solar energy works when the power grid goes down.

Here is a first draft of another outline for a proposition of fact:

Proposition: Experiments using animals are essential to the development of many life-saving medical procedures.

- I. Research of the past shows many successes from animal experimentation.
- II. Research on humans is limited for ethical and legal reasons.
- III. Computer models for research have limitations.

However, these outlines are just preliminary drafts because preparing a speech of fact requires a great deal of research and understanding of the issues. A speech with a proposition of fact will almost always need an argument or section related to the “reservations,” refuting the arguments that the audience may be preparing in their minds, their mental dialogue. So the second example needs revision, such as:

- I. The first argument in favor of animal experimentation is the record of successful discoveries from animal research.
- II. A second reason to support animal experimentation is that research on humans is limited for ethical and legal reasons.
- III. Animal experimentation is needed because computer models for research have limitations.
- IV. Many people today have concerns about animal experimentation.
 - A. Some believe that all experimentation is equal.
 - 1. There is experimentation for legitimate medical research.
 - 2. There is experimentation for cosmetics or shampoos.
 - B. Others argue that the animals are mistreated.
 - 1. There are protocols for the treatment of animals in experimentation.
 - 2. Legitimate medical experimentation follows the protocols.
 - C. Some believe the persuasion of certain advocacy groups like PETA.
 - 1. Many of the groups that protest animal experimentation have extreme views.

2. Some give untrue representations.

To complete this outline, along with introduction and conclusion, there would need to be quotations, statistics, and facts with sources provided to support both the pro-arguments in Main Points I-III and the refutation to the misconceptions about animal experimentation in Subpoints A-C under Point IV.

Organization for a proposition of value

A persuasive speech that incorporates a proposition of value will have a slightly different structure. As mentioned earlier, a proposition of value must first define the “value” word for clarity and provide a basis for the other arguments of the speech. The second or middle section would present the defense or “pro” arguments for the proposition based on the definition. The third section would include refutation of the counter arguments or “reservations.” The following outline draft shows a student trying to structure a speech with a value proposition. Keep in mind it is abbreviated for illustrative purposes, and thus incomplete as an example of what you would submit to your instructor, who will expect more detailed outlines for your speeches.

Proposition: Hybrid cars are the best form of automotive transportation available today.

I. Automotive transportation that is best meets three standards. **(Definition)**

- A. It is reliable and durable.
- B. It is fuel efficient and thus cost efficient.
- C. It is therefore environmentally responsible.

II. Studies show that hybrid cars are durable and reliable. **(Pro-Argument 1)**

- A. Hybrid cars have 99 problems per 100 cars versus 133 problem per 100 conventional cars, according to TrueDelta, a car analysis website much like Consumer Reports.
- B. J.D. Powers reports hybrids also experience 11 fewer engine and transmission issues than gas-powered vehicles, per 100 vehicles.

III. Hybrid cars are fuel-efficient. **(Pro-Argument 2)**

- A. The Toyota Prius gets 48 mpg on the highway and 51 mpg in the city.
- B. The Ford Fusion hybrid gets 47 mpg in the city and in the country.

IV. Hybrid cars are environmentally responsible. **(Pro-Argument 3)**

- A. They only emit 51.6 gallons of carbon dioxide every 100 miles.
- B. Conventional cars emit 74.9 gallons of carbon dioxide every 100 miles.
- C. The hybrid produces 69% of the harmful gas exhaust that a conventional car does.

V. Of course, hybrid cars are relatively new to the market and some have questions about them. **(Reservations)**

- A. Don't the batteries wear out and aren't they expensive to replace?
 1. Evidence to address this misconception.
 2. Evidence to address this misconception.
- B. Aren't hybrid cars only good for certain types of driving and drivers?
 1. Evidence to address this misconception.
 2. Evidence to address this misconception.

C. Aren't electric cars better?

1. Evidence to address this misconception.
2. Evidence to address this misconception.

Organization for a propositions of policy

The most common type of outline organizations for speeches with propositions of policy is problem-solution or problem-cause-solution. Typically we do not feel any motivation to change unless we are convinced that some harm, problem, need, or deficiency exists, and even more, that it affects us personally. As the saying goes, "If it ain't broke, why fix it?" As mentioned before, some policy speeches look for passive agreement or acceptance of the proposition. Some instructors call this type of policy speech a "think" speech since the persuasion is just about changing the way your audience thinks about a policy.

On the other hand, other policy speeches seek to move the audience to do something to change a situation or to get involved in a cause, and these are sometimes called a "do" speech since the audience is asked to do something. This second type of policy speech (the "do" speech) is sometimes called a "speech to actuate." Although a simple problem-solution organization with only two main points is permissible for a speech of actuation, you will probably do well to utilize the more detailed format called Monroe's Motivated Sequence.

This format, designed by Alan Monroe (1951), who wrote a popular speaking textbook for many years, is based on John Dewey's reflective thinking process. It seeks to go in-depth with the many questions an audience would have in the process of listening to a persuasive speech. Monroe's Motivated Sequence involves five steps, which should not be confused with the main points of the outline. Some steps in Monroe's Motivated Sequence may take two points.

1. **Attention.** This is the introduction, where the speaker brings attention to the importance of the topic as well as his or her own credibility and connection to the topic. This step will include the thesis and preview.
2. **Need.** Here the problem is defined and defended. This step may be divided into two main points, such as the problem and the causes of it, since logically a solution should address the underlying causes as well as the external effects of a problem. It is important to make the audience see the severity of the problem, and how it affects them, their family, or their community. The harm or need can be physical, financial, psychological, legal, emotional, educational, social, or a combination. It will have to be supported by evidence.
3. **Satisfaction.** A need calls for satisfaction in the same way a problem requires a solution. This step could also, in some cases, take up two main points. Not only does the speaker present the solution and describe it, but they must also defend that it works and will address the causes of the problem as well as the symptoms.
4. **Visualization.** . This step looks to the future either positively or negatively. If positive, the benefits from enacting or choosing the solution are shown. If negative, the disadvantages of not doing anything to solve the problem are shown. There may be times when it is acceptable to skip this step, especially if time is limited. The purpose of visualization is to motivate the audience by revealing future benefits or through fear appeals by showing future harms.
5. **Action.** This can be the conclusion, although if the speaker really wants to spend time on moving the audience to action, the action step should be a full main point and the conclusion saved for summary and a dramatic ending. In the action step, the goal is to give specific steps for the audience to take as soon as possible to move toward solving the problem. Whereas the satisfaction step explains the solution overall, the action step gives concrete ways to begin making the solution happen.

The more concrete you can make the action step, the better. Research shows that people are more likely to act if they know how accessible the action can be. For example, if you want students to be vaccinated against the chicken pox virus (which can cause a serious disease called shingles in adults), you can give them directions to and hours for a clinic or health center where vaccinations at a free or discounted price can be obtained.

In some cases for speeches of policy, no huge problem needs solving. Or, there is a problem, but the audience already knows about it and is convinced that the problem exists and is important. In those cases, a format called "comparative advantages" is used, which focuses on how one possible solution is better than other possible ones. The organizational pattern for this kind of proposition might be topical:

- I. This policy is better because...
- II. This policy is better because...
- III. This policy is better because...

If this sounds a little like a commercial that is because advertisements often use comparative advantages to show that one product is better than another. Here is an example:

Proposition: Owning the Barnes and Noble Nook is more advantageous than owning the Amazon Kindle.

- I. The Nook allows owners to trade and loan books to other owners or people who have downloaded the Nook software, while the Kindle does not.
- II. The Nook has a color-touch screen, while the Kindle's screen is black and grey and non-interactive.
- III. The Nook's memory can be expanded through microSD, while the Kindle's memory cannot be upgraded.

Building Upon Your Persuasive Speech's Arguments

Once you have constructed the key arguments and order of points (remembering that if you use topical order, to put your strongest or most persuasive point last), it is time to be sure your points are well supported. In a persuasive speech, there are some things to consider about evidence.

First, your evidence should be from sources that the audience will find credible. If you can find the same essential information from two sources but know that the audience will find the information more credible from one source than another, use and cite the information from the more credible one. For example, if you find the same statistical data on Wikipedia and the U.S. Department of Labor's website, cite the U.S. Department of Labor (your instructor will probably not accept the Wikipedia site anyway). Audiences also accept information from sources they consider unbiased or indifferent. Gallup polls, for example, have been considered reliable sources of survey data because unlike some organizations, Gallup does not have a cause (political or otherwise) it is supporting.

Secondly, your evidence should be new to the audience. In other words, the best evidence is that which is from credible sources and the audience has not heard before (Reinard, 1988; McCroskey, 1969). If they have heard it before and discounted it, they will not consider your argument well supported. An example is telling people who smoke that smoking will cause lung cancer. Everyone in the U.S. has heard that thousands of times, but 14% of the population still smokes, which is about one in seven (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017)). Many of those who smoke have not heard the information that really motivates them to quit yet, and of course quitting is very difficult. Additionally, new evidence is more attention-getting, and you will appear more credible if you tell the audience something new (as long as you cite it well) than if you use the "same old, same old" evidence they have heard before.

Third, in order to be effective and ethical, your supporting evidence should be relevant and not used out of context, and fourth, it should be timely and not out of date.

After choosing the evidence and apportioning it to the correct parts of the speech, you will want to consider use of metaphors, quotations, rhetorical devices, and narratives that will enhance the language and "listenability" of your speech. Narratives are especially good for introduction and conclusions, to get attention and to leave the audience with something dramatic. You might refer to the narrative in the introduction again in the conclusion to give the speech a sense of finality

Next you will want to decide if you should use any type of presentation aid for the speech. The decision to use visuals such as PowerPoint slides or a video clip in a persuasive speech should take into consideration the effect of the visuals on the audience and the time allotted for the speech (as well as your instructor's specifications). The charts, graphs, or photographs you use should be focused and credibly done.

One of your authors remembers a speech by a student about using seat belts (which is, by the way, an overdone topic). What made the speech effective in this case were photographs of two totaled cars, both of which the student had been driving when they crashed. The devastation of the wrecks and his ability to stand before us and give the speech because he had worn his seat belt was effective (although it didn't say much for his driving ability). If you wanted an audience to donate to disaster relief after an earthquake in a foreign country, a few photographs of the destruction would be effective, and perhaps a map of the area would be helpful. But in this case, less is more. Too many visual aids will likely distract from your overall speech claim.

Finally, since you've already had experience in class giving at least one major speech prior to this one, your delivery for the persuasive speech should be especially strong. Since delivery does affect credibility (Burgoon, Birk, & Pfau, 1990), you want to be able to connect visually as you make your appeals. You want to be physically involved and have vocal variety when you tell

dramatic narratives that emphasize the human angle on your topic. If you do use presentation slides, you want them to work in seamlessly, using black screens when the visuals are not necessary.

Conclusion

Your persuasive speech in class, as well as in real life, is an opportunity to share a passion or cause that you believe will matter to society and help the audience live a better life. Even if you are initially uncomfortable with the idea of persuasion, we use it all the time in different ways. Choose your topic based on your own commitment and experience, look for quality evidence, craft your proposition so that it will be clear and audience appropriate, and put the finishing touches on it with an eye toward enhancing your logos, ethos, and pathos.

Something to Think About

Go to YouTube and look for “Persuasive Speeches by College Students.” There are quite a few. Here’s one example:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNr7Fx-SM1Y>.

Do you find this speech persuasive? Why or why not? Based on the content of this chapter, what did the speaker do correctly or perhaps not so correctly that affected his or her persuasiveness?

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2: ETHICS MATTERS- UNDERSTANDING THE ETHICS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

2.1: Prelude to Ethics Matters- Understanding the Ethics of Public Speaking

2.2: The Ethics Pyramid

2.3: Ethics in Public Speaking

2.4: Free Speech

2.5: Chapter Exercises

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2.1: Prelude to Ethics Matters- Understanding the Ethics of Public Speaking

Ethics Today

Every day, people around the world make ethical decisions regarding public speech. Is it ever appropriate to lie to a group of people if it's in the group's best interest? As a speaker, should you use evidence within a speech that you are not sure is correct if it supports the speech's core argument? As a listener, should you refuse to listen to a speaker with whom you fundamentally disagree? These three examples represent ethical choices speakers and listeners face in the public speaking context. In this chapter, we will explore what it means to be both an ethical speaker and an ethical listener. To help you understand the issues involved with thinking about ethics, this chapter begins by presenting a model for ethical communication known as the ethics pyramid. We will then show how the National Communication Association (NCA) Credo for Ethical Communication can be applied to public speaking. The chapter will conclude with a general discussion of free speech.

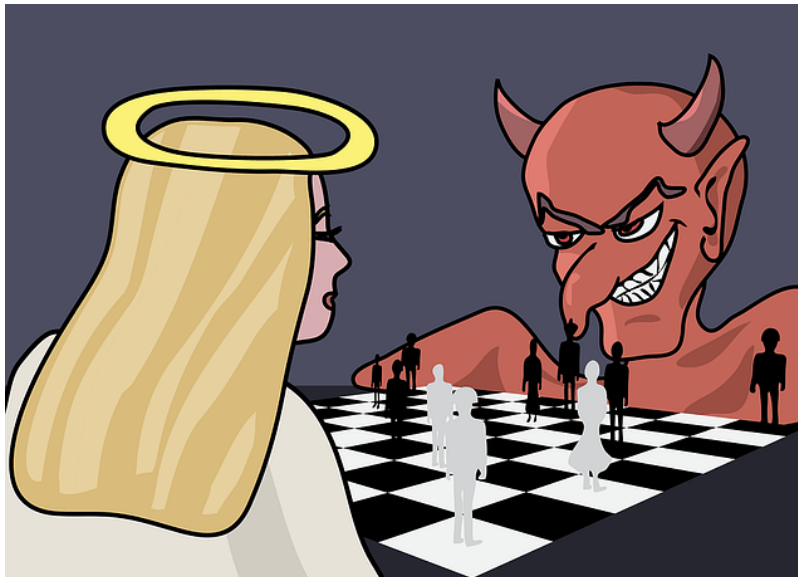


Figure 2.1.1: Pixabay – CC0 public domain.

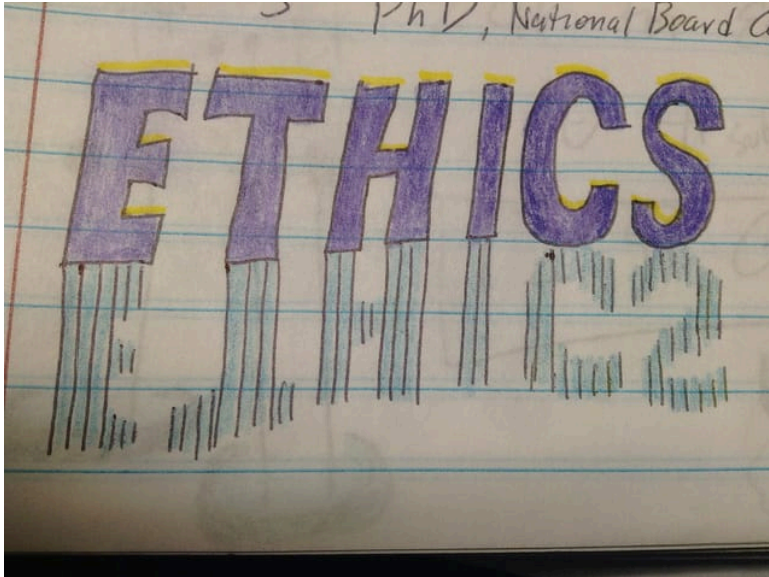
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2.2: The Ethics Pyramid

Learning Objective

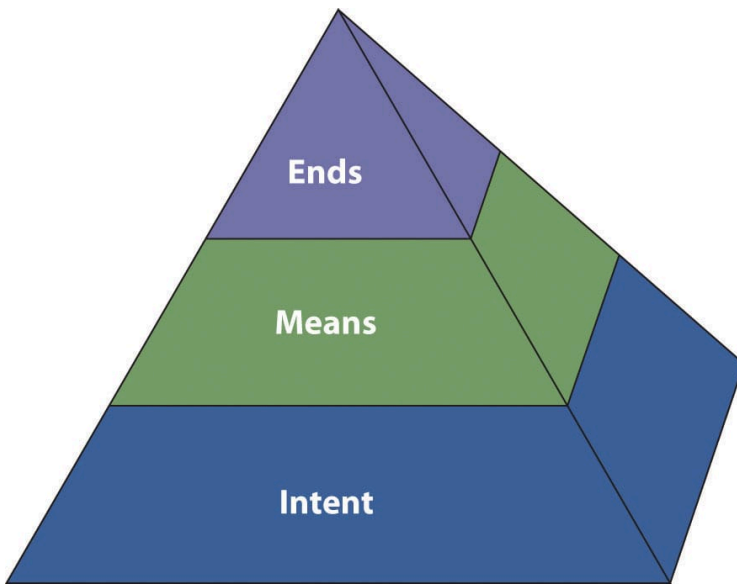
1. Explain how the three levels of the ethics pyramid might be used in evaluating the ethical choices of a public speaker or listener.



Dannon Loveland – ETHICS – CC BY 2.0.

The word “ethics” can mean different things to different people. Whether it is an ethical lapse in business or politics or a disagreement about medical treatments and end-of-life choices, people come into contact with ethical dilemmas regularly. Speakers and listeners of public speech face numerous ethical dilemmas as well. What kinds of support material and sources are ethical to use? How much should a speaker adapt to an audience without sacrificing his or her own views? What makes a speech ethical?

Figure 2.1 Ethical Pyramid



Elsbeth Tilley, a public communication ethics expert from Massey University, proposes a structured approach to thinking about ethics (Tilley, 2005). Her ethics pyramid involves three basic concepts: intent, means, and ends. Figure 2.1 illustrates the Tilley pyramid.

Intent

According to Tilley, the first major consideration to be aware of when examining the ethicality of something is the issue of **intent**. To be an ethical speaker or listener, it is important to begin with ethical intentions. For example, if we agree that honesty is ethical, it follows that ethical speakers will prepare their remarks with the intention of telling the truth to their audiences. Similarly, if we agree that it is ethical to listen with an open mind, it follows that ethical listeners will be intentional about letting a speaker make his or her case before forming judgments.

One option for assessing intent is to talk with others about how ethical they think a behavior is; if you get a variety of answers, it might be a sign that the behavior is not ethical and should be avoided. A second option is to check out existing codes of ethics. Many professional organizations, including the Independent Computer Consultants Association, American Counseling Association, and American Society of Home Inspectors, have codes of conduct or ethical guidelines for their members. Individual corporations such as Monsanto, Coca-Cola, Intel, and ConocoPhillips also have ethical guidelines for how their employees should interact with suppliers or clients. Even when specific ethical codes are not present, you can apply general ethical principles, such as whether a behavior is beneficial for the majority or whether you would approve of the same behavior if you were listening to a speech instead of giving it.

In addition, it is important to be aware that people can engage in unethical behavior unintentionally. For example, suppose we agree that it is unethical to take someone else's words and pass them off as your own—a behavior known as plagiarism. What happens if a speaker makes a statement that he believes he thought of on his own, but the statement is actually quoted from a radio commentator whom he heard without clearly remembering doing so? The plagiarism was unintentional, but does that make it ethical?

Means

Tilley describes the **means** you use to communicate with others as the second level of the ethics pyramid. According to McCroskey, Wrench, and Richmond (McCroskey, Wrench, & Richmond, 2003), “means” are the tools or behaviors we employ to achieve a desired outcome. We must realize that there are a range of possible behavioral choices for any situation and that some choices are good, some are bad, and some fall in between.

For example, suppose you want your friend Marty to spend an hour reviewing a draft of your speech according to criteria, such as audience appropriateness, adequate research, strong support of assertions, and dynamic introduction and conclusion. What means might you use to persuade Marty to do you this favor? You might explain that you value Marty's opinion and will gladly

return the favor the next time Marty is preparing a speech (good means), or you might threaten to tell a professor that Marty cheated on a test (bad means). While both of these means may lead to the same end—having Marty agree to review your speech—one is clearly more ethical than the other.

Ends

The final part of the ethics pyramid is the ends. According to McCroskey, Wrench, and Richmond (McCroskey, Wrench, & Richmond, 2003), **ends** are those outcomes that you desire to achieve. Examples of ends might include persuading your audience to make a financial contribution for your participation in Relay for Life, persuading a group of homeowners that your real estate agency would best meet their needs, or informing your fellow students about newly required university fees. Whereas the means are the behavioral choices we make, the ends are the results of those choices.

Like intentions and means, ends can be good or bad, or they can fall into a gray area where it is unclear just how ethical or unethical they are. For example, suppose a city council wants to balance the city's annual budget. Balancing the budget may be a good end, assuming that the city has adequate tax revenues and areas of discretionary spending for nonessential services for the year in question. However, voters might argue that balancing the budget is a bad end if the city lacks these things for the year in question, because in that case balancing the budget would require raising taxes, curtailing essential city services, or both.

When examining ends, we need to think about both the source and the receiver of the message or behavior. Some end results could be good for the source but bad for the receiver, or vice versa. Suppose, for example, that Anita belongs to a club that is raffling off a course of dancing lessons. Anita sells Ben a ten-dollar raffle ticket. However, Ben later thinks it over and realizes that he has no desire to take dancing lessons and that if he should win the raffle, he will never take the lessons. Anita's club has gained ten dollars—a good end—but Ben has lost ten dollars—a bad end. Again, the ethical standards you and your audience expect to be met will help in deciding whether a particular combination of speaker and audience ends is ethical.

Thinking through the Pyramid

Ultimately, understanding ethics is a matter of balancing all three parts of the ethical pyramid: intent, means, and ends. When thinking about the ethics of a given behavior, Tilley recommends asking yourself three basic questions:

1. "Have I discussed the ethicality of the behavior with others and come to a general consensus that the behavior is ethical?"
2. "Does the behavior adhere to known codes of ethics?"
3. "Would I be happy if the outcomes of the behavior were reversed and applied to me?" (Tilley, 2005)

While you do not need to ask yourself these three questions before enacting every behavior as you go through a day, they do provide a useful framework for thinking through a behavior when you are not sure whether a given action, or statement, may be unethical. Ultimately, understanding ethics is a matter of balancing all three parts of the ethical pyramid: intent, means, and ends.

Key Takeaways

- The ethics pyramid is a pictorial way of understanding the three fundamental parts of ethics: intent, means, and ends. Intent exists at the base of the ethical pyramid and serves as a foundation for determining the ethics of specific behavior. Means are the tools one uses to accomplish a goal and constitute the second layer of the ethical pyramid. Finally, ends are the results that occur after a specific behavior has occurred and exist at the top of the pyramid.

Exercises

1. Can you think of a time when you intended to have a "good" end and employed "good" means, but you ended up accomplishing a "bad" end? Why do you think our ends are not always in line with our intentions?
2. Ursula is developing a speech on the importance of organ donation. She has found lots of impressive statistics in her research but feels she needs an interesting story to really make an impression on her audience and persuade them to become organ donors. Ursula can't find a true story she really likes, so she takes elements of several stories and pieces them together into a single story. Her speech is a huge success and six of her classmates sign up to be organ donors immediately after her presentation. How do we decide whether Ursula's behavior is ethical?
3. Pablo has been scheduled to work late several nights this week and is very tired by the time his public speaking class

rolls around in the late afternoon. One of his classmates gives a speech about environmental sustainability and Pablo does not really pay attention to what the classmate is saying. After the speech, Pablo's teacher asks him to critique the speech. Because he doesn't really know what happened in the speech, Pablo makes a general statement that the speech was pretty good, that the delivery was OK, and that the organization was fine. Using the ethics pyramid as a guide, in what ways might Pablo's response be ethical? In what ways might it be unethical? What are Pablo's responsibilities as an ethical listener?

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2.3: Ethics in Public Speaking

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how to apply the National Communication Association (NCA) Credo for Ethical Communication within the context of public speaking.
2. Understand how you can apply ethics to your public speaking preparation process.

The study of ethics in human communication is hardly a recent endeavor. One of the earliest discussions of ethics in communication (and particularly in public speaking) was conducted by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato in his dialogue *Phaedrus*. In the centuries since Plato's time, an entire subfield within the discipline of human communication has developed to explain and understand communication ethics.

Communication Code of Ethics

In 1999, the National Communication Association officially adopted the Credo for Ethical Communication (see the following sidebar). Ultimately, the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication is a set of beliefs communication scholars have about the ethics of human communication.

National Communication Association Credo for Ethical Communication

Questions of right and wrong arise whenever people communicate. Ethical communication is fundamental to responsible thinking, decision making, and the development of relationships and communities within and across contexts, cultures, channels, and media. Moreover, ethical communication enhances human worth and dignity by fostering truthfulness, fairness, responsibility, personal integrity, and respect for self and others. We believe that unethical communication threatens the quality of all communication and consequently the well-being of individuals and the society in which we live. Therefore we, the members of the National Communication Association, endorse and are committed to practicing the following principles of ethical communication:

- We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.
- We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision making fundamental to a civil society.
- We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.
- We promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well-being of families, communities, and society.
- We promote communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.
- We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.
- We are committed to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.
- We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.
- We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences of our own communication and expect the same of others.

Source: <http://www.natcom.org/Default.aspx?id=134&terms=Credo>

Applying the NCA Credo to Public Speaking

The NCA Credo for Ethical Communication is designed to inspire discussions of ethics related to all aspects of human communication. For our purposes, we want to think about each of these principles in terms of how they affect public speaking.

We Advocate Truthfulness, Accuracy, Honesty, and Reason as Essential to the Integrity of Communication



[Promise?](#) (CC BY 2.0.; Carmella Fernando)

As public speakers, one of the first ethical areas we should be concerned with is information honesty. While there are cases where speakers have blatantly lied to an audience, it is more common for speakers to prove a point by exaggerating, omitting facts that weigh against their message, or distorting information. We believe that speakers build a relationship with their audiences, and that lying, exaggerating, or distorting information violates this relationship. Ultimately, a speaker will be more persuasive by using reason and logical arguments supported by facts rather than relying on emotional appeals designed to manipulate the audience.

It is also important to be honest about where all your information comes from in a speech. As speakers, examine your information sources and determine whether they are biased or have hidden agendas. For example, you are not likely to get accurate information about nonwhite individuals from a neo-Nazi website. While you may not know all your sources of information firsthand, you should attempt to find objective sources that do not have an overt or covert agenda that skews the argument you are making. We will discuss more about ethical sources of information in Chapter 7 later in this book.

The second part of information honesty is to fully disclose where we obtain the information in our speeches. As ethical speakers, it is important to always cite your sources of information within the body of a speech. Whether you conducted an interview or read a newspaper article, you must tell your listeners where the information came from. We mentioned earlier in this chapter that using someone else's words or ideas without giving credit is called **plagiarism**. The word "plagiarism" stems from the Latin word *plagiaries*, or kidnapper. The American Psychological Association states in its publication manual that ethical speakers do not claim "words and ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due" (American Psychological Association, 2001).

In the previous sentence, we placed quotation marks around the sentence to indicate that the words came from the American Psychological Association and not from us. When speaking informally, people sometimes use "air quotes" to signal direct quotations—but this is not a recommended technique in public speaking. Instead, speakers need to verbally tell an audience when they are using someone else's information. The consequences for failing to cite sources during public speeches can be substantial. When Senator Joseph Biden was running for president of the United States in 1988, reporters found that he had plagiarized portions of his stump speech from British politician Neil Kinnock. Biden was forced to drop out of the race as a result. More recently, the student newspaper at Malone University in Ohio alleged that the university president, Gary W. Streit, had plagiarized material in a public speech. Streit retired abruptly as a result.

Even if you are not running for president of the United States or serving as a college president, citing sources is important to you as a student. Many universities have policies that include dismissal from the institution for student plagiarism of academic work, including public speeches. Failing to cite your sources might result, at best, in lower credibility with your audience and, at worst, in a failing grade on your assignment or expulsion from your school. While we will talk in more detail about plagiarism later in this book, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of giving credit to the speakers and authors whose ideas we pass on within our own speeches and writing.

Speakers tend to fall into one of three major traps with plagiarism. The first trap is failing to tell the audience the source of a direct quotation. In the previous paragraph, we used a direct quotation from the American Psychological Association; if we had not used the quotation marks and clearly listed where the cited material came from, you, as a reader, wouldn't have known the source of that information. To avoid plagiarism, you always need to tell your audience when you are directly quoting information within a speech.

The second plagiarism trap public speakers fall into is paraphrasing what someone else said or wrote without giving credit to the speaker or author. For example, you may have read a book and learned that there are three types of schoolyard bullying. In the middle of your speech you talk about those three types of schoolyard bullying. If you do not tell your audience where you found that information, you are plagiarizing. Typically, the only information you do not need to cite is information that is general knowledge. General knowledge is information that is publicly available and widely known by a large segment of society. For example, you would not need to provide a citation within a speech for the name of Delaware's capital. Although many people do not know the capital of Delaware without looking it up, this information is publicly available and easily accessible, so assigning credit to one specific source is not useful or necessary.

The third plagiarism trap that speakers fall into is re-citing someone else's sources within a speech. To explain this problem, let's look at a brief segment from a research paper written by Wrench, DiMartino, Ramirez, Oviedo, and Tesfamariam:

The main character on the hit Fox television show *House*, Dr. Gregory House, has one basic mantra, "It's a basic truth of the human condition that everybody lies. The only variable is about what" (Shore & Barclay, 2005). This notion that "everybody lies" is so persistent in the series that t-shirts have been printed with the slogan. Surprisingly, research has shown that most people do lie during interpersonal interactions to some degree. In a study conducted by Turner, Edgley, and Olmstead (1975), the researchers had 130 participants record their own conversations with others. After recording these conversations, the participants then examined the truthfulness of the statements within the interactions. Only 38.5% of the statements made during these interactions were labeled as "completely honest."

In this example, we see that the authors of this paragraph cited information from two external sources: Shore and Barclay and Tummer, Edgley, and Olmstead. These two groups of authors are given credit for their ideas. The authors make it clear that they did not produce the television show *House* or conduct the study that found that only 38.5 percent of statements were completely honest. Instead, these authors cited information found in two other locations. This type of citation is appropriate.

However, if a speaker read the paragraph and said the following during a speech, it would be plagiarism: "According to Wrench DiMartino, Ramirez, Oviedo, and Tesfamariam, in a study of 130 participants, only 38.5 percent of the responses were completely honest." In this case, the speaker is attributing the information cited to the authors of the paragraph, which is not accurate. If you want to cite the information within your speech, you need to read the original article by Turner, Edgley, and Olmstead and cite that information yourself.

There are two main reasons we do this. First, Wrench, DiMartino, Ramirez, Oviedo, and Tesfamariam may have mistyped the information. Suppose the study by Turner, Edgley, and Olstead really actually found that 58.5 percent of the responses were completely honest. If you cited the revised number (38.5 percent) from the paragraph, you would be further spreading incorrect information.

The second reason we do not re-cite someone else's sources within our speeches is because it's intellectually dishonest. You owe your listeners an honest description of where the facts you are relating came from, not just the name of an author who cited those facts. It is more work to trace the original source of a fact or statistic, but by doing that extra work you can avoid this plagiarism trap.

We Endorse Freedom of Expression, Diversity of Perspective, and Tolerance of Dissent to Achieve the Informed and Responsible Decision Making Fundamental to a Civil Society

This ethical principle affirms that a civil society depends on freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent and that informed and responsible decisions can only be made if all members of society are free to express their thoughts and opinions. Further, it holds that diverse viewpoints, including those that disagree with accepted authority, are important for the functioning of a democratic society.

If everyone only listened to one source of information, then we would be easily manipulated and controlled. For this reason,

we believe that individuals should be willing to listen to a range of speakers on a given subject. As listeners or consumers of communication, we should realize that this diversity of perspectives enables us to be more fully informed on a subject. Imagine voting in an election after listening only to the campaign speeches of one candidate. The perspective of that candidate would be so narrow that you would have no way to accurately understand and assess the issues at hand or the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing candidates. Unfortunately, some voters do limit themselves to listening only to their candidate of choice and, as a result, base their voting decisions on incomplete—and, not infrequently, inaccurate—information.

Listening to diverse perspectives includes being willing to hear dissenting voices. Dissent is by nature uncomfortable, as it entails expressing opposition to authority, often in very unflattering terms. Legal scholar Steven H. Shiffrin has argued in favor of some symbolic speech (e.g., flag burning) because we as a society value the ability of anyone to express their dissent against the will and ideas of the majority (Shiffrin, 1999). Ethical communicators will be receptive to dissent, no matter how strongly they may disagree with the speaker's message because they realize that a society that forbids dissent cannot function democratically.

Ultimately, honoring free speech and seeking out a variety of perspectives is very important for all listeners. We will discuss this idea further in the chapter on listening.

We Strive to Understand and Respect Other Communicators before Evaluating and Responding to Their Messages

This is another ethical characteristic that is specifically directed at receivers of a message. As listeners, we often let our perceptions of a speaker's nonverbal behavior—his or her appearance, posture, mannerisms, eye contact, and so on—determine our opinions about a message before the speaker has said a word. We may also find ourselves judging a speaker based on information we have heard about him or her from other people. Perhaps you have heard from other students that a particular teacher is a really boring lecturer or is really entertaining in class. Even though you do not have personal knowledge, you may prejudge the teacher and his or her message based on information you have been given from others. The NCA **credo** reminds us that to be ethical listeners, we need to avoid such judgments and instead make an effort to listen respectfully; only when we have understood a speaker's viewpoint are we ready to begin forming our opinions of the message.

Listeners should try to objectively analyze the content and arguments within a speech before deciding how to respond. Especially when we disagree with a speaker, we might find it difficult to listen to the content of the speech and, instead, work on creating a rebuttal the entire time the speaker is talking. When this happens, we do not strive to understand the speaker and do not respect the speaker.

Of course, this does not just affect the listener in the public speaking situation. As speakers, we are often called upon to evaluate and refute potential arguments against our positions. While we always want our speeches to be as persuasive as possible, we do ourselves and our audiences a disservice when we downplay, distort, or refuse to mention important arguments from the opposing side. Fairly researching and evaluating counterarguments is an important ethical obligation for the public speaker.

We Promote Access to Communication Resources and Opportunities as Necessary to Fulfill Human Potential and Contribute to the Well-Being of Families, Communities, and Society

Human communication is a skill that can and should be taught. We strongly believe that you can become a better, more ethical speaker. One of the reasons the authors of this book teach courses in public speaking and wrote this college textbook on public speaking is that we, as communication professionals, have an ethical obligation to provide others, including students like you, with resources and opportunities to become better speakers.

We Promote Communication Climates of Caring and Mutual Understanding That Respect the Unique Needs and Characteristics of Individual Communicators

Speakers need to take a two-pronged approach when addressing any audience: caring about the audience and understanding the audience. When you as a speaker truly care about your audience's needs and desires, you avoid setting up a manipulative climate.

This is not to say that your audience will always perceive their own needs and desires in the same way you do, but if you make an honest effort to speak to your audience in a way that has their best interests at heart, you are more likely to create persuasive arguments that are not just manipulative appeals.

Second, it is important for a speaker to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding. To do this, you should first learn as much as possible about your audience, a process called audience analysis. We will discuss this topic in more detail in the audience analysis chapter.

To create a climate of caring and mutual respect, it is important for us as speakers to be open with our audiences so that our intentions and perceptions are clear. Nothing alienates an audience faster than a speaker with a hidden agenda unrelated to the stated purpose of the speech. One of our coauthors once listened to a speaker give a two-hour talk, allegedly about workplace wellness, which actually turned out to be an infomercial for the speaker's weight-loss program. In this case, the speaker clearly had a hidden (or not-so-hidden) agenda, which made the audience feel disrespected.

We Condemn Communication That Degrades Individuals and Humanity through Distortion, Intimidation, Coercion, and Violence and through the Expression of Intolerance and Hatred

This ethical principle is very important for all speakers. Hopefully, intimidation, coercion, and violence will not be part of your public speaking experiences, but some public speakers have been known to call for violence and incite mobs of people to commit atrocities. Thus distortion and expressions of intolerance and hatred are of special concern when it comes to public speaking.

Distortion occurs when someone purposefully twists information in a way that detracts from its original meaning. Unfortunately, some speakers take information and use it in a manner that is not in the spirit of the original information. One place we see distortion frequently is in the political context, where politicians cite a statistic or the results of a study and either completely alter the information or use it in a deceptive manner. FactCheck.org, a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center (<http://www.factcheck.org>), and the St. Petersburg Times's Politifact (<http://www.politifact.com>) are nonpartisan organizations devoted to analyzing political messages and demonstrating how information has been distorted.

Expressions of intolerance and hatred that are to be avoided include using **ageist, heterosexist, racist, sexist**, and any other form of speech that demeans or belittles a group of people. Hate speech from all sides of the political spectrum in our society is detrimental to ethical communication. As such, we as speakers should be acutely aware of how an audience may perceive words that could be considered bigoted. For example, suppose a school board official involved in budget negotiations used the word "shekels" to refer to money, which he believes the teachers' union should be willing to give up (Associated Press, 2011). The remark would be likely to prompt accusations of anti-Semitism and to distract listeners from any constructive suggestions the official might have for resolving budget issues. Although the official might insist that he meant no offense, he damaged the ethical climate of the budget debate by using a word associated with bigotry.

At the same time, it is important for listeners to pay attention to expressions of intolerance or hatred. Extremist speakers sometimes attempt to disguise their true agendas by avoiding bigoted "buzzwords" and using mild-sounding terms instead. For example, a speaker advocating the overthrow of a government might use the term "regime change" instead of "revolution"; similarly, proponents of genocide in various parts of the world have used the term "ethnic cleansing" instead of "extermination." By listening critically to the gist of a speaker's message as well as the specific language he or she uses, we can see how that speaker views the world.

We Are Committed to the Courageous Expression of Personal Convictions in Pursuit of Fairness and Justice

We believe that finding and bringing to light situations of inequality and injustice within our society is important. Public speaking has been used throughout history to point out inequality and injustice, from Patrick Henry arguing against the way the English government treated the American colonists and Sojourner Truth describing the evils of slavery to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and Army Lt. Dan Choi's speeches arguing that the military's "don't ask, don't tell policy" is unjust. Many social justice movements have started because young public speakers have decided to stand up for what they believe is fair and just.

We Advocate Sharing Information, Opinions, and Feelings When Facing Significant Choices While Also Respecting Privacy and Confidentiality

This ethical principle involves balancing personal disclosure with discretion. It is perfectly normal for speakers to want to share their own personal opinions and feelings about a topic; however, it is also important to highlight information within a speech that represents your own thoughts and feelings. Your listeners have a right to know the difference between facts and personal opinions.

Similarly, we have an obligation to respect others' privacy and confidentiality when speaking. If information is obtained from printed or publicly distributed material, it's perfectly appropriate to use that information without getting permission, as long as you cite it. However, when you have a great anecdote one of your friends told you in confidence, or access to information that is not available to the general public, it is best to seek permission before using the information in a speech.

This ethical obligation even has legal implications in many government and corporate contexts. For example, individuals who work for the Central Intelligence Agency are legally precluded from discussing their work in public without prior review by the agency. And companies such as Google also have policies requiring employees to seek permission before engaging in public speaking in which sensitive information might be leaked.

We Accept Responsibility for the Short- and Long-Term Consequences of Our Own Communication and Expect the Same of Others

The last statement of NCA's ethical credo may be the most important one. We live in a society where a speaker's message can literally be heard around the world in a matter of minutes, thanks to our global communication networks. Extreme remarks made by politicians, media commentators, and celebrities, as well as ordinary people, can unexpectedly "go viral" with regrettable consequences. It is not unusual to see situations where a speaker talks hatefully about a specific group, but when one of the speaker's listeners violently attacks a member of the group, the speaker insists that he or she had no way of knowing that this could possibly have happened. Washing one's hands of responsibility is unacceptable: all speakers should accept responsibility for the short-term and long-term consequences of their speeches. Although it is certainly not always the speaker's fault if someone commits an act of violence, the speaker should take responsibility for her or his role in the situation. This process involves being truly reflective and willing to examine how one's speech could have tragic consequences.

Furthermore, attempting to persuade a group of people to take any action means you should make sure that you understand the consequences of that action. Whether you are persuading people to vote for a political candidate or just encouraging them to lose weight, you should know what the short-term and long-term consequences of that decision could be. While our predictions of short-term and long-term consequences may not always be right, we have an ethical duty to at least think through the possible consequences of our speeches and the actions we encourage.

Practicing Ethical Public Speaking

Thus far in this section we've introduced you to the basics of thinking through the ethics of public speaking. Knowing about ethics is essential, but even more important to being an ethical public speaker is putting that knowledge into practice by thinking through possible ethical pitfalls prior to standing up and speaking out. Table 2.1 is a checklist based on our discussion in this chapter to help you think through some of these issues.

Table 2.1 Public Speaking Ethics Checklist

Instructions: For each of the following ethical issues, check either "true" or "false."		True	False
1.	I have knowingly added information within my speech that is false.		
2.	I have attempted to persuade people by unnecessarily tapping into emotion rather than logic.		
3.	I have not clearly cited all the information within my speech.		
4.	I do not know who my sources of information are or what makes my sources credible.		
5.	I wrote my speech based on my own interests and really haven't thought much about my audience.		
6.	I haven't really thought much about my audience's needs and desires.		

7.	I have altered some of the facts in my speech to help me be more persuasive.		
8.	Some of the language in my speech may be considered bigoted.		
9.	My goal is to manipulate my audience to my point of view.		
10.	I sometimes blend in my personal opinions when discussing actual facts during the speech.		
11.	My personal opinions are just as good as facts, so I don't bother to distinguish between the two during my speech.		
12.	I've used information in my speech from a friend or colleague that probably shouldn't be repeated.		
13.	I'm using information in my speech that a source gave me even though it was technically "off the record."		
14.	It's just a speech. I really don't care what someone does with the information when I'm done speaking.		
15.	I haven't really thought about the short- or long-term consequences of my speech.		
Scoring: For ethical purposes, all your answers should have been "false."			

Key Takeaways

- All eight of the principles espoused in the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication can be applied to public speaking. Some of the principles relate more to the speaker's role in communication, while others relate to both the speaker's and the audience's role in public speech.
- When preparing a speech, it is important to think about the ethics of public speaking from the beginning. When a speaker sets out to be ethical in his or her speech from the beginning, arriving at ethical speech is much easier.

Exercises

1. Fill out the "Public Speaking Ethics Checklist" while thinking about your first speech. Did you mark "true" for any of the statements? If so, why? What can you do as a speaker to get to the point where you can check them all as "false"?
2. Robert is preparing a speech about legalizing marijuana use in the United States. He knows that his roommate wrote a paper on the topic last semester and asks his roommate about the paper in an attempt to gather information. During his speech, Robert orally cites his roommate by name as a source of his information but does not report that the source is his roommate, whose experience is based on writing a paper. In what ways does Robert's behavior violate the guidelines set out in the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication?

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2.4: Free Speech

Learning Objectives

1. Define the concept of free speech and discuss its origins.
2. Discuss the First Amendment to the US Constitution in terms of free speech.
3. Describe how free speech relates to other freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment to the US Constitution.



Mouth wide shut (CC BY 2.0.; Soumyadeep Paul)

What Is Free Speech?

Free speech has been a constitutional right since the founding of our nation, and according to *Merriam Webster's Dictionary of Law*, **free speech** entails “the right to express information, ideas, and opinions free of government restrictions based on content and subject only to reasonable limitations (as the power of the government to avoid a clear and present danger) esp. as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution” (Freedom of speech). Free speech is especially important to us as public speakers because expressing information and ideas is the purpose of public speaking. It is also important to audiences of public speeches because free speech allows us to hear and consider multiple points of view so that we can make more informed decisions.

The First Amendment to the Constitution

Free speech was so important to the founders of the United States that it is included in the first of the ten amendments to the US Constitution that are known as the Bill of Rights. This is not surprising, considering that many American colonists had crossed the Atlantic to escape religious persecution and that England had imposed many restrictions on personal freedoms during the colonial era. The text of the First Amendment reads, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” (National Archives and Records Administration, 2011).

The freedoms protected by the First Amendment may seem perfectly natural today, but they were controversial in 1791 when the Bill of Rights was enacted. Proponents argued that individuals needed protection from overreaching powers of government, while opponents believed these protections were unnecessary and that amending them to the Constitution could weaken the union.

Freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, of association, of assembly and petition are all guaranteed in amendments to the

US Constitution. Free speech allows us to exercise our other First Amendment rights. Freedom of assembly means that people can gather to discuss and protest issues of importance to them. If free speech were not protected, citizens would not be able to exercise their right to protest about activities such as war or policies such as health care reform.

Free speech does not mean, however, that every US citizen has the legal right to say anything at any time. If your speech is likely to lead to violence or other illegal acts, it is not protected. One recent example is a 2007 Supreme Court decision in the *Morse et al. v. Frederick* case. In this case, a high school student held up a sign reading “Bong Hits 4 Jesus” across from the school during the 2002 Olympic Torch Relay. The principal suspended the teenager, and the teen sued the principal for violating his First Amendment rights. Ultimately, the court decided that the principal had the right to suspend the student because he was advocating illegal behavior (Supreme Court of the United States, 2007).

The meaning of “free speech” is constantly being debated by politicians, judges, and the public, even within the United States, where this right has been discussed for over two hundred years. As US citizens, it is important to be aware of both the protections afforded by free speech and its limits so that we can be both articulate speakers and critical listeners when issues such as antiwar protests at military funerals or speech advocating violence against members of specific groups come up within our communities.



Figure (public domain; via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Key Takeaways

- Freedom of speech is the right to express information, ideas, and opinions free of government restrictions based on content and subject only to reasonable limitations.
- Free speech helps us to enact other freedoms protected by the First Amendment, including freedom of assembly and freedom of religion. Without free speech, we would not be able to assemble in groups to publically debate and challenge government policies or laws. Without free speech, we would not be able to exercise our rights to express our religious views even when they are at odds with popular opinion.

Exercises

1. What are your campus's internal codes on speech and free speech? Do you have free speech areas on campus? If so, how are they used and regulated?
2. Some college campuses have experienced controversy in recent years when they invited speakers such as Ward Churchill or those who deny that the Holocaust occurred to campus. Discuss in a small group how these controversies reflect the importance of free speech in our society.

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2.5: Chapter Exercises

Speaking Ethically

Jerold Follinsworth is an elected official on the verge of giving the most important speech of his entire life, but he doesn't know which speech to give. He looks down at his hands and sees two very different speeches. The speech in his left hand clearly admits to the public that he has been having an affair with a senior staffer. The allegations have been around for a few months, but his office has been denying the allegations as slanderous attacks from his opponents. In his right hand, he has a speech that sidesteps the affair allegations and focuses on an important policy issue. If Jerold gives the speech in his left hand, an important initiative for his state will be defeated by his political enemies. If Jerold gives the speech in his right hand, he will be deceiving the public, but it will lead to increased growth in jobs for his state. Jerold asked his top speech writer to prepare both speeches. As Jerold waits in the wings for his press conference, he's just not sure which speech he should give.

1. What ethical communication choices do you see Jerold as having in this case?
2. How would you analyze Jerold's decision using the ethical pyramid?
3. How would you apply the National Communication Association (NCA) Credo for Ethical Communication to this case?

End-of-Chapter Assessment

1. Darlene is in the process of preparing a speech on global warming. She knowingly includes a source from a fringe group that has been previously discredited, but she thinks the source will really help her drive her argument home. What combination of the ethics pyramid does this case represent?
 - a. intentional use of bad means
 - b. intentional use of good means
 - c. unintentional use of bad means
 - d. unintentional use of good means
 - e. intentional use of neutral means
2. Which of the following is *not* an ethical aspect described by the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication?
 - a. freedom of expression
 - b. access to communication resources and opportunities
 - c. accepting responsibility for one's own communication
 - d. respecting a source before evaluating her or his message
 - e. promoting ethical standards in business

Answer Key

1. a
2. e

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3: CHANGING BELIEFS, ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR

- 3.1: Challenging Stasis
- 3.2: Beliefs
- 3.3: Values
- 3.4: Value Systems
- 3.5: How Are Values Learned?
- 3.6: Attitudes
- 3.7: Resisting Change
- 3.8: Cognitive Dissonance
- 3.9: Audience Analysis
- 3.10: Motivation
- 3.11: Targeting by Using the Needs Theory in Persuasion
- 3.12: Targeting Strategy
- 3.13: Changing Attitude and Stasis
- 3.14: Last Important Thought

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3.1: Challenging Stasis

A California state educational survey revealed that 75 percent of high school students in California admit that they cheat on tests, and 66% of students say cheating to obtain a desired grade is okay. Years ago, students would have considered cheating a very big deal, but now it appears to be wrong only if they are caught. This change in attitude about cheating has led to a change in "cheating" behavior.

To explain this change of behavior we need to examine some of the current beliefs of the typical student. The campus newspaper at Moorpark Memorial High School conducted a survey to discover why student cheating is so rampant. The results of the poll revealed that the main reasons for cheating are to get good grades and the lack of test preparedness. The pressure to get good grades occurs for several reasons, including parental pressure, lower car insurance rates, and college acceptance. These pressures are cited in an attempt to justify the cheating behavior. When we take a test, we make the decision to cheat or not to cheat. If we feel pressured to do well, or if it is important that we do well, and if we are unprepared due to lack of studying, we might tend to have a positive attitude toward cheating. Therefore, the decision is made to cheat.

In analyzing this increase in student cheating, we start with three very important terms: beliefs, attitudes and behavior. Briefly explained, one's beliefs (knowledge) and values (goods or bads) lead to the development of an attitude (likes or dislikes), which in turn guides or directs one's behavior. And when all these parts become comfortable, we are in our personal stasis or comfort zone.

To best understand the overall process, we need to first look at beliefs, and at subsets of beliefs, known as values, followed by a description how this leads to an attitude. Once we understand this foundation for how we act, we can look at various persuasion strategies that are used to alter beliefs and attitudes. We can learn not only how to use these approaches to change others, but we can examine how others use these methods to persuade us.

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3.2: Beliefs

Beliefs represent all the bits of information we collect about people, events, and things in our life. They are cognitions that we have discriminated and selected from all those we have been exposed to, relevant to any subject in our environment.

Beliefs are measured using a true-false continuum and a probability scale. There are some beliefs you feel are absolutely true or false; probably true or false; or are not sure about. All of us possess beliefs about a college education. They may include that a college education takes time, is a lot of work, makes our parents happy, and will allow us to make more money in the future, and so on.

Some beliefs are stronger than others or as we say, have more salience. That is, some information about the environment is more important to us than other information, such as, how you are doing in a class as opposed to how another class member is doing.

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3.3: Values

A special subset or type of beliefs is known as values. Values are:

- **Enduring**, or long lasting concepts of the nature of good as opposed to brief ideas. Resistant to change.
- **Salient**, important beliefs, inflexible beliefs about the worth given to people, events, things and philosophy in one's life.

Values are enduring. Values stand the test of time, because they are tied to our basic human needs and because they are learned very early in life. Many of the values you possess are likely to be shared by other members of your family and community and have been passed down from one generation to another. They are the common bond that unites cultures and social systems and are seen as necessary for the continuation and survival of the culture and social system. Values are also enduring because no acceptable alternatives have been found for those values. What acceptable alternatives are there to values like freedom, or equality, or honesty, or being forgiving, or having self- respect, or being loved?

Values are salient and lack flexibility. Values are generally regarded as absolutes. Values have a tendency to take on the appearance of being certain, with little room for flexibility. Since values categorize things as good or bad, right or wrong, superior or inferior, there are rarely shades of gray. In this country, freedom of speech is valued. This, as with most values, seems to be an all-or-nothing situation, for it is difficult to establish partial freedom of speech, as the courts have attempted to do with the question of pornography. Once adopted, people will fight for, even die for, their values. This is especially valid for nationalistic and religious values.

The Beliefs of a Snake Handling Preacher

A Kentucky pastor who starred in a reality show about snake-handling in church has died -- of a snakebite. Jamie Coots died Saturday evening after refusing to be treated, Middlesboro police said.

On "Snake Salvation," the ardent Pentecostal believer said that he believed that a passage in the Bible suggests poisonous snakebites will not harm believers as long as they are anointed by God. The practice is illegal in most states, but still goes on, primarily in the rural South. Coots was a third-generation "serpent handler" and aspired to one day pass the practice and his church, Full Gospel Tabernacle in Jesus Name, on to his adult son, Little Cody.

"Even after losing half of his finger to a snake bite and seeing others die from bites during services," Coots "still believes he must take up serpents and follow the Holiness faith," the website says.

Because of their strength, it becomes very difficult to change values. Instead, if you are attempting to convince someone to accept a proposal, you need to demonstrate how that proposal fits in with his or her values. An astute political candidate who is running for office will try to convince you that he or she stands for your values, instead of attempting to convince you to accept his or her values which may be different. We often make the mistake of attempting to convince someone that our proposal fits in with what his or her values "should" or "should not be."

As Myers and Myers write in their book, Dynamics of Human Communication,

*"Values indicate to those who share them what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad, moral or immoral, and therefore what one should stand for. They provide people with a guidance system which is supposed to enable them to choose the 'right' alternative when several courses of action are possible."*¹Myers, 1992)

Two Categories of Values

Psychologist Milton Rokeach has done extensive work with values. In his works, he describes the two basic types of values that people possess: **Terminal** values and **Instrumental** values.²

Terminal values are the major goals in one's life. They represent lifelong desired end states. **Instrumental** values are short-term ways of living our day-to-day life. They are the "goods and bads" we follow each day.

INSTRUMENTAL VALUES	TERMINAL VALUES
AMBITIOUS (hard-working, aspiring)	A COMFORTABLE LIFE (a prosperous life)
BROAD-MINDED (open-minded)	AN EXCITING LIFE (a stimulating, active life)
CAPABLE (competent, effective)	ACCOMPLISHMENT (lasting contribution)
CHEERFUL (lighthearted, joyful)	A WORLD AT PEACE (free of war and conflict)
CLEAN (neat, tidy)	A WORLD OF BEAUTY (beauty of nature and the arts)
COURAGEOUS (standing up for your own beliefs)	EQUALITY (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)
FORGIVING (willing to pardon others)	FAMILY SECURITY (taking care of loved ones)
HELPFUL (working for the welfare of others)	FREEDOM (independence, free choice)
HONEST (sincere, truthful)	SELF-RESPECT (self-esteem)
IMAGINATIVE (daring, creative)	HAPPINESS (contentedness)
INDEPENDENT (self-reliant, self-sufficient)	INNER HARMONY (freedom from inner conflict)
INTELLECTUAL (intelligent, reflective)	MATURE LOVE (sexual and spiritual intimacy)
LOGICAL (consistent, rational)	SECURITY (protection from attack)
LOVING (affectionate, tender, sexual)	LEISURE (an enjoyable, leisurely life)
OBEDIENT (loyal, dutiful, respectful)	SOCIAL RECOGNITION (respect, admiration)
POLITE (courteous, well-mannered)	TRUE FRIENDSHIP (close companionship)
RESPONSIBLE (dependable, reliable)	WISDOM (a mature understanding of life)
SELF-CONTROLLED (restrained, self-disciplined)	SALVATION (saved, eternal life)

Remember, values differ from general beliefs in two important ways: **Values are enduring** and thus very resistant to change, and **values are inflexible**. (Rokeach, 1989)

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3.4: Value Systems

Value systems are an organized collection of individual values, such as honesty, kindness, and equality. These values are prioritized with the most important values on top, and the least important on the bottom. Values are usually embodied in a set of moral and/or religious systems found in all cultures and societies. We may feel that all of our values are important, but when two or more values clash, we have to decide which value is most important to us. This becomes a value system, which guides our decision-making.

To give you an idea how a value system works, I present to you the Gene Autry's Cowboy Code. Gene Autry was a famous Hollywood "singing cowboy" of the 30's, 40's and 50's. He was also the owner of the Angels professional baseball team, when he passed away. He was a hero to many, many children who wanted to be a cowboy just like him. Over the years Gene Autry had developed a philosophy of life that he decided to share with these young admirers. This system of values, like any value system, would guide the actions of his young cowboy fans.



9.4.1: "Gene Autry" (Public Domain; Seattle Packing Company-Bar-S Brand via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Gene Autry's Cowboy Code

- The Cowboy must never shoot first, hit a smaller man, or take unfair advantage.
- He must never go back on his word, or a trust confided in him.
- He must always tell the truth.
- He must be gentle with children, the elderly, and animals.
- He must not advocate or possess racially or religiously intolerant ideas.
- He must help people in distress.
- He must be a good worker.
- He must keep himself clean in thought, speech, action, and personal habits.
- He must respect women, parents, and his nation's laws.
- The Cowboy is a patriot.¹

You can find other cowboy codes from Roy Rogers to the Lone Ranger at a website called "Cowboy Codes of the West."² You can also find online "life codes" from "Chivalry" to the Japanese warriors "Bushido Code." All these codes list values that guide decision-making.



9.4.2: "Core Values" (CC BY-SA 3.0; Nick Youngson via Picserver.org)

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3.5: How Are Values Learned?

The process of learning values and organizing them into a defined value system takes place through a learning process. The book, *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students*, describes four methods of learning our values.¹

Moralizing is the method by which values are transmitted in a direct manner from a parent or parent-like figure to the child or childlike figure. It is the quickest, and simplest method, where one person just tells the other which value(s) to uphold. Often this method is the “don’t do as I do, but do as I say” approach.

Modeling says that by watching the actions of the parental model, the child will learn which values are correct. In this method, the parent-like figure holds him or her up as a model of what is acceptable as good or bad, right or wrong. A young boy may determine how to treat his girlfriend by how his father treats his mother. This is the “don’t do as I say, do as I do” approach.

Experimenting states that each individual must find his or her own appropriate value system, for no two people necessarily have one system. The process of discovering one’s values is one of trial and error, experience and experimenting, and sorting through the options available. Life’s experiences will teach one what is good and bad, right or wrong.

Clarification teaches the consequences of accepting or denying a particular value. For example, instead of Moralizing that the value of always telling the truth is important, the Clarification process discovers the positive and negative aspects of always telling the “truth.” The person then can make the choice to accept or reject the value. Instead of teaching a person which values to accept or reject, this approach describes a method one can utilize to discover one’s values.

The 8 Rules George Washington Carver Lived By



9.5.1: "George Washington Carver" (Public Domain; Arthur Rothstein via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

- Be clean both inside and out
- Neither look up to the rich nor down to the poor
- Lose, if need be, without squealing
- Win without bragging
- Always be considerate of women, children and older people
- Be too brave to lie
- Be too generous to cheat
- Take your share of the world & let others take theirs

The acceptance or rejection of new beliefs is affected by our value system. Beliefs that are consistent with or correspond to our value system are more readily accepted than those which contradict our value system. If you have accepted the value that getting a good college education is very important you will have stronger adherence to future beliefs which reinforce that position. If a person tells you that they believe college to be a waste of time, you will initially reject that belief merely because it contradicts a value you hold.

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3.6: Attitudes

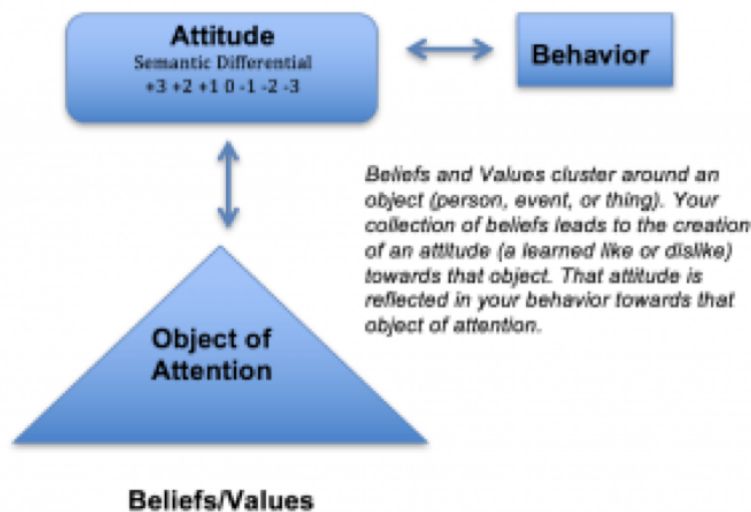
Attitudes are our likes and dislikes. The clustering of beliefs around a person, place or thing, causes us to like or dislike that person, place or thing. When more positive than negative beliefs are clustered around an object, the resulting attitude is favorable. When there are more negative than positive beliefs, the resulting attitude is unfavorable.

An attitude itself cannot be directly observed; only the behavior that follows from the attitude can be observed. Milton Rokeach defines an attitude as, “a learned predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably towards a person, place, or event.” (Rokeach, 1989)



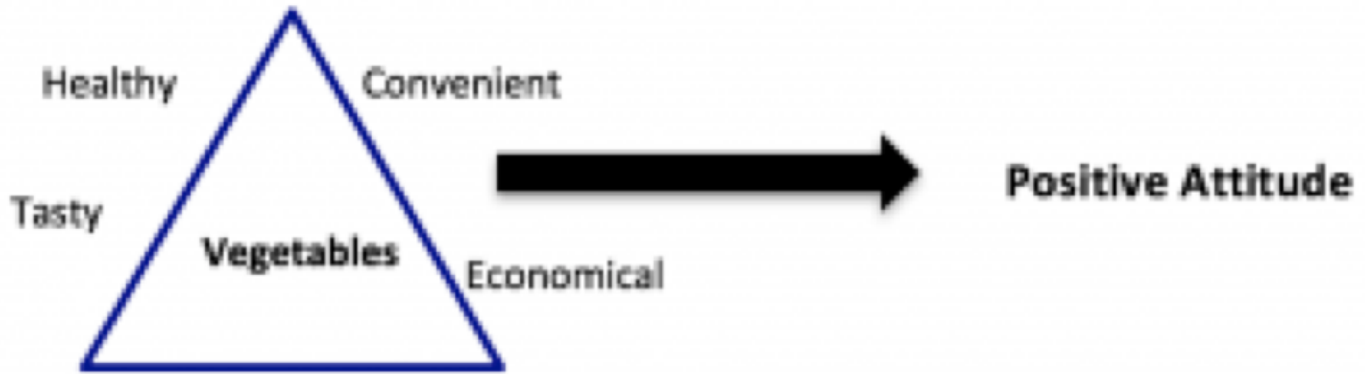
9.6.1: "Roy E. Disney" (CC BY-SA 3.0; Towpilot via Wikimedia Commons)

“When your values are clear to you, making decisions becomes easier.” --Roy E. Disney¹



9.6.2: "Attitude Diagram" (CC BY 3.0; J. Marteney)

Take vegetables. You have several beliefs clustered around the object, vegetables. You believe that vegetables are good for your health, some taste good, some, like carrots, are convenient to eat and vegetables are economical. Based on all these beliefs you have a positive attitude towards vegetables.



9.6.3: "Beliefs to Attitude" (CC BY 3.0; J. Marteney)

Given that you have a positive attitude towards vegetables, your behavior should be to eat them. This balance between your beliefs and attitudes, and your attitude and behavior is a form of Stasis. You are comfortable.

Attitudes guide our behavior. If you have developed a positive attitude about getting a college degree, you are more likely to attend classes regularly and get good grades. If you have developed a negative attitude toward getting a college degree, you are more likely to cut school regularly and get poor grades. If you have a positive attitude towards vegetables, your behavior will probably include eating more vegetables.

Attitudes have a measurable direction. We can place attitudes on a continuum with highly favorable at one end, and highly unfavorable at the other end. Pollsters measure not just if you like a product or not, but how much you like a product.

Attitudes are learned. We have attitudes on just about everything we know. These attitudes are learned. People are not born liberal or conservative, baseball or basketball fans. Do you share the same attitudes of your family?

Attitudes have importance or salience. We simply feel stronger about some of our attitudes than about others. We may feel somewhat that a college education will make us better and more informed citizens, but we have a stronger belief that in obtaining that education we will be much better off financially. Some subjects are closer, more important, or more relevant to us than others. Some subjects are distant, less important, or less relevant to us than others. The more personalized the attitude, the more salience it will possess. Attitudes emerge from the clustering of beliefs and values we learn from others with whom we live and associate. Because they are learned, they can be unlearned and changed, although change most often will be resisted.

One important question emerges. Once we have an attitude, can it be altered? Are there attitudes that can never change? Many of our attitudes begin to form when we are young and continue to develop through adulthood. Once attitudes have had years to form, they are more resistant to change. Attitudes are a fact of life and play a vital role in how we make decisions.

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3.7: Resisting Change

As normal human beings, we want maintain our comfortable beliefs and so we naturally resist change or any challenge to our existing beliefs and attitudes. As a critical thinker, however, we know this leads to dogmatic thinking. So, we are in a constant fight between our natural urge not to change and our skill at critical thinking that tells us to be open to new ideas.

When we attempt to persuade others, we need to present an argument that actually creates a feeling of discomfort in their currently held beliefs. This discomfort leads to a tension. We would like this tension to lead to a change in their minds, but since humans want to be comfortable they strive to resolve the tension they feel without changing their minds. One theory that has looked at this process is the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance.

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3.8: Cognitive Dissonance

As a “normal” human being, we want to maintain our stasis and be comfortable. There are times, however, when we become aware of cognitions that disagree with our held beliefs, causing a feeling of uncertainty, or discomfort. How do we return to our feeling of comfort when we experience cognitions that are contradictory to our beliefs and disrupting our stasis?

A cognition has been understood to be both the process of understanding our environment and the end product of that process, a unit of awareness. Our environment bombards us with more stimuli than we can interpret. The few that we become aware of are known as cognitions. Leon Festinger developed his Theory of Cognitive Dissonance¹ in “A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance” to explain how a person attempts to resolve the discomfort felt when they experience contradictory cognitions.²

Leon Festinger argues that there are a total of three different, possible relationships between cognitions, which he refers to as being thoughts or ideas. Instead of calling the comfort state, stasis, he refers to it as being a state on “consonance.” Dissonance is an “unpleasant motivating state (a feeling) that encourages attitude change to achieve or restore consonance.”³

- Change a cognition
- Add a new cognition
- Change the importance of the cognition

For example, you may like an occasional drink, or two or three. You are comfortable with your drinking. But then you become aware of how alcohol can harm your body from your liver to your heart. Your stasis is now disrupted and you need to resolve this discomfort. According to Festinger, you can do one of three things to return to your comfortable stasis:

Change a cognition This can be accomplished by either altering the new cognition or your old, comfortable cognition. The person could rationalize by saying the source of the disrupting information on alcohol was biased, or unreliable. Or as a last resort, the original cognition that drinking was fine should now be changed.

Add a new cognition This can occur where you read from another source that a glass of red wine a night is actually good for your health

Change the importance of the cognition This can occur when you realize you only drink on weekends so the health effects are really not that big a deal.

Although Dissonance Theory can suggest that a person will engage in one of these three actions, the theory does not predict which one.

If you are attempting to persuade another person, you need to first disrupt their stasis by providing cognitions that create dissonance. A person cannot be persuaded to change to a new stasis until they are made uncomfortable with their current stasis. A couple has been living together for a couple of years and now she wants to get married. He is very comfortable with his stasis of just living together. If she wants to persuade him to get married, she must first make him uncomfortable with their current relationship. Then he will be open to a change in the relationship.

But even when we experience discomfort in our current situation, we will still fight to not change. Researcher Robert Abelson suggests that we resist a challenge to our stasis, by following one of four methods of reducing an inconsistency with our comfortable stasis.

“Inconsistency is not always resolved by bringing the maverick beliefs, attitudes, or values into line. At least four other strategies for reducing inconsistency have been distinguished: denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence.”⁴

- **Deny** one of the dissonant cognitions. Here a person makes the determination the cognition is wrong. “She is the spokesperson for that company, so you can’t believe anything she says.”
- **Bolster** an attitude they want to believe by looking for sources that support beliefs they want to maintain. After becoming aware of a new cognition, a person can now easily find an internet source that agrees with his original belief.
- **Differentiate** one of the cognitions by separating it into different paths, where one of the paths may contain the dissonant idea, but the other path has a more consonant idea. “Sure, she may be telling lies, but she is also trying to save her children’s

feelings.”

- **Transcendence** is the opposite of differentiate and occurs when the dissonant parts are put together and lead to an important whole. “Sure, he is lying on the school form and pretending to live in the proper district, but he really wants to get his daughter into a better school.”

Convincing ourselves that we should maintain our stasis in the face of new information can also be referred to as rationalization. Based on the work theory of belief-dilemma resolution by Robert Abelson⁵ Ware and Linkugel (1973)⁶ used the same four key methods to explain how we excuse ourselves and rationalize that we are not to blame for some action we have taken.

Denial: “I didn't do it.” Denial is the simplest of methods of excusing oneself and avoiding punishment. This is a method of coping with cognitive dissonance felt when our actions are in contradiction with our values. It does, however, require plausibility. You cannot deny something where there were multiple witnesses, although some do try.

Bolstering: “I'm a nice person.” I can't have done it. The word 'bolstering' means propping something up. When defending an attack, particularly when it appears to be personal, then many feel the need to bolster their character and reputation.

Differentiation: Distancing oneself. Show that you are not really connected with what went on. Distance yourself from the event. Indicate that it had nothing to do with you and that you had no knowledge of it.

Transcendence: A higher purpose when faced with an accusation, transcendence is a method of connecting the accused action with a greater meaning, thereby excusing the act as legitimate on a more important stage.... Transcendence is a method of reframing, not so much changing the facts, but changing their meaning by looking at things in new ways.⁷

As you can see from these previous theories, **we are not naturally, open minded critical thinkers.** Our natural state is to create a comfortable stasis and do our best to maintain that comfortable position. Instead of taking in new information and testing it to see if there is enough validity to it to change our minds, our natural tendency is to fight this new information, using a variety of strategies so we can maintain our comfort zone. This has led me to observe that **“People would rather be comfortably wrong than uncomfortably right.”**

Persuasive Strategies

There are, as you might guess, a variety of approaches that describes how we can change the stasis of others and be more aware of how others will try to change us. The first step is to analyze your audience.

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3.9: Audience Analysis

To successfully persuade someone to see your point of view you must first either change or reinforce their beliefs. You either change their beliefs to go along with yours or you show them how their beliefs already are consistent with your point of view. In either case, you need to better understand your audience and what beliefs they currently hold.

Audience analysis is a planning technique you can use to determine the characteristics of your audience and what motivates them. This information is used to decide the best way to present information and persuade the audience to the action you want them to do, or belief you want them to hold. I frequently wanted a new computer, but my wife was not so enthusiastic. But I knew that she would do anything to help our children succeed in school. Using this analysis, I would make the argument that getting a new computer would help our children succeed in school. And just like that, we had a new computer.

Your audience is where it all begins. The more you know about your audience, the better you can “target” your remarks to reflect their specific interests and concerns. When I refer to audience, I don’t necessarily mean a large crowd. Your audience might just be one person from a member of your family to your boss. Your audience will respond as you want them to **only** if you can convince them that they will benefit from the action you’re proposing. As you prepare your persuasion, make sure you base your plans on an understanding of your audience. Focus on what matters most to them, how they will react, and what will help you lead them to your goal.

Any number of factors can affect how your audience will react. These can include their experience, education, job or professional background, age, gender, ethnic background, cultural differences, and more. Knowing your audience helps you to shape your message in a way that’s most likely to gain their acceptance. The following will help a good advocate **target** his or her audience.

- Know the attitudes and biases of your audience.
- Know how the audience already feels about the subject of your persuasion.
- As much as possible, know what motivates your audience.
- Never talk down to your audience.
- Talk to the interests of your audience.
- Make sure your audience understands the importance to them of the goal of your persuasion.
- Make sure you stay consistent.
- Be clear.

You’re sitting at home on a hot summer day, thinking about how thirsty you are. A 30-second spot for Coca-Cola plays on the television. You respond to the ad by going to the refrigerator and taking out a can of Coke or you drive to a store and buy a Coke. Either way, a cause/effect relationship exists between your behavior and the advertisement. Corporate Coca-Cola loves you, but does not expect its ad to have that kind of effect on everyone.

The more likely response to the ad is that the next time you are purchasing soda at the store, you will recognize the Coca-Cola label, you remember the taste, and many pleasant memories—both your own and those given you in ads—are recalled. Maybe, whenever you see a Coke logo or anytime you are thirsty, you think about those pleasant memories. Now Coca-Cola is part of your daily life; Coca-Cola product and memories shape your thinking. In fact, Coke is such a part of your life that you do not even have to consciously think about it. When Coca-Cola achieves such a level of acceptance, as it has within our culture, its efforts at persuasion through the mass media have been successful.

The word persuasion itself is very misunderstood. For many, it conjures up images and feelings of making someone do something that he might not want to do. This is very far from how persuasion techniques really work.

The main purpose of persuasion to convince someone to think, act, or feel a certain way. The goal of persuasion is to get someone to do something you want them to do that they are not currently doing and this includes thinking about a subject as you would like them to think about that subject. Persuasion involves modifying the attitudes of a target audience in such a way as to alter their behavior in the manner the advocate wants that behavior altered. We use persuasion to motivate people to change.

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3.10: Motivation

You can read article after article on the different motivational theories. The focus of most is that motivation refers to forces that give us incentive to actually do something. When you wake up in the morning something stimulates you to get out of bed and get started with the day.

Motivation can come from factors outside of us. In the morning, it might be an alarm clock or a person “suggesting” we get out of bed. We call this external stimulus, extrinsic motivation. Or, you might wake up and decide on your own that you need to get started. We call this internal stimulus, intrinsic motivation.

Motivation can be positive or negative, tangible or intangible, subtle or obvious. Motivation is concerned with the process by which behavior is energized and directed. That is, what gets people excited? Although there are many approaches to motivation that critical thinkers can use to move, drive, induce, provoke, arouse, stimulate, lure, coax, influence, compel, tempt, prod, spur, push, and otherwise get someone else to accept their stand on a claim. We will look at one, Maslow’s Need Theory.

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3.11: Targeting by Using the Needs Theory in Persuasion

Targeting is a motivational theory which rests on the concept that all humans are motivated by certain common needs. Targeting concludes that audience acceptance of a position is more likely to occur when the position you want them to take meets one of their needs. An insurance commercial is a classic example where a person's need for Safety can be met with the insurance product being advertised.

Targeting is focusing on the appropriate "need level" of your audience without necessarily telling them or asking them to acknowledge your needs.

"If you want to motivate others to cooperate with you—at home, in the office, or in a social setting—the best way is to try to see that their needs are met first," says Dr. Marvin Glock of Cornell University.



9.11.1: "Abraham Maslow" (Fair Use; Unknown via [Wikipedia](#))

Abraham Maslow developed a theory of personality that has been very influential in many fields of study from business to psychology to communication. The theory may seem simplistic at first, but the more we examine it, the more we can see our own actions following the pattern, or hierarchy he suggests.

Maslow was a humanistic psychologist who believed that the behaviors of human beings were guided by external influences. These influences were either external stimuli and reinforcements or of unconscious instinctual impulses. A "healthy person" looks to achieve a high stage of consciousness and wisdom.

Maslow believed that all humans shared a hierarchy of five levels of basic needs. At the base of this pyramid are a person's basic needs. These basic needs must be met before a person can move up to the next level of needs. Until a need at a particular level is met, the person does not feel the need for the next level. For example, you need to meet your safety need before you can fulfill your love, affection or belongingness need. As a person achieves each level of need they move up to the next level of needs until they reach the highest level of needs, "*Self-Actualization*." ¹

Maslow's theory can be applied to your own life and your own goals. If you begin to realize that all humans share these same motivations, it becomes clear that all humans have something in common. Maslow's basic needs are as follows:

Physiological Needs: These are biological needs. They consist of needs for oxygen, food, water, and a relatively constant body temperature. They are the strongest needs, because if a person is deprived of these needs, the person will die.

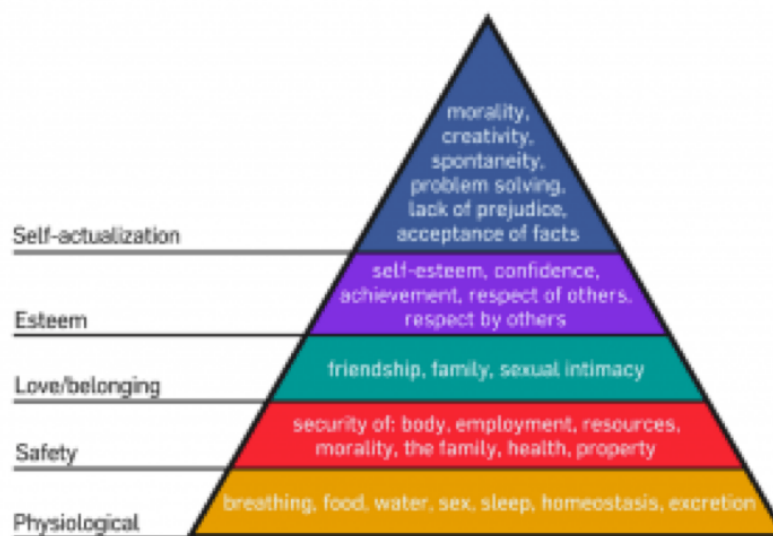
Safety Needs: When all physiological needs are satisfied, and are no longer controlling thoughts and behaviors, the needs for security can become active. We have the need to feel safe and secure. To some it may be to own a gun, while for others, just locking their doors is enough. Being a member of a union or even a gang can make a person feel safe and secure. Even a loveless

marriage allows for some degree of safety, which makes it difficult for people to end the relationship.

Needs of Love, Affection and Belongingness: When the needs for safety and for physiological well-being are satisfied, the next level of needs for love, affection and belongingness emerges. We want to be loved or at least appreciated. Once our physical and safety needs are met we look for ways to meet our need to be loved.

Needs for Esteem: When the first three levels of needs are satisfied the need for esteem emerges. Here we want not just to be liked, but also to be respected. This need involves both personal self-esteem and for the esteem a person obtains from others. We want to be respected for who we are and/or what we do. When this need level is satisfied, we are self-confident. When this need level is not satisfied, we experience feelings of inferiority, helplessness, and worthlessness.

Needs for Self-Actualization: When all of the previous need levels are satisfied, the need for self-actualization emerges. Self-actualization is the need to reach one's potential. What is it you can be? This level is often associated with being creative in order to achieve your potential. At this level, we are less concerned with what other people think about us, but what we think about ourselves. Have we written a paper to our standards, or merely the standards of others? At this level, instead of relying on others to judge us, we judge ourselves using our standards.



9.11.2: "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" (CC BY-SA 3.0; Factoryjoe via Wikimedia Commons, derivative from the original work)

Maslow writes,

*"Even if all these needs are satisfied, we may still often (if not always) expect that a new discontent and restlessness will soon develop, unless the individual is doing what he is fitted for. A musician must make music; an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be happy. What a man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization."*²

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1. Maslow, Abraham. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. New York City: Simon and Schuster, 2013, first published in 1968.
2. Maslow, Abraham and Deborah C. Stevens. *The Maslow Business Reader*. New York: Wiley, 2000.

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3.12: Targeting Strategy

To persuade someone or some group, we want to relate our argument to the need level of our audience. We want to demonstrate that our position or argument will help them satisfy their need level.

Politicians are experts at this strategy. If a politician believes that his audience is worried about national security, that their security need is unmet, he or she will argue for increase for defense. This way if the person votes for them, then their need level of security will be met.

Targeting involves two steps:

- First, clearly identify which need level your audience is on, or at what need level the audience is most vulnerable.
- Second, create a line of reasoning that will appeal directly to that need.

Remember that no two audiences are necessarily on the same level at the same time, and that one type of reasoning will work with one audience and not with another. If your appeal is targeted to one level, and your audience is on another level, the appeal will fail.

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3.13: Changing Attitude and Stasis

Critical thinkers need to remember that before anyone can be persuaded to do anything, that person must be pushed off their stasis. As long as a person is comfortable in his attitudes and behavior, he will not change. Only when a person experiences a significant amount of discomfort can an alternative attitude be substituted. This new attitude, once adopted, will allow him or her to get back to a state of comfort or stasis, restoring the balance between his or her beliefs, values, and attitudes.

As long as you are comfortable with your weight, you will never diet. But your doctor, who you really trust, says that you have to lose 35 pounds or be at risk of acquiring Type II Diabetes. This news knocks you off your stasis and to return to comfort, you go on that diet and create a new stasis.

As communication professors Reike and Sillars write:

*"Values and beliefs function in systems. Thus, several values and beliefs are operative in a given argument over a specific attitude. Within value systems people will share values and beliefs but may also disagree on how they are applied in a specific situation. There will also be disagreements on which values are appropriate to a given situation. Changes in attitude rarely result from adding a new value or eliminating an old one. Changes will most often result from redistributing, rescaling, redeploying, and re-standardizing values."*¹(Rieke, 1993)



9.14.1: "Megaphone Announcement Information" (CC0 1.0; 3dman.eu on Needpix.com)

Reference

1. Rieke, Richard D., and Malcolm Sillars. *Argumentation and Critical Decision Making*. New York: HaperCollins Rhetoric and Society Series, 1993.

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3.14: Last Important Thought

The last few pages have given you suggestions on how to persuade others. But just suppose that the other person's argument is actually better than yours? As strong of an advocate you are for a certain position, when arguing, especially informal and personal arguing, it is important to listen with an open mind. It is great advice to carefully listen to other points of view, first, for not only getting information, but if you listen with an open mind, you might even find out that they just might be right.

By understanding our beliefs, values and needs we can better understand the decisions we make, and why we are comfortable with those decisions.

By understanding the beliefs, values and needs of our audience we can better plan our argumentative and persuasive strategy.

And never be afraid to change your mind. that is how we intellectually grow.

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4: PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES

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4.1: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

An Introduction to Ethos, Logos, and Pathos

YouTube Video

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[View this YouTube Video online](#)



4.2: Introduction to Persuasive Strategies

We've learned that theories attempt to explain a phenomenon (like persuasion) through examination and contemplation of relevant facts and research. A great deal of research has been done to explore, examine and explain human communication, and much of this research and exploration has focused upon persuasion. As a result, we have some interesting and wildly different theories about persuasion, from inoculation theory to the narrative paradigm to the elaboration likelihood model.

Persuasive strategies are different from theories. Again, theories are broader examinations that attempt to explain and predict behavior.; For example, cognitive dissonance theory states that a state of psychological discomfort or dissonance may create a great need to restore cognitive balance that makes folks receptive to persuasive messages - but it doesn't tell you HOW to achieve this. Strategies, on the other hand, are action plans designed to achieve a specific result. There are many persuasive strategies! It's hard to get through a day without being exposed to numerous persuasive strategies; we see them in television ads, social media ads, requests from our friends and family, and the list goes on and on.

Interestingly, one of the early theories relating to attitude change, the Yale attitude change approach, provides an interesting framework by which we can organize persuasive strategies. Carl Hovland, a psychologist at Yale University, did a great deal of work in the 1940s and 1950s that focused upon conditions that affect attitude change (Demirdögen 194). "One of the major contributions of Hovland's research program at Yale was the 'specification of an initial set of characteristics that influence one's acceptance of a persuasive communication'" (Deaux et al. 180). These characteristics can be stated as (1) the source of the persuasive communication, (2) the characteristics of the message, (3) the characteristics of the audience and the context of the message. These "characteristics" that affect attitude change are frequently used as persuasive strategies.

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4.3: Persuasive Strategies Related to the Source

Aristotle would probably be pretty gratified to know that the *ethos* he wrote about over 2500 years ago has very much withstood the test of time and is still very much relevant today. Research consistently demonstrates that source credibility is a big factor in persuasion. The communicator's trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, likeability, similarity, and perceived closeness to the audience are some of the characteristics that have been tested by the researchers.

Perceived **credibility** consists of the judgements made by a message recipient concerning the believability of a communicator (O'Keefe 181).

So how does one establish or improve one's credibility?

Be knowledgeable, trustworthy and attractive. These three characteristics have been measured as positive features that significantly provoke receivers' positive attitude and even purchasing action toward products (Hovland et al. 20). "Both expertise and trustworthiness emerge as basic dimensions of credibility because only when these two aspects exist together can we have reliable communication. A communicator who knows what is correct (has expertise) but who nevertheless misleads the audience (is untrustworthy, has a reporting bias) produces messages that are unreliable guides to belief and action, just as does the sincere (trustworthy) but uninformed (low-expertise, knowledge-biased) communicator" (O'Keefe 184). When advertisements say that "doctors recommend" a product, they are using expertise and trust as a persuasive strategy.

Not surprisingly, research indicates that physical attractiveness can significantly enhance communicator persuasiveness (Chaiken 1394). The use of attractive models and celebrities is most definitely a persuasive strategy! But what if you don't look like Margot Robbie or Regé-Jean Page? Fear not: attractiveness is not just about physical attractiveness. Being funny, authentic and kind makes folks attractive, too.

Be likeable. What does it mean to be likeable? In some communication research, subjects judged those who praise, give compliments, and offer affirming messages as more likeable (Chaiken 755, 757).

Bear in mind that, where judgments about people are concerned, we often run into the **halo effect**. "The halo effect is generally defined as the influence of a global evaluation on evaluations of individual attributes of a person" (Nisbett and Wilson 250). In other words, if we rate a person as nice - a global evaluation - we are likely to rate that person as more attractive or more intelligent or better informed, etc. If we rate a person as unpleasant, that negative evaluation is likely to negatively affect our ratings of other attributes of that person. This may help explain why people who are perceived as more attractive are more likely to be perceived as more likeable, more competent, more honest, etc.

Establish similarity with your audience. Perceived similarity between the source and the receiver is also associated with persuasion. This positive effect has been explained in several ways. One explanation is that similar others might have preferences similar with one's own, which makes their advice more applicable or relevant (Hovland et al. 22). A second explanation is that similar others may be liked more, thus listeners might follow their advice to satisfy a need to maintain connectedness with them (Jiang et al. 788-789). A third explanation is that, when we believe we are similar to someone, we believe we understand their mental state, which in turn creates a degree of certainty. "The feeling of certainty subjectively validates the advice as decision input. Thus similar advisers are more persuasive" (Faraji-Rad 469).

Establish closeness with your audience. A relatively new source characteristic has emerged as more and more persuasion occurs over social media platforms: closeness. "Closeness, as many studies in audience and especially fandom studies have suggested, is commonly utilized by celebrities' mediated images to fulfill fans' psychological needs of constituting intimacy with the fan-object. Portraying a celebrity as a mundane and approachable person who shares similar lifestyle with the so-called 'common people' thus became sufficient strategy to communicate with fans" (Li and Yin 303). Posts that focus on off-staged life, including leisure time, connection with friends, and connection with family and spouse, etc. influence because audiences feel a sense of similarity and empathy for the person. A large quantity of literature in marketing domain suggest that perceived closeness between an endorser and the consumer can have a positive effect on source credibility" (Li and Yin 308). Closeness based on race, gender, sexual preference, and language can significantly affect source credibility, as can perceived closeness to the endorser in overall lifestyle, cultural background, and basic values. This is because closeness is usually significantly associated with endorsers' attributes like competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill (again, we see the halo effect).

Use persuasive language. Appropriate, powerful, vivid, and inclusive language increases persuasiveness. **Appropriate** language

is suitable or fitting for ourselves, as the speaker, our audience, the speaking context, and the speech itself. **Powerful** language can highlight emotive impact, particularly repetition, vivid language that helps listeners create strong mental images, and metaphors. **Honed delivery** and a respectful tone are also rated highly by listeners.

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4.4: Persuasive Strategies Related to the Message

A great deal of research has been done regarding the content of persuasive messages. Whole texts could be written on persuasive strategies relating to content. Below are some of the strategies supported by research. Although all of the tactics below have proven to be effective, some are deceptive and/or manipulative and should be avoided.

Start strong...or finish strong. Should a speaker start with their strongest points, evidence, or arguments (anti-climax order), or should a speaker build up to their strongest material (climax order)? "There might, on average, be some benefit from arranging arguments in a climax order, although likely so small as to be negligible" (O'Keefe 216). More importantly than order, then, is to have good evidence and strong arguments!

Be rational...or maybe not. As we learned in our material on rhetorical analysis, an effective persuader should know their audience as well as possible. We also learned in our communication theory material about the elaboration likelihood and systemic-heuristic models, which theorize that people are motivated to expend more effort to process messages and make judgments about argument quality if they are highly motivated and have the ability to do so. When audiences have low interest or low motivation, they tend not to carefully scrutinize or analyze a message; rather, they depend upon peripheral cues, such as associations with the product, the attractiveness of the presenter, the appeal of accompanying visuals, etc. People simply cannot critically analyze every message we perceive; we are bombarded with messages and we simply wouldn't have time to floss or fall in love or do the things that humans do! If your audience is highly motivated and has the ability to engage in a topic, the well-crafted argument and the evidence that supports it will likely receive the attention they deserve. If, however, your audience may have little interest or motivation to analyze a message, peripheral/heuristic cues like speaker attractiveness, emotional associations, or how those around them are reacting to the message.

We have nothing to fear...or do we? "In many persuasive contexts, message receivers are unable or unmotivated to effectively process rational appeals; in such cases, persuaders often turn to emotional persuasive appeals," in particular: fear (Demirdögen 196). Overblown or over-exaggerated fear appeals are not effective because they are unrealistic. However, when researchers have manipulated fear successfully, high-fear appeals are more effective than low-fear appeals; more fear is better than less (Perloff 162). Kağıtçıbaşı points out that this changes if the listener or listeners lack self-confidence or are highly anxious. Highly confident people can better handle threatening messages and as a consequence are more open to their effects. People lacking in self-confidence are less equipped to handle fear-arousing messages and therefore more likely to ignore them (qtd. in Demirdögen 197).

Tell your audience of your intent to persuade...if you're attractive. "In most persuasive messages, speakers do not explicitly convey their intention to persuade. However, [research] suggests that when the spokespersons used in an advertising campaign are physically attractive or otherwise likeable, the campaign might be made more effective if the spokespersons express their intentions" (Reinhard et al. 257). Attractive male and female salespersons induced more positive attitudes and stronger intentions to purchase a product when they explicitly stated their desire to influence potential buyers than those who did not (253).

Modality matters. Persuasion research on modality often examines three different modalities: visual messages, verbal messages, or a combination of the two: audiovisual messages (Gupta 48). In research relating to persuading children to choose healthy food options, it was found that multimodal/audiovisual presentations are more effective in influencing attitudes and creating healthy eating intentions in children compared to singular (visual-only) presentations (Charry 610). Due to the higher level of attention audiovisual messages create, Charry recommends that "screenwriters of popular programs should be advised to use audio-visual supports, not those that are merely visual, when integrating healthy food consumption messages into their shows for pre-adolescents" (611).

Take sides. "Sidedness" refers to whether a persuasive message is one-sided (containing only one point of view) or a two-sided message (containing pros and cons). Hovland's research found that one-sided messages were more persuasive to people who support the persuader's position, as well as with less educated audience members. For people who are more educated and audiences that are mixed or against the persuader's position, two-sided messages work best (Hovland et al. 225). Two-sided messages appear to be most effective over time, especially when people are opposed to the persuader's point of view (Larson 87).

You've been framed. Check out this message, framed two different ways: "Doing your homework will improve your grade." Conversely: "Not doing your homework will diminish your grade." **Gain-framed persuasive messages** focus on the positives of compliance. **Loss-framed messages** focus on the disadvantages of non-compliance. The message framing effect has been

studied extensively, particularly in health campaigns; e.g., the benefits of wearing sunscreen vs. the dangers of not wearing sunscreen; the benefits of eating fiber vs. the consequences of not eating enough fiber; the benefits of quitting smoking vs. the harm of not quitting, etc. The results are mixed; some studies show that loss-framed messages are more persuasive, often because fear arousal is so compelling, while other studies demonstrate that gain-framed messages are more persuasive. Still other studies found them equally persuasive (Nan 510). Nabi et al. (qtd. in Gass and Seiter 227) found that loss-framed messages tend to arouse negative emotions, while gain-framed messages tend to arouse positive emotions. The intensity of such emotions is associated with message effectiveness. Specifically, gain-framed messages become increasingly persuasive as positive emotions grow in intensity, while loss-framed messages become increasingly persuasive as negative emotions become more intense. "Practically speaking, then, if you want to be persuasive, try boosting people's positive emotions when using gain-framed messages and amplifying their negative emotions when using loss-framed messages" (Gass and Seiter 227).

Know your sequencing techniques. Sometimes, persuasion is like Newton's first law of motion; just as an object in motion tends to stay in motion, a person who says yes tends to continue saying yes - even if a deal changes. This is where the message sequencing tactic of **low-balling** comes in. The common example of the lowballing technique is the car sale: a salesman offers a phenomenal deal on a car and the potential buyer jumps on the deal, only to be told that - oopsie - that particular car is no longer available, or that the original deal forgot to include the cost of some of the car's features, or even that the sales manager has rejected the deal and won't allow the sale to go forward. The original offer is taken back, and the new sale price is much higher. And quite often, the buyer agrees to the new deal. It appears that humans wish to maintain commitment and consistency; a personal commitment has the ability to "build its own support system, a support system of new justifications for the commitment" (Cialdini 99). People appear to "become committed to a choice through an initial inducement and [are] still more dedicated to it after the inducement is removed" (Cialdini 102). Because the low-balling technique is deliberately deceptive, it is an unethical or antisocial persuasion technique. But back to Newton's law regarding objects in motion: a very successful car salesman once told me that, whenever he greets car buyers, he immediately starts asking them questions that he knows will result in a "yes" answer, such as, "Nice day today, huh?" or "So, looking at cars today, huh?" He shared that if he can keep prospective buyers answering in the affirmative, they are much more likely to purchase a car, which speaks to behavioral commitment and consistency.

Start small - and weird. Another common sequencing tactic is the **foot-in-the-door** approach "The idea behind it is to pose an auxiliary and comparatively easy request before the target request, which is considerably more difficult to comply with. A person who complies with the easy initial request will be more inclined to fulfill the subsequent target request. Existing evidence suggests that the foot-in-the-door technique is effective in producing enhanced compliance in many settings and in response to a wide range of requests" (Dolinsky 437). "Once conformity is elicited at all it is more likely to occur in the future" (Freedman and Fraser 196). Interestingly, some research suggests that the more unusual or unique the small, initial request, the more effective the foot-in-the-door technique is. "An unusual request—strange and unlikely to be encountered every day—captures the person's attention, which under conditions of a lack of external justification for the reaction, can make the person more certain about his or her own predisposition to help others (Dolinsky 450). According to this technique, if you needed to ask your professor for an extension on an assignment, you would probably have a better chance of compliance if you made a smaller ask first, such as "Can I have a tissue, please?" Also according to this theory, your chances of getting the extension would be even higher if you made a somewhat unusual request, such as, "Can I have three tissues, please?" Like the low-balling technique, the foot-in-the-door tactic is considered suspect because it is deceptive and manipulative.

Or start really big. The **door-in-the-face** technique increases the likelihood that individuals will comply with a small target request after turning down a larger request (Genshow et al. e2). Cialdini et al. did research which supported this technique in 1975. In the study, student research assistants asked some participants only the smaller target request: would participants be willing to act as chaperones for a group of juvenile delinquents at a two-hour trip to the zoo? For the remaining participants, the research assistants would first ask a large request: whether participants would be willing to work voluntarily as a non-paid counselor at the County Juvenile Detention Center for two hours a week for two years. After participants declined the huge ask, and most of them did, the research assistants would then follow up with the smaller request about chaperoning at the zoo. Far more people agreed to the smaller request if they first declined the larger request (Cialdini et al. 206). The door-in-the-face technique is driven by reciprocity norms: "a shift from an extreme request to a smaller request is perceived as a concession from the requester. After rejecting the extreme request, participants may feel the need to reciprocate to this concession by accepting the subsequent smaller request" (Genshow et al. e5). Again, though, getting your friend to loan you her car by first asking for \$600 to buy Taylor Swift tickets is deceptive, manipulative, and there, unethical.

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4.5: Persuasive Strategies Related to the Audience or Context

Much research has been done regarding whether certain people are more susceptible to persuasion than others. Additionally, research has been done on which media are more persuasive with particular audiences.

Ladies and Gentlemen. Early research in the communication discipline seemed to indicate that women were more susceptible to persuasion than men. Some speculated that this was due to "women's greater verbal ability and thus generally better reception of messages" (Lau 36). Further research revealed, however, that these findings may have been due to other factors: one, that women are socialized to maintain social harmony while men are socialized to be assertive and independent; and two, sex differences in attitude change studies focused on topics that males would be more likely to have stronger opinions on, and thus could appear more resistant to attitude change (Lau 36). Research indicates that women and men have almost equal tendencies to change their attitudes (Eagly and Carli 17).

How do you feel about you? In addition to gender, self-esteem has also been studied as a factor in persuasion. Despite a great deal of research over several decades, the results are mixed; findings in this area are contradictory. Whether a person has high or low regard for themselves has not been established as a factor in persuasion.

Intelligence. As with self-esteem, the research results relating to audience intelligence is mixed, although Deaux et al. found that "highly intelligent people changed their attitudes more than less intelligent people when the message was complex; but when a message was weak....people of lower intelligence were more likely to change their attitudes" (185). The ability to process and scrutinize messages, as well as one's memory/recall abilities, may be factor.

I Forgot. People forget things over time. Memory is heavily studied in the field of psychology, and "forgetting curves" – how learned information slips out of our memories over time – are real. Studies show that persuasion is more persistent than would be suggested by standard forgetting curves, but not by much (Lau 37). It stands to reason, then, that a person with better memory functions will have better retention of attitude change over time. "If attitude change is a function of attention to and comprehension of a persuasive message, then the persistence or stability of that attitude change over time should be a function of the ability to remember the gist of the arguments in that message" (Lau 37).

Talk to me. "Although we may think of Madison Avenue as all powerful, face-to-face interaction is far more effective" (Gass and Seiter 17). Although persuasive messages abound in mass media, reach millions, and sometimes cost small fortunes, they are not more effective than good, old-fashioned personal persuasion. According to Roghanizad and Bohns, people "feel awkward and uncomfortable saying 'no,' both because of what it might insinuate about the requester and because it feels bad to let someone down" (223). It's much easier to ignore requests or persuasion attempts in less personal, mediated forms of communication.

"The medium is the message." This famous Marshall McLuhan quote eloquently expresses his belief that the medium through which we choose to communicate holds as much, if not more, value than the message itself. The channel by which we share a message matters: words printed in a newspaper hit differently than identical words spoken aloud by Morgan Freeman or those same words posted on social media or those same words heard on a radio commercial. How a persuasive message is delivered affects its persuasiveness. As we learned in the elaboration likelihood model and the systemic-heuristic model, some messages require a great deal of thought, elaboration, and mental energy. Some media are more conducive to this than others. Many persuasive messages rely upon heuristic cues, and some media are better-suited for this. "A written message may be more effective in conveying information and initiating systematic processing, particularly information that is difficult to grasp. More direct communication such as videotaped and live presentations, tend to initiate heuristic processing" (Deaux et al. 184). Complex messages and complicated issues may be better communicated in writing, followed up by an oral presentation. When a persuasive message is simple, printed messages produce less attitude change than audio messages and audio messages produce less attitude change than audio-visual messages (Chaiken and Eagly 605).

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5: MOTIVATIONAL APPEALS

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5.1: Introduction



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*In the arms of the angel
Fly away from here
From this dark cold hotel room
And the endlessness that you fear ...*

"Angel" by Sarah McLachlan

As you read these lyrics, chances are that you are recalling the famous—and very sad—ASPCA commercial, which featured photos and videos of abused and neglected animals while this song played. This ad has become somewhat iconic for emotional appeals.

This commercial raised \$30 million in less than two years (Strom). As of this writing, various uploads of the commercial have over 6 million views on *YouTube*. The moral of the story: emotional appeals can be highly effective.

Although we often fancy ourselves to be rational creatures, and Western philosophical tradition tells us over and over that logic and reasoning are the gold-standard of decision making, the reality is that human brains are both emotional *and* logical, and research suggests that a lot of our decision making is based upon emotion. Research by Gallup indicates that "70% of decisions are based on emotion, including brand preference" (Pendell). Emotion affects more than brand preference or consumer behavior; "emotions constitute potent, pervasive, predictable, sometimes harmful and sometimes beneficial drivers of decision making" (Lerner et al.).

People need to feel safe, we need sustenance and affection, we need agency, and we need acceptance, among other things. We all have needs, and we are highly motivated to meet those needs. This brings us to motivational appeals. Gass and Seiter define motivational appeals as "external inducements, often of an emotional nature, that are designed to increase an individual's drive to undertake some course of action" (328). "External inducements" refer to things other than the persuasive message itself which seek to alter peoples' emotions, feelings, and moods.

First, we will distinguish between internal and external motivation as well as positive and negative motivation. We will then examine some common motivational appeals. Lastly, we will explore Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and its implications for persuasion.

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5.2: Internal and External Motivation

Internal and External Motivation

Internal motivation is motivation that comes from within (e.g. contentment, enjoyment, pride, sense of accomplishment, responsibility). **External motivation** is motivation that comes from an external source (e.g. tangible rewards, money, recognition, gifts, praise). People can be internally motivated or externally motivated.

On one hand, some say that extrinsic rewards are more effective and reflective of the real world; people aren't motivated to work without paychecks. Extrinsic motivation can take the form of a hefty pay raise or bonus for an adult. It can be getting the approval of a teacher or being accepted by peers. It can be rewards from a store's loyalty program or volunteering in order to beef up one's resume.

Intrinsic motivation is the incentive we feel to complete a task simply because we find it interesting or enjoyable. We pursue such goals not for external reward, but rather because it aligns with our passions, values, or interests. Because intrinsic motivation comes from within, it is considered by many to be the more effective of the two when it comes to behavior change. With external motivation, when the rewards go away, the behavior goes away.

Eric Reiss, a professor at Ohio State University, believes that "taking many diverse human needs and motivations, putting them into just two categories [internal and external], and then saying one type of motivation is better than another" is inherently flawed (qtd. in Grabmeier). Reiss believes that different people can be motivated in different ways and there is no right or wrong way to motivate. "Individuals differ enormously in what makes them happy - for some, competition, winning and wealth are the greatest sources of happiness, but for others, feeling competent or socializing may be more satisfying. The point is that you can't say some motivations, like money (or other tangible rewards), are inherently inferior...Proponents of intrinsic motivation are also making value judgments by saying some types of motivation are better than others" (Grabmeier).

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5.3: Positive and Negative Motivation

Positive and Negative Motivation

You've probably heard the analogy of the carrot and the stick. This comes from the idea that a horse will walk towards a carrot (a reward) but will walk away from a stick (which can be used for punishment). The carrot is an example of positive motivation: we are motivated by the idea of getting something positive. These positives can be external rewards, such as a bonus, a promotion, or inclusion in a group. Rewards can also be internal, such as the a feeling of accomplishment, the satisfaction of a job well done, or just plain feeling good. The stick is an example of negative motivation: we are motivated by the idea of avoiding or removing a punishment or something unpleasant. Again, the negative motivator can be external, such as an actual physical punishment, a lower grade, a fine, or exclusion from a group. Negative motivators can also be internal, such as feeling like a failure or feelings of remorse or regret. We tend to avoid negative things! As we learned in math, the subtraction of a negative is a positive.

- Motivation Math:
 - The addition of a positive is a positive (financial rewards, praise, feeling of accomplishment, etc.)
 - The subtraction of a negative is a positive (removal of a chore, avoiding a fine, avoiding unpleasant feelings, etc.)
 - The addition of a negative is a negative (paying a fine, receiving a punishment, etc.)
 - The subtraction of a positive is a negative (losing privileges, losing face, demotion, etc.)

Effective persuaders present messages in such a way as to motivate people to pursue positives and/or avoid negatives. Elsewhere in this text, gain-framed and loss-framed messages are discussed as persuasive strategies. Gain-framed messages are positive motivational math: they focus on attaining a desirable outcome or avoiding an undesirable outcome. Loss-framed messages are negative motivational math; they focus on acquiring something undesirable or losing something desirable.

When it comes to emotional states, we tend to gravitate towards positive emotions that lead to good feeling, such as humor, hope, and warmth; and avoid negative emotions that lead to bad feeling or anxiousness, such as fear, pity, and guilt.

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5.4: Common Motivational Appeals

Common Motivational Appeals

Fear

Your childhood was likely full of fear appeals. "You're going to break your neck!" "You'll shoot your eye out!" "If you keep making that face, it's going to stay that way!" As adults, we still encounter a lot of fear appeals, some more subtle than others. Public service announcements frequently incorporate fear appeals; we've probably all seen the "this is your brain on drugs" message. "Fear taps into our primal concerns for survival, making us more apt to take action" (Lindstrom 29). Fear appeals "increase advertising's effect on consumer interest, recall, persuasiveness, and behavior change" (Williams).

According to the extended parallel process model, when people are faced with a threat, the first thing they do is determine if the threat is **severe** enough to warrant action and determine if they are **susceptible** to a threat. For example, although the threat of testicular cancer is quite real, as a woman, I am not susceptible to it, so chances are I would ignore that threat. If we perceive that a threat is severe and that we are susceptible to the threat, the next thing we do is assess whether we believe that the recommended behavior, course of action, or product will prevent or reduce the threat. This is referred to as **response efficacy**. If we believe we are capable of doing the recommended behavior or obtaining the recommended product, etc., we believe we have high **self-efficacy**. Fear appeals work when people believe the threat is severe, relevant, and that they are in a position to do something about the threat.

There are some caveats for fear appeals, however. Too much fear can be viewed by audiences as manipulative, and when fear appeals are presented in conjunction with disgusting images, "aversive activation reaches a point where there is some defensive withdrawal of cognitive resources from encoding a message" (Leshner et al 86). In other words, fear combined with disgusting images can lead people to a defensive avoidance response; they simply stop paying attention to the message. (Again, people typically avoid negative things.) People distance themselves from too much emotional discomfort. Fear appeals also fail if people do not perceive the threat to be real or relevant, if they do not believe the response advocated for will work, or if they do not believe they are capable of executing the requested response.

Humor

Who doesn't love a good laugh? But does laughter and/or humor lead to persuasion? Humor is defined as a psychological response characterized by the appraisal that something is funny, the positive emotion of amusement, and the tendency to laugh (Warren et al.). An analysis of 369 correlations between humor and advertising found that humor increases brand recognition, brand attitudes, and audience attention (Eisend 191). Humor does not appear to impact cognitive processes, having neither positive nor negative effects on message processing. Interestingly, the analysis found that the overall effect of humor on credibility is negative (Eisend 200). A more recent study analyzed specific types of humor, including incongruity resolution, tension relief, and humorous self-disparagement and how they affect the perceived warmth and competence of an organization. Incongruity resolution improves competence but only when consumers can resolve the incongruity. Tension relief enhances a company's warmth. Humorous self-disparagement reduces impressions of competence, while other-disparagement reduces both warmth and competence (Hoang et al.).

Life experiences teaches us that people have wildly different senses of humor, so it stands to reason that what one person finds hilarious another might find offensive. One must exercise caution when using humor appeals. Furthermore, Walter et al. found that there is no effect for people using humor in health communications, which isn't terribly surprising, given that most people take their health pretty seriously (365).

Sex

We've probably all heard the adage that "sex sells". But does it? A sexual appeals is a "persuasion attempt that uses words, images and/or actions by models to evoke sexual thoughts, feelings, and/or arousal in a target audience" (Wirtz et al. 169). Advertising research reveals that "sexual appeals are attention-getting, arousing, affect-inducing, and memorable" (Reichert et al. 1). In social marketing campaigns, sexual appeals that are relevant, free of sexism, and appealing to both genders are persuasive: "sexual

appeals are attention-getting, likeable, dynamic, and somewhat more apt to increase interest in the topic than are nonsexual appeals. In a saturated media environment, the ability to attract favorable attention and interest to the message is vital" (Reichert et al. 13).

In a more recent study specific to social media advertising, it was found that "an ad using sex appeal and a control ad without sex appeal for the same brand ran on Facebook for the same 5-day period. Results indicated the sex appeal ad outperformed the control ad in terms of engagement but not in actual sales" (Stewart et al. 701). Yet another study found that people remembered the sexual content of ads but not the brands associated with them, citing the evolutionary emotional arousal theory as explanation: "cognitive overload caused by sexual content should lead to poorer recall of all details that do not contain sexual content because individuals have an evolutionary pre-disposition to attend to evolutionarily significant cues like sex" (Lawrence et al.) It would appear that, although sexual appeals are liked, remembered, and attention-getting, evidence is scant that they lead to long-term behavior or attitude change.

Hope

Hope has been found to be an important coping strategy when facing adversities, as hope is positively associated with individual resilience, psychological well-being, as well as decreased depression and distress (Tao et al. 3). A hope appeal is a message strategy that attempts to persuade people to adopt a specific action by arousing hope. Hope has the potential to persuade people to adopt various behaviors. Indeed, Chadwick defines hope as a discrete, future-oriented emotion that can motivate people's behavior by focusing their thoughts on opportunities to achieve future rewards (Chadwick).

Hope is not only a coping strategy for reducing stress, anxiety, and the psychological effects of adversity, but can also serve as a pivotal resource to facilitate goal-directed actions, including broadening one's openness to different perspectives and thus persuasion (Tao et al. 3). How does hope work? It turns out that emotions affect our susceptibility to misinformation. Depression is associated with beliefs in both misinformation and conspiracy theories. Anger can make us susceptible to anger-inducing rumors, and anxiety increases our reliance upon the information environment, making partisanship more believable (Tao et al. 2). Fear is no friend to information processing, as fear generates the desire to alleviate or avoid threat, thus making people more vulnerable to misinformation.

In a study relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tao et al. found that hope appeals reduce misconceptions to a similar degree as factual correction. Of considerable note, however, is how hope appeals and factual corrections differ *in the presence of a threat*. Not only do hope appeals induce more positive feelings than simple factual rebuttals, but hope appeals appear to be more sensitive to threat, and hope appeals in combination (i.e., words of optimistic outlook, individual efficacy, and collective/group efficacy) are powerful. Particularly during threats to public health, deploying the combined version of hope appeal corrections is very promising in counteracting misperception-inducing threats and fear (Tao et al. 9).

Pity

The Sarah McLachlan ASPCA ad, mentioned earlier in this chapter, is an iconic example of the pity appeal. But what, exactly, is pity? When we see someone (or something) experiencing distress, pain, or misfortune, we humans tend to feel compassion, sympathy, or sorrow. When we see suffering, especially among those who cannot help themselves, we tend to want to alleviate that suffering. Witnessing such things causes most people to feel sad, frustrated, or regret for the situation.

The classical rhetoricians deemed the appeal to pity to be a logical fallacy, *argumentum ad misericordiam* (Walton 1). Many philosophers believed – and continue to believe – that appealing to emotions such as pity and fear bypasses our ability to think. Furthermore, some believe that, because pity is so susceptible to manipulation, it is highly suspect and never a valid justification for action.

Others, however, argue that pity itself isn't bad. Imagine not feeling sorrow or distress in the presence of suffering! Perhaps, rather, emotion should not be excluded from reason, "since our emotions are often informative and are sometimes more reliable guides to action than argument" (Kimball 302).

Whether one sees pity as a logical fallacy or a reliable guide to action, there is no denying its power as a persuasive appeal. GoFundMe campaigns, which often appeal to compassion and sympathy, have raised over \$30 billion dollars since 2010, with giving spikes noted on or around distressing events, such as the day Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin collapsed on live television and in the days following the Uvalde, Texas school shooting (Beaty).

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5.5: Appeals to Human Needs

Appeals to Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs states that there are several layers of needs that human beings pursue. They include physiological, safety, social, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs (Maslow 372-382). Since these needs are fundamental to human survival and happiness, tapping into needs is a common persuasive strategy. Appeals to needs are often paired with positive or negative motivation, which can increase the persuasiveness of the message.



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Physiological needs form the base of the hierarchy of needs. The closer the needs are to the base, the more important they are for human survival. Persuaders do not appeal to physiological needs. After all, a person who doesn't have food, air, or water isn't very likely to want to engage in persuasion, and it wouldn't be ethical to deny or promise these things to someone for persuasive gain. Some persuaders attempt to appeal to self-actualization needs, but that this is difficult to do ethically. Self-actualization refers to our need to achieve our highest potential, and these needs are much more intrapersonal than the others. We achieve our highest potential through things that are individual to us, and these are often things that we protect from outsiders. Some examples include pursuing higher education and intellectual fulfillment, pursuing art or music, or pursuing religious or spiritual fulfillment. These are often things we do by ourselves and for ourselves, so many think of this as sacred ground that should be left alone. Persuaders are more likely to be successful at focusing on safety, social, and self-esteem needs.

We satisfy our safety needs when we work to preserve our safety and the safety of our loved ones. Persuaders can combine appeals to safety with positive motivation by presenting information that will result in increased safety and security. Combining safety needs and negative motivation, a speaker may convey that audience members' safety and security will be put at risk if the speaker's message isn't followed. Combining negative motivation and safety needs depends on using some degree of fear as a motivator. Think of how the insurance industry relies on appeals to safety needs for their business. While this is not necessarily a bad strategy, it can be done more or less ethically.

Ethics of Using Fear Appeals

- Do not overuse fear appeals.
- The threat must be credible and supported by evidence.
- Empower the audience to address the threat.

I saw a perfect example of a persuasive appeal to safety while waiting at the shop for my car to be fixed. A pamphlet cover with a yellow and black message reading, “Warning,” and a stark black and white picture of a little boy picking up a ball with the back fender of a car a few feet from his head beckoned to me from across the room. The brochure was produced by an organization called Kids and Cars, whose tagline is “Love them, protect them.” While the cover of the brochure was designed to provoke the receiver and compel them to open the brochure, the information inside met the ethical guidelines for using fear appeals. The first statistic noted that at least two children a week are killed when they are backed over in a driveway or parking lot. The statistic is followed by safety tips to empower the audience to address the threat.

Fear appeals aimed at safety needs can be persuasive. The goal is to get the attention of audience members and compel them to check out the information the organization provides. When the information provided by the organization or persuader supports the credibility of the threat, empowers the audience to address the threat, and is free, this is an example of an ethical fear appeal.

Our social needs relate to our desire to belong to supportive and caring groups. We meet social needs through interpersonal relationships ranging from acquaintances to intimate partnerships. We also become part of interest groups or social or political groups that help create our sense of identity. The existence and power of peer pressure is a testament to the motivating power of social needs. People go to great lengths and sometimes make poor decisions they later regret to be a part of the “in-group.” Advertisers often rely on creating a sense of exclusivity to appeal to people’s social needs. Positive and negative motivation can be combined with social appeals. Positive motivation is present in messages that promise the receiver “in-group” status or belonging, and negative motivation can be seen in messages that persuade by saying, “Don’t be left out.” Although these arguments may rely on the bandwagon fallacy to varying degrees, they draw out insecurities people have about being in the “out-group.”

We all have a need to think well of ourselves and have others think well of us, which ties to our self-esteem needs. Messages that combine appeals to self-esteem needs and positive motivation often promise increases in respect and status. A financial planner may persuade by inviting a receiver to imagine prosperity that will result from accepting his or her message. A publicly supported radio station may persuade listeners to donate money to the station by highlighting a potential contribution to society. The health and beauty industries may persuade consumers to buy their products by promising increased attractiveness. While it may seem shallow to entertain such ego needs, they are an important part of our psychological makeup. Unfortunately, some sources of persuasive messages are more concerned with their own gain than the well-being of others and may take advantage of people’s insecurities in order to advance their persuasive message. Instead, ethical speakers should use appeals to self-esteem that focus on prosperity, contribution, and attractiveness in ways that empower listeners.

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6: EMOTIONAL APPEALS

6.1: Fear Appeals- The Extended Parallel Process Model

6.2: Applications of the Extended Parallel Process Model

6.3: Hope Appeals- Persuasive Hope Theory

6.4: Applications of Persuasive Hope Theory

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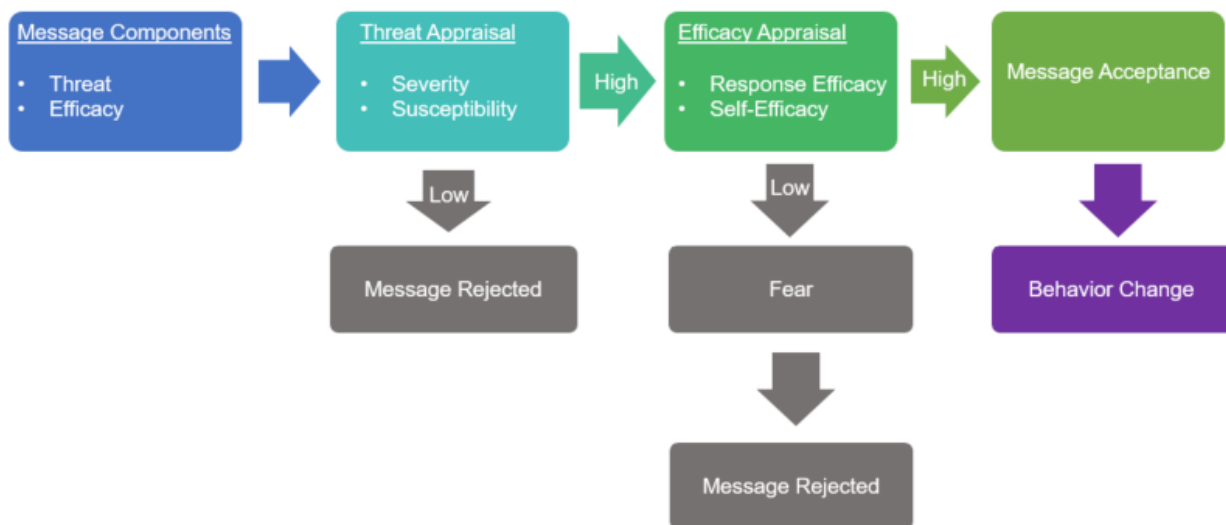
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6.1: Fear Appeals- The Extended Parallel Process Model

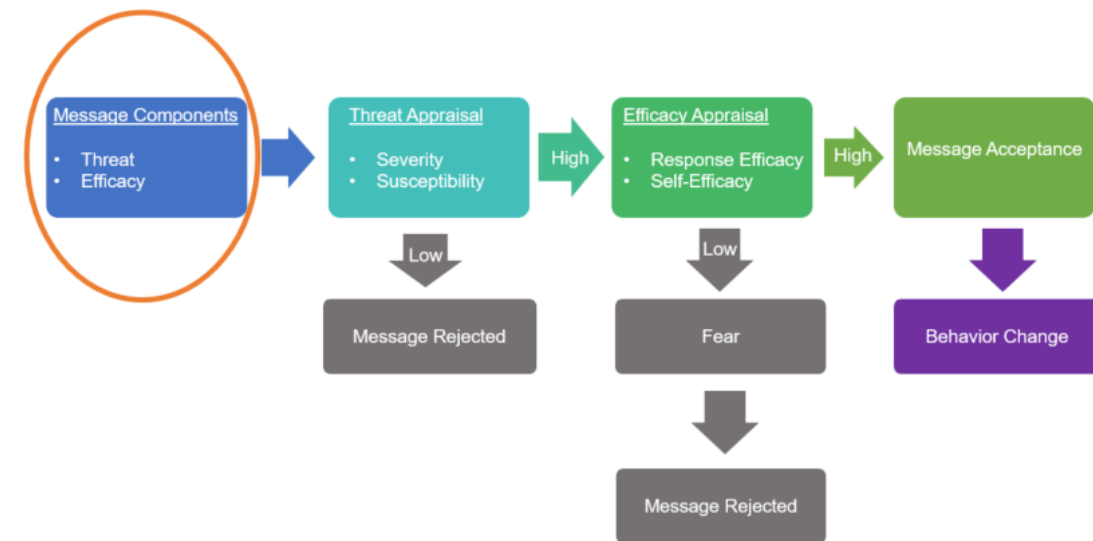
How many times have you come across a message that tries to scare people into doing something? For example, messages may attempt to use fear to persuade people to stop smoking, refrain from drinking alcohol and driving, wear a helmet, and so on.

Importantly, messages that use fear are not always effective, and communication theories can be used to help explain when these fear appeals likely will or will not work. This chapter reviews fear appeals and explains how to create effective fear appeal messages.

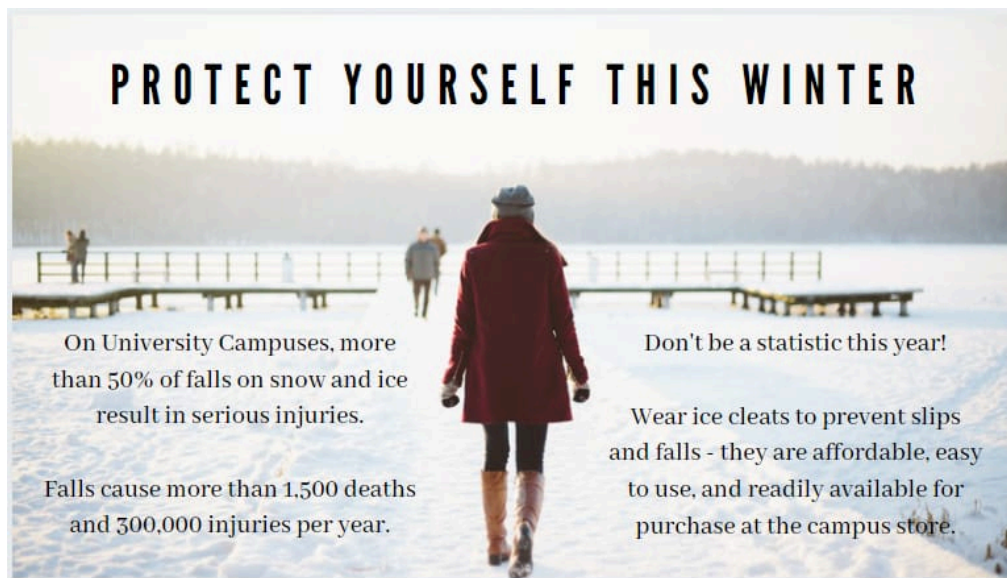
A fear appeal is a message strategy that attempts to persuade people to adopt a specific action by arousing fear. Fear appeals have a long history, including Levanthal's (1970, 1971) parallel process model and Roger's (1975, 1983) protection motivation theory. This chapter focuses on the most frequently used fear appeal theory today, which is Witte's (1992) Extended Parallel Process Model. The Extended Parallel Process Model describes when a message with fear will be effective and when it will not. The image below depicts the Extended Parallel Process Model:



The Extended Parallel Process Model begins with a fear appeal message, which includes message content related to a specific threat and the efficacy of a specific recommended behavior to resolve that threat. This part of the model is highlighted in the figure below:



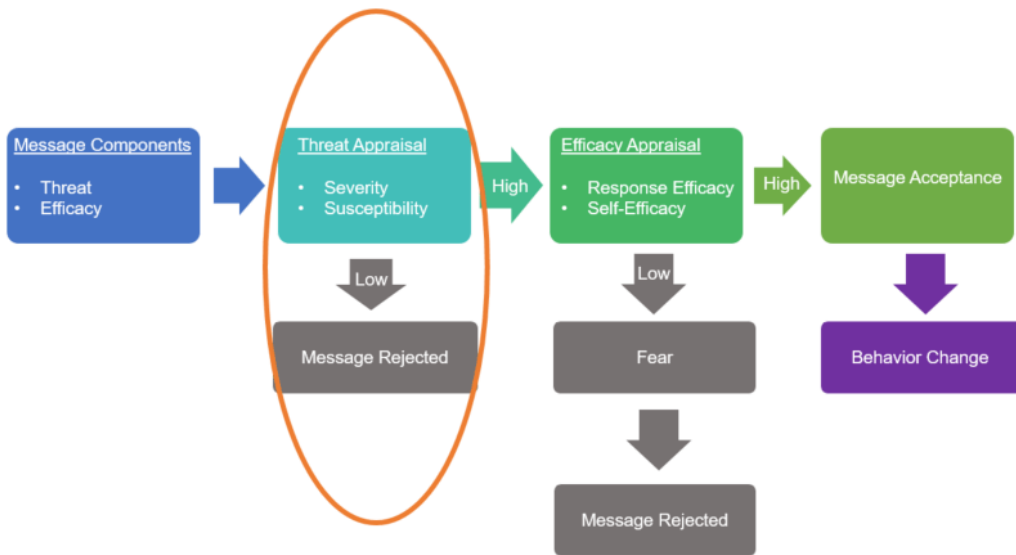
For example, a threat might be icy sidewalks on a university campus, and a specific recommended behavior to resolve that threat might be to wear ice cleats. Here is an example message:



According to the Extended Parallel Process Model, the first thing someone does when reading the message is to appraise the threat. This includes assessing whether they perceive that the threat is severe, which refers to their perception of the magnitude of the threat (i.e., **perceived severity**), and whether they perceive that they are susceptible to the threat, which refers to their perception of the likelihood that the threat will impact them (i.e., **perceived susceptibility**).

In the above example, this would be whether or not someone reading the message perceives that falls on snow and ice are severe (e.g., “Falls cause more than 1,500 deaths and 300,000 injuries per year”) and whether or not they perceive that they are susceptible to falling on snow and ice (e.g., “On University Campuses”). For example, a student in Florida might perceive that falling on snow and ice is severe, but they might not believe they are susceptible to falling on snow and ice on their Florida campus. A student in Alaska, on the other hand, might perceive that falling on snow and ice is severe and that they are susceptible to it on their Alaska campus.

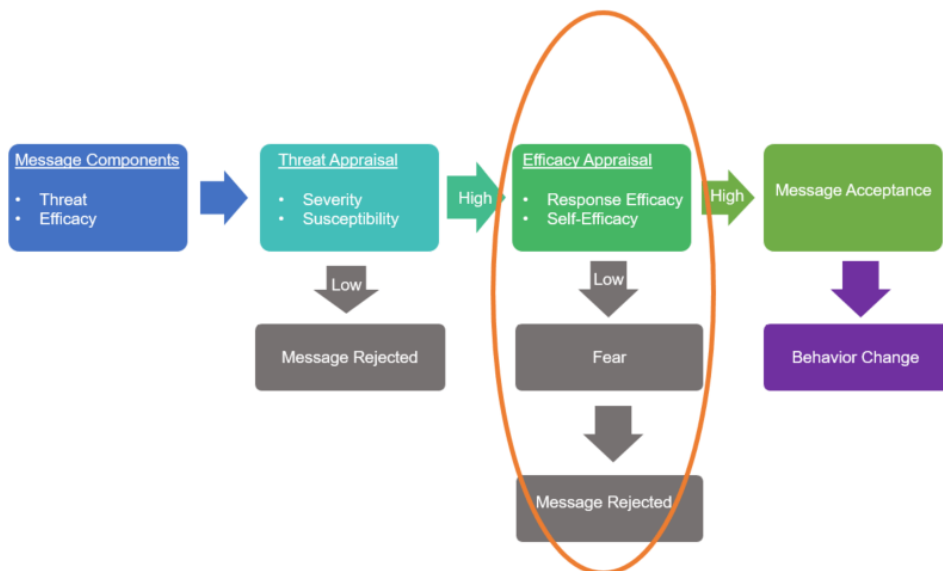
If someone perceives the threat as low (i.e., if the person does not believe the threat is severe and/or does not believe they are susceptible to the threat) then they will reject the message. This part of the model is highlighted in the figure below:



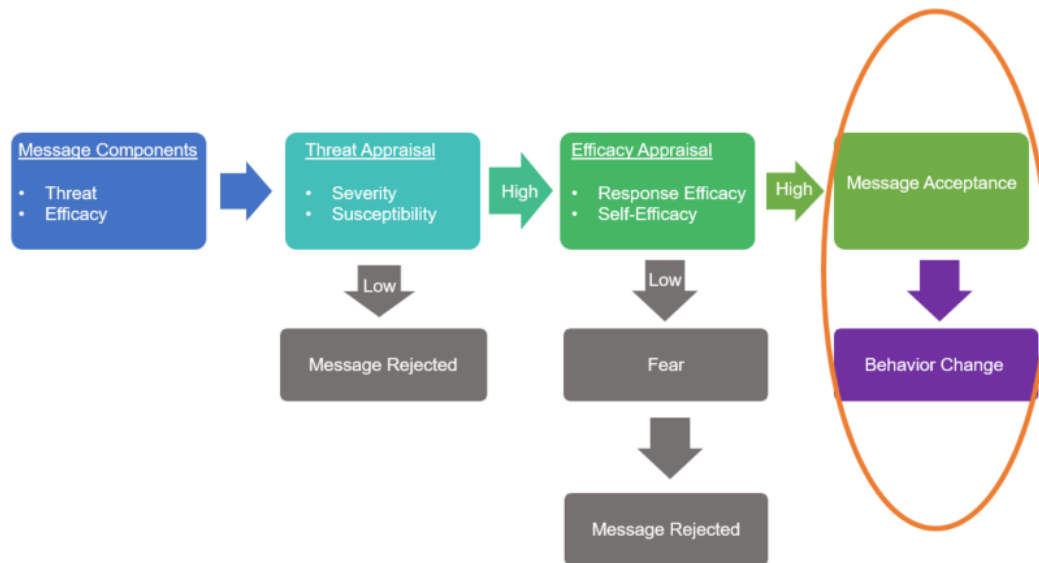
If someone perceives the threat as high (i.e., if the person believes the threat is severe and that they are susceptible to it) then they will keep reading the message. The next thing they will do is appraise the efficacy. This includes assessing whether they believe that the recommended behavior will prevent or reduce the threat, which is referred to as **response efficacy**, and whether they believe they are capable of doing the recommended behavior, which is referred to as **self-efficacy**.

In the above example, this would be whether or not someone reading the message perceives that the recommended behavior to wear ice cleats would prevent a fall on ice (i.e., response efficacy) and whether they believe they are capable of affording, using, and finding ice cleats (i.e., self-efficacy). For example, someone might believe that ice cleats would work to prevent falls (i.e., high response efficacy) but might also think they would not be able to afford them (i.e., low self-efficacy). Someone else might think that ice cleats would work to prevent falls (i.e., high response efficacy) and might also think they could afford to purchase them (i.e., high self-efficacy).

If someone perceives the efficacy as low (i.e., if the person does not believe that the recommended behavior would prevent the threat and/or does not believe they are capable of enacting the recommended behavior) then they will reject the message. This part of the model is highlighted in the figure below:



If someone perceives the efficacy as high (i.e., they have both high response efficacy and self-efficacy), they will accept the message. According to the Extended Parallel Process Model, someone who accepts the message is then likely to change their behavior accordingly. This part of the model is highlighted in the figure below:



What influences the relationship between message acceptance and behavior change?

The Extended Parallel Process Model states that message acceptance leads to behavior change; however, similar to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Chapters 4 & 5) and the Technology Acceptance Model (Chapters 6 & 7), message acceptance does not always guarantee behavior change. For example, someone might accept the message and intend to buy and use ice cleats but not follow through. There are several factors that influence the strength of the relationship between message acceptance and behavior change.

First, in order to best predict behavior change, the message acceptance beliefs must relate to specific intentions and a subsequent specific behavior. Any given behavior can include an action, target, context and time period. For example, a goal might be “to use ice cleats every time when walking outside during winter.” In this example, “using ice cleats” is the action, “every time” is the target, “when walking outside” is the context, and “during winter” is the time period. As the specificity of the behavior increases, message acceptance becomes a better predictor of behavior change.

Additionally, the temporal stability of message acceptance influences the strength of the relationship between message acceptance and behavior. If an individual's message acceptance fluctuates over time (e.g., some days I perceive the threat of falling to be high and other days I do not), then message acceptance measured at one particular time might not predict subsequent behavior change (e.g., Rhodes & Dickau, 2013). As the stability of an individual's message acceptance increases over time, message acceptance becomes a better predictor of behavior.

When is it appropriate to use fear in persuasive messages?

Fear can be an effective persuasive tool when following the Extended Parallel Process Model. Very importantly, however, there are certain conditions where fear may be appropriate and other conditions where fear may be inappropriate or even unethical. Indeed, Peters, Ruiter, and Kok (2013) note that high feelings of threat when coupled with low efficacy can cause people to engage in health-defeating behaviors. Thus, using fear only works when the population has a high baseline efficacy or when the message also includes powerful information to enhance efficacy (Peters et al., 2013). Together, this suggests that fear is only appropriate when the message recipients have high response and self-efficacy regarding the recommended behavior or when it is possible to strongly increase their response and self-efficacy with the message. When efficacy is low, other persuasive tools should be used (e.g., see Chapters 12 & 13 on Hope Appeals).

How can the Extended Parallel Process Model be used to create persuasive messages?

The Extended Parallel Process Model specifies that it is possible to change someone's behavior by influencing their perceived threat (i.e., perceived severity and perceived susceptibility) and perceived efficacy (i.e., response efficacy and self-efficacy).

Perceived Severity

The Extended Parallel Process Models notes that vivid language can be used to increase perceptions that a specific health

threat is severe. Vivid language and descriptions to increase perceptions of severity include specific references to the severity of the threat (e.g., the magnitude of harm) and the terrible consequences of a health threat (Witte & Allen, 2000). Witte (1992) also stated gruesome symptom descriptions are a form of vivid language. Examples ranged from neutral language (“the patient complained of fatigue and a rash”) to moderately vivid language (“the patient complained of fatigue and lumps on the neck”) to extremely vivid language (“the patient complained of fatigue and bleeding, oozing sores all over his body”; Witte, 1994, p. 120).

Perceived Susceptibility

The Extended Parallel Process Models states that personalistic language or imagery can be used to increase perceptions that someone is susceptible to a specific health threat. Personalistic language and descriptions can include references to the target population’s susceptibility to the specific health threat (e.g., their likelihood of experiencing the negative consequences of the threat; Witte & Allen, 2000). Personalistic language could also emphasize the similarities between people impacted by the health threat and the target audience (e.g., “You face a 40% chance of facing these consequences”; see Witte & Allen, 2000).

Response Efficacy

There are some message strategies that could be used to increase a message reader’s perceived response efficacy. For example, the message could provide examples of when the recommended behavior has previously effectively prevented the threat (e.g., “This has worked in the past!”) or explicitly state ways that the recommended behavior will prevent the threat.

Self-Efficacy

Various message strategies could be used to increase a message reader’s perceived self-efficacy. For example, the message could provide examples of others who have successfully performed the behavior (e.g., “If they can do it, I can do it”), provide verbal encouragement (e.g., “You can do it!”; O’Keefe, 2016), or explicitly state that the recommended behavior is affordable, easy to implement, and so on. Any of these strategies individually, or concurrently, could influence a person’s perceptions of self-efficacy.

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6.2: Applications of the Extended Parallel Process Model

Alejandra Salazar, Auston L. Vreeland, Amber K. Worthington, & Parker Yeates*

**Authors names are listed in alphabetical order; all authors contributed equally to this chapter*

Fear appeals, specifically the Extended Parallel Process Model (Witte, 1992), are explained in detail in Chapter 10. Of note, the Extended Parallel Process Model is only appropriate to use when the target audience has a high perception of efficacy already or when it is possible to increase efficacy with message content.

The Extended Parallel Process Model can be used to design messages to try to persuade college students to drink adequate amounts of water, take a vitamin D supplement, and wear reflective clothing. Examples on these topics are provided below by Alejandra Salazar, Auston L. Vreeland, and Parker Yeates, respectively. The authors felt that their intended audience (college students) would have preexisting high efficacy to engage in the recommended behaviors in these examples, thus making fear an appropriate persuasive tool. Message content related to response and self-efficacy are of course included to reinforce high perceptions of efficacy.

Example by Alejandra Salazar



The Extended Parallel Process Model can be used to persuade college students to drink adequate amounts of water. A persuasive fear appeal message would need to influence students' perceptions of threat and efficacy.

Perceptions of threat include perceived severity and perceived susceptibility. The example message above states that "75% of Americans are chronically dehydrated" and that dehydration can lead to "dry lips & skin, nausea, fatigue, and feeling dizzy, irritable, or tired." This message content specifically references the magnitude of harm and negative consequences of the health threat, which can increase perceived severity.

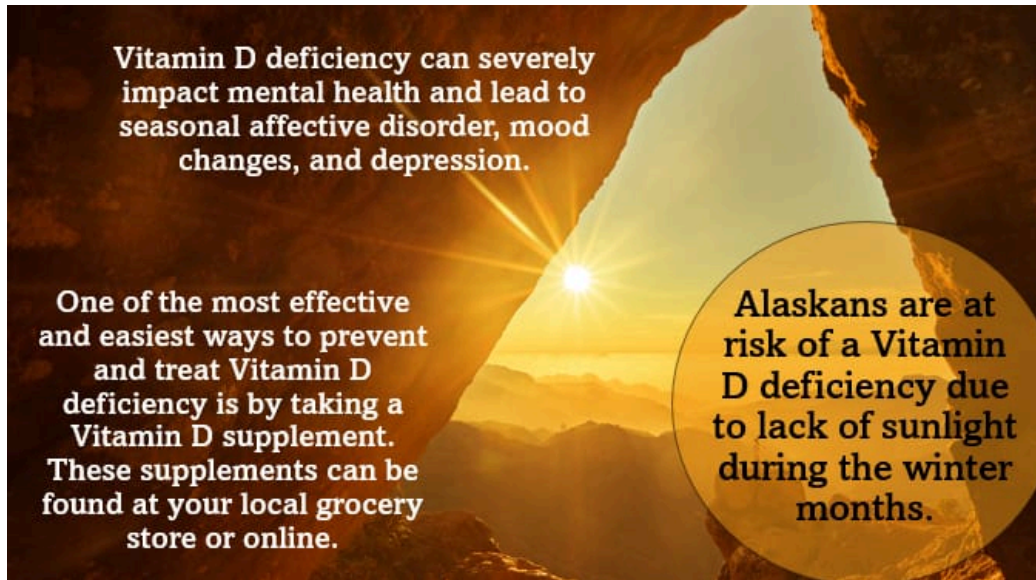
The example message also specifically references that dehydration impacts "Americans" and, in particular, "college students who deal with busy schedules." This message content specifically references the likelihood that college students in the United States of America could experience the negative consequences of the health threat, which can increase perceived susceptibility.

Perceptions of efficacy include response efficacy and self-efficacy. The example message above states that "drinking at least 11 cups of water a day can keep dehydration away." This explicitly states that the recommended behavior, drinking water, will prevent the health threat, which can increase perceived response efficacy.

The example message above also provides strategies to make enacting the recommended behavior, drinking 11 cups of water,

easier. This includes the suggestion to buy a reusable water bottle, to refill the water bottle at convenient locations across campus, and to keep track of water consumption using a free app. All of this information can help increase the college students' beliefs that drinking water would be easy to implement, thus potentially increasing perceived self-efficacy.

Example by Auston L. Vreeland



The Extended Parallel Process Model can be used to persuade college students in Alaska to take a Vitamin D supplement. A persuasive fear appeal message would need to influence students' perceptions of threat and efficacy.

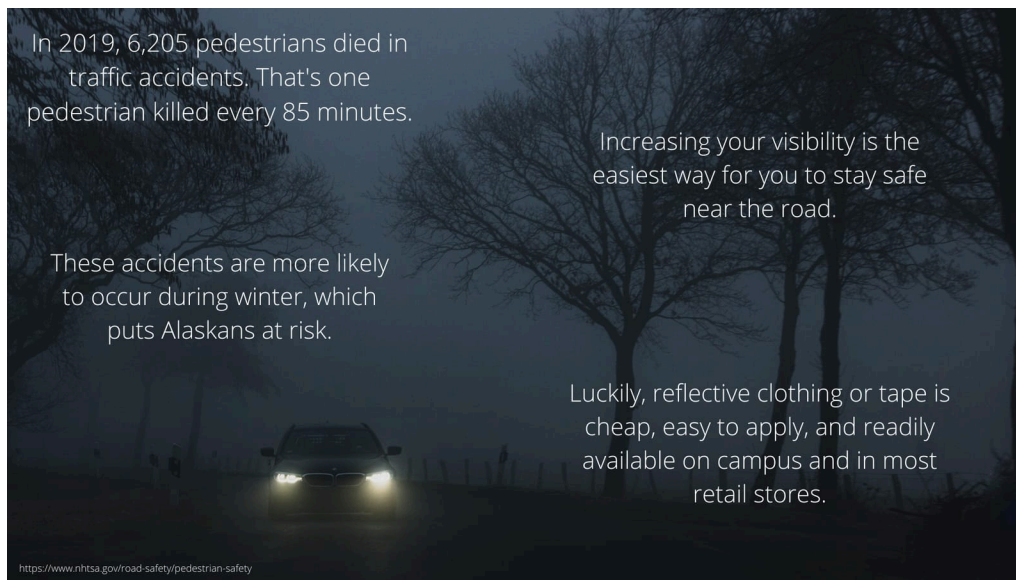
Perceptions of threat include perceived severity and perceived susceptibility. The example message above states that "Vitamin D deficiency can severely impact mental health and lead to seasonal affective disorder, mood changes, and depression." This message content specifically references the magnitude of harm and negative consequences of the health threat, which can increase perceived severity.

The example message also specifically states that "Alaskans are at risk of a Vitamin D deficiency due to lack of sunlight during the winter months." This message content specifically references the likelihood that college students in Alaska could experience the negative consequences of the health threat, which can increase perceived susceptibility.

Perceptions of efficacy include response efficacy and self-efficacy. The example message above states that "One of the most effective and easiest ways to prevent and treat Vitamin D deficiency is by taking a Vitamin D supplement." This explicitly states that the recommended behavior, taking a Vitamin D supplement, will prevent the health threat, which can increase perceived response efficacy.

The example message above also states that "These supplements can be found at your local grocery store or online." This can help increase the Alaskan students' beliefs that taking a Vitamin D supplement would be easy to implement, thus potentially increasing perceived self-efficacy.

Example by Parker Yeates



The Extended Parallel Process Model can be used to persuade college students to wear reflective clothing when it is dark outside. A persuasive fear appeal message would need to influence students' perceptions of threat and efficacy.

Perceptions of threat include perceived severity and perceived susceptibility. The example message above states that "In 2019, 6,205 pedestrians died in traffic accidents. That's one pedestrian killed every 85 minutes." This message content specifically references the magnitude of harm and negative consequences of the health threat, which can increase perceived severity.

The example message also specifically notes that "These accidents are more likely to occur during winter, which puts Alaskans at risk." This message content specifically references the likelihood that those in Alaska could experience the negative consequences of the health threat, which can increase perceived susceptibility.

Perceptions of efficacy include response efficacy and self-efficacy. The example message above states that "Increasing your visibility is the easiest way for you to stay safe near the road." This explicitly states that the recommended behavior, increasing your visibility, will prevent the health threat, which can increase perceived response efficacy.

The example message above also notes that "reflective clothing or tape is cheap, easy to apply, and readily available on campus and in most retail stores." This information can help increase the Alaskan students' beliefs that increasing their visibility by applying reflective tape or purchasing reflective clothing would be easy to implement, thus potentially increasing perceived self-efficacy.

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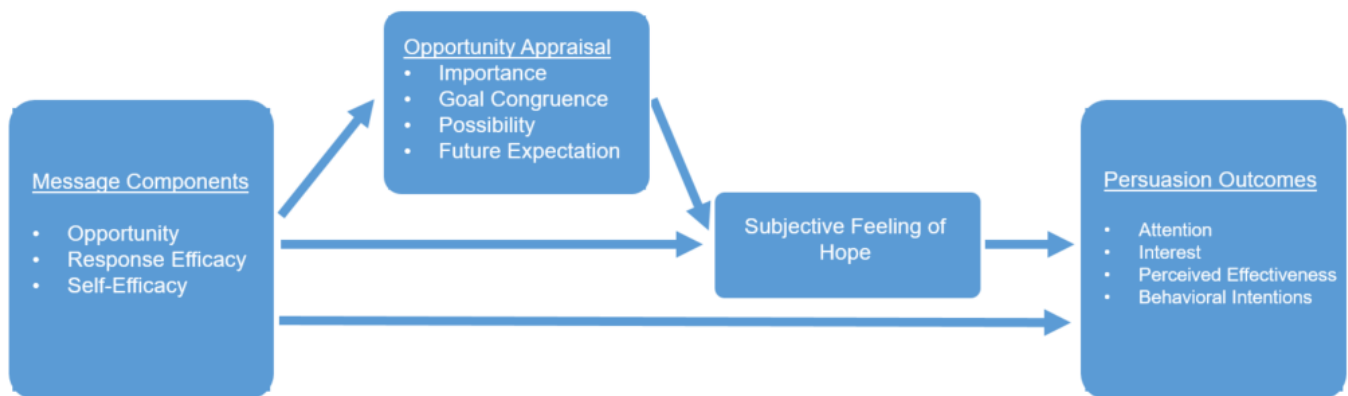
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6.3: Hope Appeals- Persuasive Hope Theory

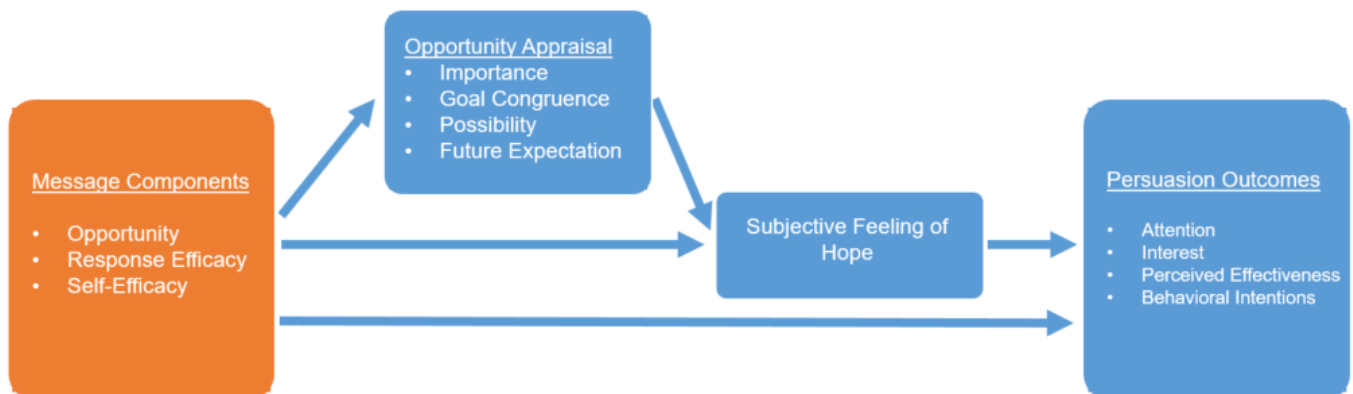
Acknowledgements: The examples used in this chapter were provided by Jordan Q. Ahgeak. The examples were adapted for use in this chapter by the author.

Hope has the potential to persuade people to adopt various behaviors. Indeed, hope is a discrete, future-oriented emotion that can motivate people's behavior by focusing their thoughts on opportunities to achieve future rewards (Chadwick, 2015).

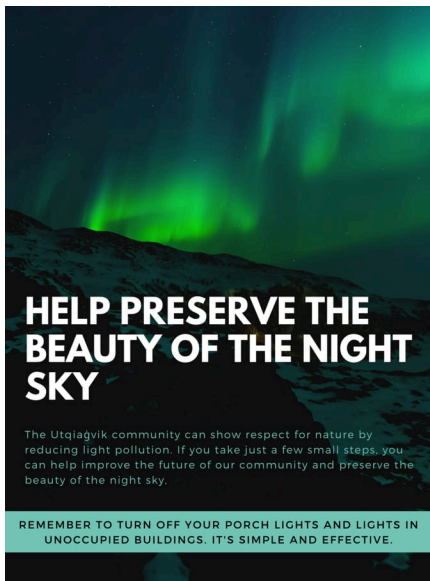
A hope appeal is a message strategy that attempts to persuade people to adopt a specific action by arousing hope. Hope appeals are a relatively recent addition to the study of persuasion (see Chadwick, 2010), and this chapter focuses on Persuasive Hope Theory (Chadwick, 2015). Persuasive Hope Theory defines hope and describes the message features needed for an effective hope appeal. The image below depicts Persuasive Hope Theory:



Persuasive Hope Theory begins with a hope appeal message, which includes message content related to a specific opportunity and the efficacy of a specific recommended behavior to achieve a desired outcome. This part of the theory is highlighted in the figure below:



For example, Jordan Q. Ahgeak (see Acknowledgements) noted that one opportunity in Alaska might be to reduce light pollution in Utqiaġvik (also known as Barrow), and a specific recommended behavior to achieve that outcome might be to lessen the amount of insignificant artificial lighting (for example, turning off porch lights and turning off lights of unoccupied buildings/offices). Here is an example message:



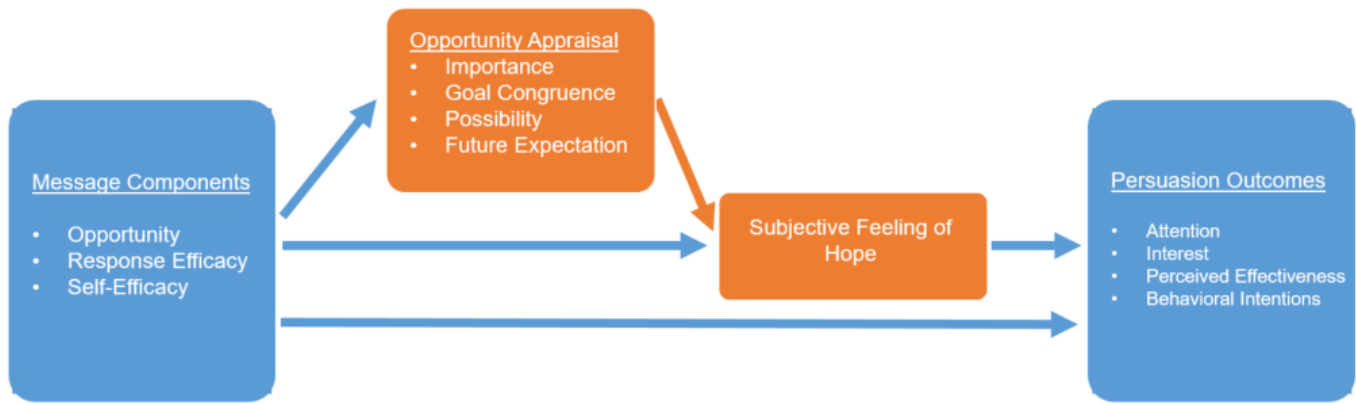
According to Persuasive Hope Theory, the first thing someone does when reading the message is to appraise the opportunity. This includes assessing the opportunity using perceptions of importance, goal congruence, possibility, and future expectation. In the above example, this would be whether or not someone reading the message perceives that reducing light pollution in Utqiaġvik is important, congruent with their goals, possible, and would lead to a better future.

Perceived importance includes an assessment of whether the future outcome is personally relevant. **Perceived goal congruence** refers to whether the future outcome is consistent with and favorable to their personal goals or motives. **Perceived possibility** includes an assessment of the likelihood of the future outcome, and **perceived future expectation** refers to whether the outcome would lead to a better future.

The message component designed to lead to appraisals of **importance** and **goal congruence** connects reducing light pollution to preserving “the beauty of the night sky” and showing “respect for nature.” This was done because Jordan Ahgeak noted that her Utqiaġvik community follows a traditional set of twelve values: Avoidance of Conflict, Compassion, Cooperation, Family and Kinship, Humility, Humor, Hunting Traditions, Knowledge of our Language, Love and Respect for our Elders and One Another, Respect for Nature, Sharing, and Spirituality. The community members have learned, taught, and incorporated these values throughout their lives and subsistence living, thus underscoring the personal relevance and importance of respecting nature for a message recipient from Utqiaġvik. The **possibility** and **future expectation** message components indicate that it is likely that the message recipient can help improve the situation, which would make the future better.

When reading this message, someone in the contiguous United States (or Lower 48) might believe that preserving the beauty of the night sky in Utqiaġvik is possible, but they might not believe that this outcome is personally important to them, is congruent with their goals, or that it would lead to a better future. A community member in Utqiaġvik, on the other hand, might perceive that preserving the beauty of the night sky is important, congruent with their personal goals, possible, and would lead to a better future.

If someone perceives the opportunity as low (i.e., if the person does not believe the opportunity is important, goal congruent, possible, and/or would lead to a better future) then they will not feel hope. If someone perceives the opportunity as high (i.e., if the person does believe the opportunity is important, goal congruent, possible, and would lead to a better future) then they will feel hope. This part of the theory is highlighted in the figure below:

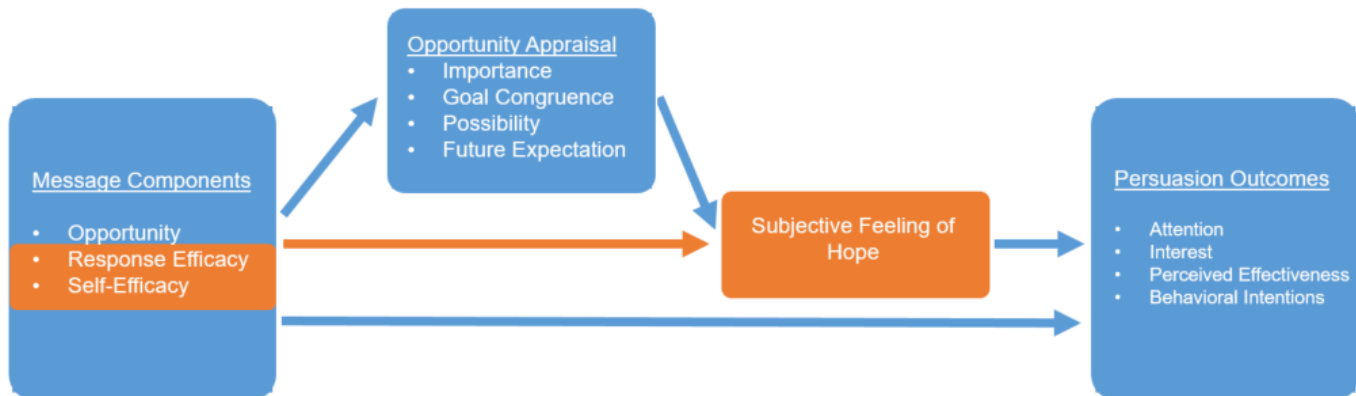


The next thing someone will do when reading the message is appraise the efficacy. This includes assessing whether they believe that the recommended behavior will help them achieve the desired outcome, which is referred to as **response efficacy**, and whether they believe they are capable of doing the recommended behavior, which is referred to as **self-efficacy**.

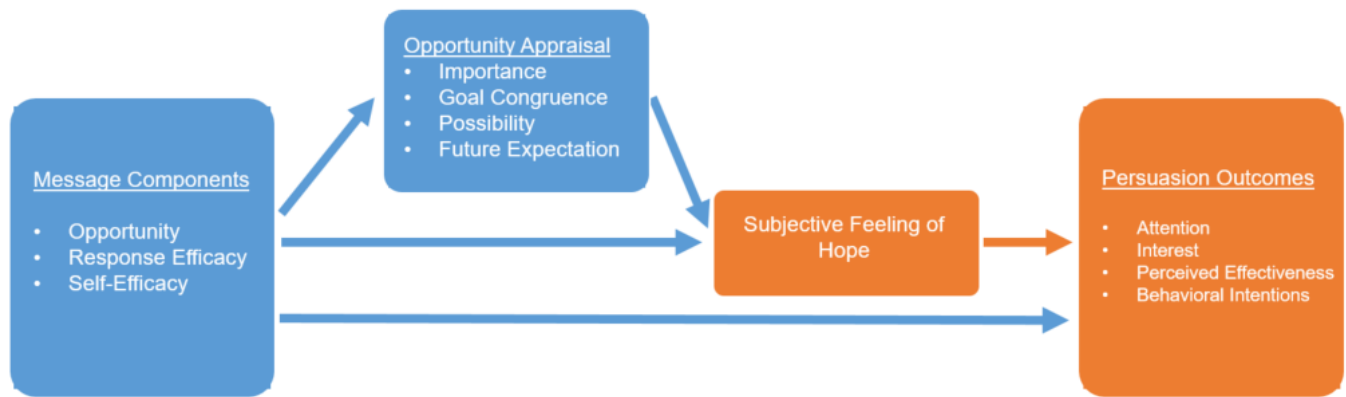
In the above example, this would be whether or not someone reading the message perceives that the recommended behavior to “turn off porch lights and lights in unoccupied buildings” would help reduce light pollution (i.e., response efficacy) and whether they believe they are capable of turning off those lights (i.e., self-efficacy).

For example, someone might believe that turning off porch lights would not help reduce light pollution (i.e., low response efficacy) even if they think they could turn off their porch lights (i.e., high self-efficacy). Someone else might think that turning off their porch lights would help reduce light pollution (i.e., high response efficacy) and might also think they are capable of doing that (i.e., high self-efficacy).

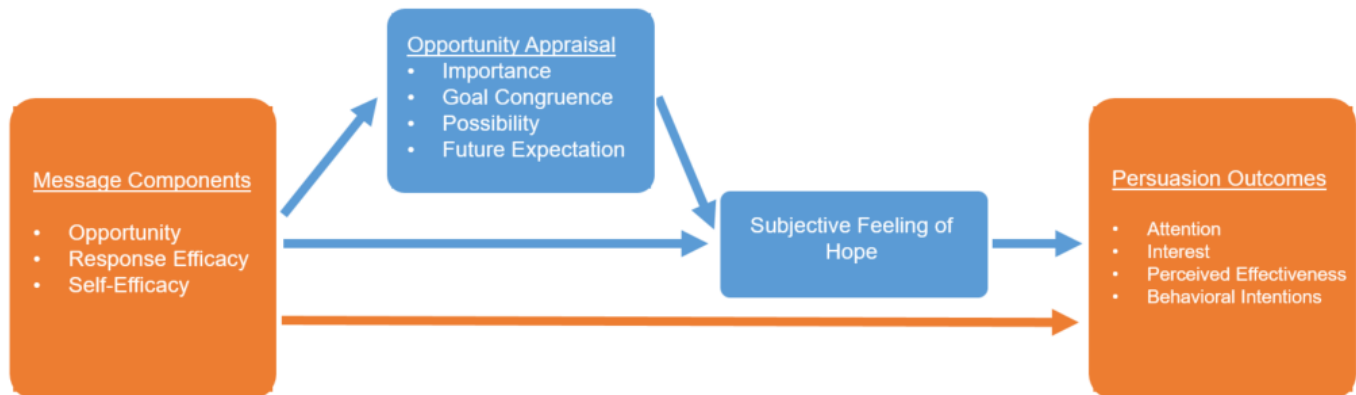
If someone perceives the efficacy as low (i.e., low response efficacy and/or low self-efficacy) then they will not feel hope. If someone perceives the efficacy as high (i.e., high response efficacy and high self-efficacy), then they will feel hope. This part of the theory is highlighted in the figure below:



Persuasive Hope Theory states that this subjective feeling of hope can lead to several different persuasion outcomes, including attention, interest, perceived effectiveness, and behavioral intentions. Indeed, Chadwick (2015) notes that the focused, eager feeling of hope should increase general attention to the message, general interest in the topic, perceptions that the message is effective, and intentions to engage in the recommended behavior. Additional research is needed to refine this part of the theory, but some previous research and empirical work support this. This part of the theory is highlighted in the figure below:



Persuasive Hope Theory also notes that the message components themselves can lead directly to the above mentioned persuasion outcomes. This means that when a message specifically states that the future outcome is important, congruent with goals, possible, and would lead to a better future, this can lead directly to an increase in general attention to the message, general interest in the topic, perceptions that the message is effective, and intentions to engage in the recommended behavior. This part of the theory is highlighted in the figure below:



This is a relatively new theory in persuasion, and therefore additional research is needed to establish all of these theoretical claims.

What influences the relationship between attention, interest, perceived effectiveness, behavioral intentions, and behavior change?

Persuasive Hope Theory states that a hope message can lead to increased attention, interest, perceived effectiveness, and behavioral intentions. However, in persuasion, we are also interested in changing behaviors themselves.

Similar to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Chapters 4 & 5) and the Technology Acceptance Model (Chapters 6 & 7), the persuasion outcomes in Persuasive Hope Theory do not always guarantee behavior change. For example, someone might pay attention to the message, think it is interesting, and intend to turn their porch lights off but not follow through. There are several factors that influence the strength of the relationship between attention, interest, perceived effectiveness, behavioral intentions, and behavior change.

First, in order to best predict behavior change, the beliefs must relate to specific intentions and a subsequent specific behavior. Any given behavior can include an action, target, context and time period. For example, a goal might be “turning off porch lights every night when I’m back home during winter.” In this example, “turning off porch lights” is the action, “every night” is the target, “when I’m back home” is the context, and “during winter” is the time period. As the specificity of the behavior increases, the persuasion outcomes in Persuasive Hope Theory become a better predictor of behavior change.

Additionally, the temporal stability of attention, interest, perceived effectiveness, and behavioral intentions influences the strength of the relationship between these persuasion outcomes and behavior. If an individual's feeling of hope and therefore, for example, interest fluctuates over time (e.g., some days I perceive a high opportunity to reduce light pollution and other days I do not), then persuasion outcomes measured at one particular time might not predict subsequent behavior change (e.g., Rhodes & Dickau, 2013). As the stability of an individual's persuasion outcomes increases over time, message acceptance becomes a better predictor of behavior.

How can Persuasive Hope Theory be used to create persuasive messages?

Persuasive Hope Theory specifies that it is possible to change someone's behavior by influencing their perceived opportunity (i.e., perceived importance, goal congruence, possibility, and future expectation) and perceived efficacy (i.e., response efficacy and self-efficacy).

Importance

Chadwick (2010) notes several message strategies that could be used to increase a message reader's perceived importance. For example, the message can use the second person (e.g., "you") and focus specifically on how the recommended behavior would affect the reader. For example, a message on climate change manipulated to have high importance could include: "The climate affects your well-being in many ways. Protecting the climate is VERY important for your well-being" (see Chadwick, 2010).

Goal Congruence

There are also message strategies that could be used to increase a message reader's perceived goal congruence (Chadwick, 2010). For example, the message can again use the second person (e.g., "you") and focus specifically on how the opportunity impacts the reader's goals (which may require some background research). Chadwick (2010) found that saving money is an important goal for undergraduate students, and therefore used this background research to construct an example message on climate change that was manipulated to have high goal congruence: "Protecting the climate saves you a lot of money. You can make simple changes to protect the climate. You can use less energy, use less hot water, and make less trash. These changes are free or cheap. These small changes will directly save you at least \$500 per year. Protecting the climate saves you In four years at Penn State, you will save \$2000! That is a lot of money."

Possibility

A message reader's perceptions of possibility could be created by several message strategies. Chadwick (2010) notes that a message should use the second person (e.g., "we") and should state that it is possible for the message reader to help create a better future. Modifiers like "very" can also be used. Here is an example message on climate change that was manipulated to have high possibility: "It is very likely that we can make the climate better. All over the world, people like you are taking action. They are using less energy, using less hot water, and making less trash. Billions of people are taking action to protect the climate. You can join the effort and make it even more likely that we will make the climate better" (Chadwick, 2010).

Future Expectation

Chadwick (2010) also discusses several ways to increase a message reader's perceptions of future expectation. Again, the second person (e.g., "you") should be used, and the message should explicitly say how much better the future will be. Additional modifiers like "many" and "much" can be added for emphasis. Here is an example message related to climate change that has high future expectation: "Protecting the climate will make the future much better. Protecting our climate will bring a wonderful future. Our air will be much cleaner. Our weather will be much less extreme. Our summers will be beautiful and mild. We will experience many fewer diseases and will live much longer. Growing food will be easier and more productive. Protecting the climate will have By helping protect the climate, you can help create a wonderful future" (Chadwick, 2010)

Response Efficacy

There are some message strategies that could be used to increase a message reader's perceived response efficacy. For example, the message could provide examples of when the recommended behavior has previously effectively achieved the desired future outcome (e.g., "This has worked in the past!") or explicitly state ways that the recommended behavior will lead to the desired future outcome.

Self-Efficacy

Various message strategies could be used to increase a message reader's perceived self-efficacy. For example, the message

could provide examples of others who have successfully performed the behavior (e.g., “If they can do it, I can do it”), provide verbal encouragement (e.g., “You can do it!”; O’Keefe, 2016), or explicitly state that the recommended behavior is affordable, easy to implement, and so on. Any of these strategies individually, or concurrently, could influence a person’s perceptions of self-efficacy.

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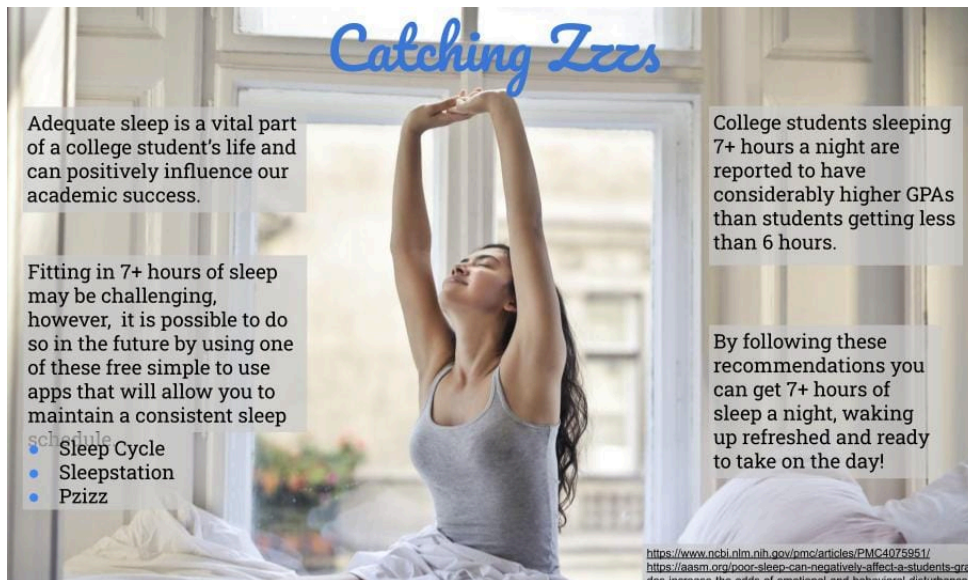
6.4: Applications of Persuasive Hope Theory

Alejandra Salazar, Auston L. Vreeland, Amber K. Worthington, & Parker Yeates*

**Authors names are listed in alphabetical order; all authors contributed equally to this chapter*

Hope appeals, specifically Persuasive Hope Theory (Chadwick, 2015), are explained in detail in Chapter 12. Persuasive Hope Theory can be used to design messages to try to persuade college students to get adequate sleep, reduce food insecurity by accessing a university's food bank, and recycle. Examples on these topics are provided below by Alejandra Salazar, Parker Yeates, and Auston L. Vreeland, respectively.

Example by Alejandra Salazar



Persuasive Hope Theory can be used to persuade college students to sleep adequate amounts in order to promote academic success. A persuasive hope appeal message would need to influence students' perceptions of opportunity and efficacy.

Perceptions of opportunity include perceived importance, goal congruence, possibility, and future expectation. The example message above states that adequate sleep is a vital part of a college student's life and can positively influence academic success. This message content focuses on how the opportunity to achieve academic success through adequate sleep would affect college students, which can increase perceived importance.

The example message also focuses on how the opportunity impact's a college student reader's goals. College students all share a similar goal, which is to achieve academic success. The message above states that "college students sleeping 7+ hours a night are reported to have considerably higher GPAs...". This message content can therefore increase perceived goal congruence.

Perceived possibility message content includes information that states that it is possible for the message reader to achieve the desired future outcome. The message above notes that sleeping 7+ hours may be difficult to manage; however, the message also states that it is something that can be accomplished and "...it is possible to do so in the future by..." This message content can increase perceived possibility.

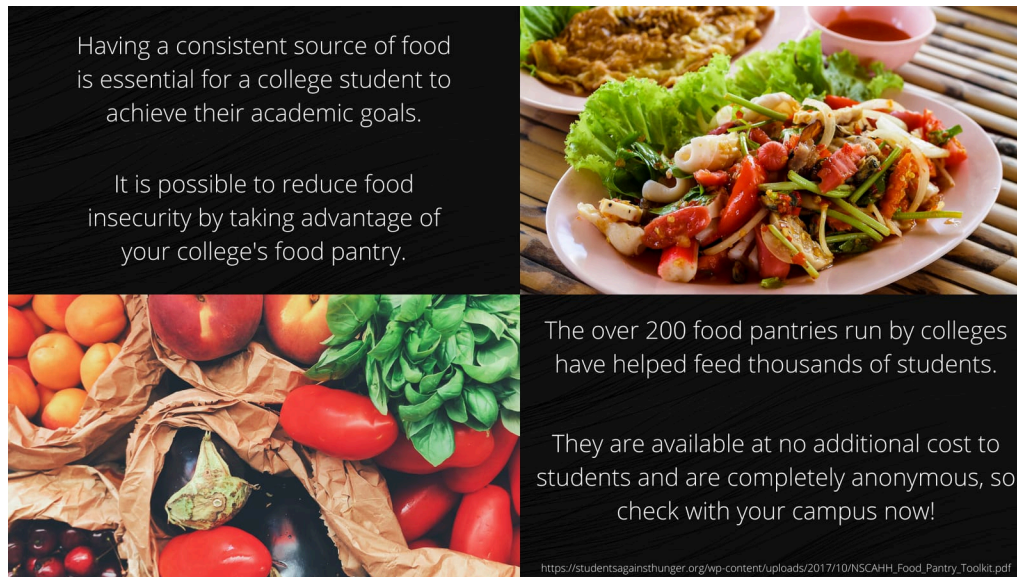
The example message above also contains content designed to increase perceived future expectation. The message should say explicitly that the future will be better, which is included in the statement: "By following these recommendations you can get 7+ hours of sleep a night, waking up refreshed and ready to take on the day!".

Perceptions of efficacy include response efficacy and self-efficacy. The example message above states that "college students sleeping 7+ hours a night are reported to have higher GPAs than students getting less than 6 hours." This explicitly states that

the recommended behavior, getting adequate sleep, will help achieve the desired future outcome of academic success, which can increase perceived response efficacy.

The example message above also provides strategies to make enacting the recommended behavior, adequate sleep, easier. This includes the suggestion to use one of the free, simple to use apps listed on the message to maintain a consistent sleep schedule. All of this information can help increase the college students' beliefs that getting adequate sleep would be easy to implement, thus potentially increasing perceived self-efficacy.

Example by Parker Yeates



Having a consistent source of food is essential for a college student to achieve their academic goals.

It is possible to reduce food insecurity by taking advantage of your college's food pantry.

The over 200 food pantries run by colleges have helped feed thousands of students.

They are available at no additional cost to students and are completely anonymous, so check with your campus now!

https://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/NSCAHH_Food_Pantry_Toolkit.pdf

Persuasive Hope Theory can be used to persuade college students to utilize the university's food bank in order to reduce food insecurity. A persuasive hope appeal message would need to influence students' perceptions of opportunity and efficacy.

Perceptions of opportunity include perceived importance, goal congruence, possibility, and future expectation. The example message above states that having a consistent food source is essential for college students. This message content focuses on how the opportunity to reduce food insecurity would affect college students, which can increase perceived importance.

The example message also focuses on how the opportunity impact's a college student reader's goals. College students all share a similar goal, which is to achieve academic success. The message above states that a consistent food source is needed for college students to achieve their academic goals. This message content can therefore increase perceived goal congruence.

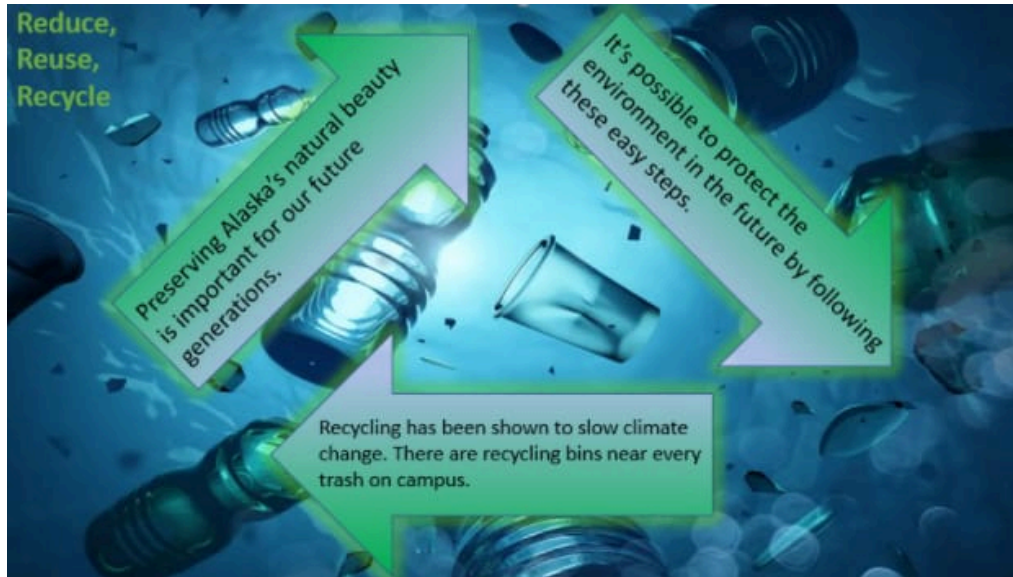
Perceived possibility message content includes information that states that it is possible for the message reader to achieve the desired future outcome. The message above notes that "it is possible to reduce food insecurity." This message content can increase perceived possibility.

The example message above also contains content designed to increase perceived future expectation. The message should say explicitly that the future will be better. The above examples does not explicitly say that the future will be better, but does imply that the future would be better if the reader took advantage of the opportunities presented by their college's food pantry.

Perceptions of efficacy include response efficacy and self-efficacy. The example message above states that "the over 200 food pantries run by colleges have helped feed thousands of students." This explicitly states that the recommended behavior, using a college food pantry when facing food insecurity, will help achieve the desired future outcome of adequately fed college students, which can increase perceived response efficacy.

The example message above also provides strategies to make enacting the recommended behavior, using a college food pantry, easier. This includes the statement that the food pantries "are available at no additional cost to students and are completely anonymous". All of this information can help increase the college students' beliefs that using the food pantry when facing food insecurity would be easy to implement, thus potentially increasing perceived self-efficacy.

Example by Auston L. Vreeland



Persuasive Hope Theory can be used to persuade college students in Alaska to recycle in order to help preserve Alaska's natural beauty. A persuasive hope appeal message would need to influence students' perceptions of opportunity and efficacy.

Perceptions of opportunity include perceived importance, goal congruence, possibility, and future expectation. The example message above states that preserving Alaska's natural beauty is important for future generations. This message content focuses on how the opportunity to preserve Alaska's natural beauty would affect college students in Alaska and those in future generations, which can increase perceived importance.

The example message also focuses on how the opportunity impact's a college student reader's goals. College students in Alaska share a similar goal, which is to preserve Alaska's natural beauty. The message above states that recycling is needed for college students to achieve this goal. This message content can therefore increase perceived goal congruence.

Perceived possibility message content includes information that states that it is possible for the message reader to achieve the desired future outcome. The message above notes that "it is possible to protect the environment in the future by..." This message content can increase perceived possibility.

The example message above also contains content designed to increase perceived future expectation. The message should say explicitly that the future will be better. The below examples does not explicitly say that the future will be better, but does imply that the future of a beautiful Alaska is possible if the reader follows the recycling recommendations.

Perceptions of efficacy include response efficacy and self-efficacy. The example message above states that "recycling has been shown to slow climate change." This explicitly states that the recommended behavior, recycling, will help achieve the desired future outcome, which can increase perceived response efficacy.

The example message above also provides strategies to make enacting the recommended behavior, recycling, easier. This includes the statement that "there are recycling bins near every trash can on campus". This information can help increase the college students' beliefs that recycling would be easy to implement, thus potentially increasing perceived self-efficacy.

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7: ARGUMENT STRUCTURE

- 7.1: Responding to an Argument
- 7.2: Skepticism
- 7.3: Fight or Flight?
- 7.4: Ways to Disagree
- 7.5: Two Sides to an Argument
- 7.6: Toulmin Approach to Argument
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- 7.9: Arguing from the Con-Side
- 7.10: Using Toulmin To Develop Con Strategies
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- 7.12: Con side Case Alternatives
- 7.13: The Focus of This Chapter

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7.1: Responding to an Argument

Your long time romantic partner comes to you and says, “*You don’t love me anymore.*” You just stand there. Stunned. Too startled to speak. Hearing you not say anything your partner turns around walks away saying, “*That’s what I thought.*”

What just happened? By you not answering, your partner assumed you agreed with the statement. Your failure to engage in an argument implied that you had nothing to contradict the statement. Your failure to clash led to the belief that you agreed with the statement, thus no argument.

If you do disagree with someone’s statement, you need to learn how to clash with him or her.



3.1.1: “Portrait of Sir Thomas More” (Public Domain; [Hans Holbein the Younger](#) via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

If we look at this interaction through the lenses of this text, your partner is considered the pro-side, because they have made the claim that you don’t love them. They have presented their argument which in this case is just the statement of the claim “*You don’t love me.*” You, the con-side, must now respond or else the pro-side’s position is upheld automatically. Why?

“Silence means consent”

The maxim is Qui tacet consentiret: the maxim of the law is “Silence gives consent”.

– *Sir Thomas Moore*

There is a famous maxim that states, “*Silence means consent.*” That is if the pro-side makes an argument and the con-side says nothing, the implication is that the con-side agrees with the pro-side. There is no controversy, thus no argument.

I was writing a letter that was going out to all the members of an organization to which I belong. I sent out a final draft to the nine committee members for one last check. I heard from three of them. I did not hear from the other six members so I reasonably assumed that they had no objections.

Now I agree that in a social situation, silence could mean that the person is merely tired of arguing. They still may not agree, but they no longer want to spend the time or energy fighting. In a structured argument, however, it is important for those who disagree to fulfill their responsibility and respond to the initial argument. If not, then the argument is over.

Clash occurs when there is a disagreement. In an argument, responding to the pro-side is referred to as clash. When the pro-side presents their argument and the con-side says nothing, there is no clash. Only when the con-side makes their argument against the pro-side then clash occurs and we have a genuine argument.

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7.2: Skepticism

Our first step involves being skeptical of new ideas and arguments. When someone tells you something or you read it over the internet or see it on television, are you more likely to believe it or disbelieve it? As long as it does not clash with previous beliefs we hold, science suggests that we are more likely to accept new information. In fact, in order to understand a new concept our minds must first accept the concept to even understand what it means.

In a landmark 1991 paper, Harvard psychologist Dan Gilbert proposed that we process information in two steps. First, we accept information as true, and then we interrogate whether it may actually be false. In other words, we let the Trojan horse past the gate before we check to see if it's full of Greek soldiers. "Humans," wrote Gilbert, are "very credulous creatures who find it very easy to believe and very difficult to doubt."

*Cognitive Science Offers Tools To Rebuff Climate Deniers*¹

As Dan Gilbert argues, understanding a new idea requires two steps.

- Accept that the new information is accurate to understand the new ideas.
- Once the ideas are understood, then test them to see if they are accurate.

Silence Does Not Always Mean Consent, Especially in Romance

Silence means consent is not an actual legal term and should not actually be relied on for all situations. This is especially accurate when "romance" is involved. More and more social situations, however, demand that if romantic advances are being made by an individual, that person must receive an affirmation of those advances before the romance is continued. Silence here does not mean consent.

But as you might imagine, once we accept the accuracy of a concept it becomes a challenge to then reject it. Since we are naturally prone to accept new information, our human nature is not to be initially skeptical. Being skeptical is a skill we must develop.

Our skepticism skill is challenged even more when we are presented with many "lies." Again, **Jeremy Deaton** writes:

- Human brains are built to ward off singular untruths, but we struggle against an army. When faced with an onslaught of lies, our defenses falter, letting alternative facts slip past the barricade. There are several reasons why this is the case. Here are three:
 - It takes energy to scrutinize a lie.
 - It takes more energy to scrutinize it when we hear that lie again and again.
 - We don't like to scrutinize a lie that supports our worldview.²

There is a misconception over what it means to be skeptical and I am guessing that now is a good time to clearly define what it means to be skeptical. **Michael Shermer** is the publisher of *Skeptic* magazine and is frequently asked what it means to be a skeptic. He answers this question by saying,

As the publisher of *Skeptic* magazine, I am often asked what I mean by skepticism, and if I'm skeptical of everything or if I actually believe anything. Skepticism is not a position that you stake out ahead of time and stick to no matter what.

...science and skepticism are synonymous, and in both cases, it's okay to change your mind if the evidence changes. It all comes down to this question: What are the facts in support or against a particular claim?

There is also a popular notion that skeptics are closed-minded. Some even call us cynics. In principle, skeptics are neither closed-minded nor cynical. We are curious but cautious.³

This passage by Shermer points out **four key thoughts about skeptics**:

- No position is staked out ahead of time. This allows for you to examine the argument with an open mind and then decide whether you accept it or reject it.
- Skepticism follows the procedure of scientific inquiry looking to see if the evidence provided in the argument adequately supports the claim.
- It is okay to change your mind. You may have one position, but after listening to a new argument, with new and additional evidence you can now make a better decision and actually changing your mind is a good thing.
- Skeptics are not cynics. Instead Skeptics are curious, but are cautious and resist leaping to a comfortable conclusion.

An additional and often used method of learning a concept is to look at the origin of a word. For those of you who want to impress your friends, the term for this is *etymology*. The *Basics of Philosophy* website has a nice, brief examination of the term skeptic.

*The term is derived from the Greek verb "skeptomai" (which means "to look carefully, to reflect"), and the early Greek Skeptics were known as the Skeptikoi. In everyday usage, Skepticism refers to an attitude of doubt or incredulity, either in general or toward a particular object, or to any doubting or questioning attitude or state of mind. It is effectively the opposite of dogmatism, the idea that established beliefs are not to be disputed, doubted or diverged from.*⁴ (Maston, 2008)

I like the idea that this passage clearly states that being a skeptic is the opposite of being dogmatic.

Jamie Hale describes the difference between being cynical and being a skeptic.

*"Cynics are distrustful of any advice or information that they do not agree with themselves. Cynics do not accept any claim that challenges their belief system. While skeptics are open-minded and try to eliminate personal biases, cynics hold negative views and are not open to evidence that refutes their beliefs. Cynicism often leads to dogmatism."*⁵

He continues by stating that dogmatism "opposes independent thinking and reason." If we want to be successful critical thinkers we need to become much more skeptical and less cynical.

In his TEDTalk Michael Shermer explains the relationship between the process of skepticism and science.



3.2.1: "Photo of Michael Shermer" (CC BY 3.0; Loxton via Wikimedia Commons)

Skeptics question the validity of a particular claim by calling for evidence to prove or disprove it. In other words, skeptics are from Missouri -- the "Show Me" state. When we skeptics hear a fantastic claim, we say, "That's interesting, show me the evidence for it."⁶

A key goal here is to encourage you to be more skeptical. Instead of blindly accepting or rejecting claims made by others, take the time to demand proof. Make the person or organization prove the claim they are making. And remember, you need to be open minded when listening to the argument.

Over three centuries ago the French philosopher and skeptic René Descartes, after one of the most thorough skeptical purges in

intellectual history, concluded that he knew one thing for certain: “Cogito ergo sum” — “I think therefore I am.”

By a similar analysis, to be human is to think. Therefore, to paraphrase Descartes: *Sum Ergo Cogito —I Am Therefore I Think* ⁷

An effective critical thinker who is successful in arguing is a person who is more skeptical of the messages they receive. This advice is not just for those who wish to be argumentative. This advice is for every citizen.

“What we all need, as citizens, is to develop more skill in applying our skepticism. We need to spot false narratives, and also turn aside those who would replace them with pure fiction. Either we get this right or we cease to be free citizens.” ⁸

The problem we all experience is that it is not natural to be skeptical. Our natural state is to either flee a conflict or stand and argue. This can be explained by how our brains are structured.

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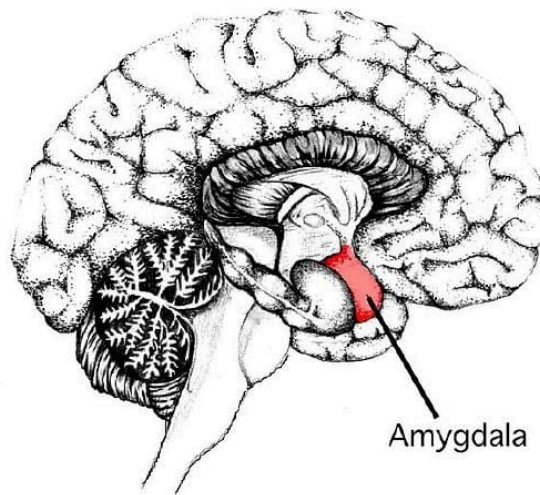
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7.3: Fight or Flight?

All of your information from your senses goes first to a part of the brain called the Thalamus. We call the thalamus the “flight control center” of the brain. It takes in all of your senses, your hearing, sight, touch and decides how to route the messages it is receiving. One route takes the messages to the cerebral cortex, where our skill in decision-making allows us to contemplate alternatives and make a decision. But if the thalamus is triggered by more intense perceptions, the message goes straight to the Amygdala for action.



3.3.1: “Amygdala” (Public Domain; Sgerstenberg via Wikimedia Commons)

We all have an emotional brain that resides in the limbic system, located on top of the brain stem and buried under the cortex. When faced with the stress of an argument, your first reaction is a physical one that begins in an almond sized organ towards the bottom of your brain, called the amygdala. This organ actually keeps a record of your past dangerous experiences and strives to protect you from future harm. As soon as this organ perceives danger, it sends a distress signal to the hypothalamus.

You are taking a nice stroll outdoors when suddenly a snake slithers up on the path in front of you. Emotions are triggered. Oh no, this snake might strike and kill me. Do I stay and defend myself, or flee? You are experiencing, *Fight or Flight*.

This just doesn’t happen out in the wilderness. It can also happen at work. Your boss is looking for you to assign you a major project. Emotions are triggered, “Oh no I can’t do this,” or “My boss is trying to kill me.” Immediately you think, “I am going to stay and tell him that I can’t do this.” Or “Where can I hide?” This is Fight or Flight.

When the thalamus becomes aware of an emotionally charged perception, the amygdala is sent that perception. Snake! Or Project! Your amygdala has access to your memory and quickly relates the current situation to one of those past memories so it can immediately act. Only later will it look to the logical part of the brain for alternative reactions.

The amygdala swings into action. Immediately:

- Past memories of similar situations are examined
- Adrenaline is pumped into the body which prompts quicker physical reaction
- A surge of energy is experienced
- Stress hormones are activated
- Your pain threshold gets higher

These processes are so intense it may take you 20 minutes before you can get these emotions under control and allow the more logical part of the brain to take over and help with the decisions. This, by the way, explains road rage and why we should wait until the next day to respond to an email that has angered us.

While in this condition, you lose the ability for in depth thinking. The amygdala does not want you to look curiously at the snake and wonder, “*What type is it?*” No, it recognizes potential danger and is preparing you for survival. If you have ever had a stressful situation and then asked yourself afterwards, “*What was I thinking?*” The answer is, you weren’t. The brain was preparing you for your “fight or flight” mode and not allowing you to really think. There is no time to think. This is also an explanation for why we often think of something very witty to say to someone, after they have left.

If the situation is so emotionally charged, like a snake or project, then the emotions may totally take over your thoughts and reactions, creating a condition called “*emotional hijack*.” A way of expressing emotional hijacking is road rage. The impact of the perception is so strong that the emotions take over. Logic does not enter into it. Think about the time your partner did something that finally was the proverbial “last straw” or someone you may be supervising made the same mistake for the tenth time. Did you make an outburst that you now wish had been handled in a different way? All of this happens, before the rational part of our brain, the cerebrum, is asked for guidance.

Now, if we can get the amygdala under a bit of control, our cerebrum is notified of the danger and we now have a chance to think of alternative actions. Instead of just responding with the first reaction that occurs from our memory, we now have the opportunity for more in depth thinking.

A very useful formula to remember is **E + R = O**.

- “**E**” stands for Event and refers to some action that has happened to you.
- “**R**” stands for either Reaction or Response. Reaction is our quick, unthinking answer to an action while a Response is more of a thought our answer where we look at alternatives and select the best one for us in that situation.
- “**O**” stands for Outcome.

We can't always control the Event that happen to us, but we can create more desirable Outcomes if we Respond to a situation instead of just Reacting to it.

I find it very interesting that your brain gets you ready to either fight a perceived danger or flee from a perceived danger. Even before you are totally aware of the threat, you are in that state of fight or flight. Do you flee or stay and fight? I am hoping that this text will give you the skills to stay and fight in arguments and not flee from them. There are certainly a variety of ways to disagree with someone.

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7.4: Ways to Disagree

When we arrive at a point where we disagree with the claim being made, we find that there are several ways we can respond. In his essay, *How to Disagree*, Paul Graham describes a hierarchy of seven ways a person can respond to an argument. Here is his list starting with the most basic way people react to a disagreement and working up to a more academic method of arguing.

- **Name Calling** – Totally ignoring an argument and instead just calling the person issuing the argument an unwelcomed name. You probably did this as a small child to your siblings or playmates.
 - Example: *"You're just crazy."*
- **Ad Hominem** – Attacking specific aspects of the source of the argument without referencing any aspect of the actual argument.
 - Example: *"You don't have a college degree, what do you know?"*
- **Responding to Tone** – Attacking the tone of the argument, instead of and of the actual content of the argument.
 - Example: *"Wow, your tone is way over the top, don't you think?"*
- **Contradiction** – Disagreeing by just stating an opposing side, with virtually no actual evidence to support this presented argument.
 - *"No I didn't"* or *"You're wrong, basketball is a better sport than football."*
- **Counterargument** – Contradicting the initial argument, but also backing it up with reasoning and evidence. This is an actual argument and what the author, Graham, considers the first form of a convincing disagreement.
 - *"No, the death penalty does not deter crime. In Ohio when they initiated the death penalty, crime actually increased."*
- **Refutation** – Here instead of making a unique counter argument, a mistake in the initial argument is found, and an explanation of that mistake along with evidence and reasoning is presented. Here no new argument is made; we are just finding the weakness in the initial argument.
- **Refuting the Central Point** – Explicitly refuting the main point of the initial argument. Instead of refuting some of the supporting parts of an argument, here we focus on the key, central point of the initial argument.¹

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7.5: Two Sides to an Argument

There are two sides to every argument. The two sides are called the pro-side and the con-side. The pro-side will speak in favor of the topic of the argument or what we call the claim being made, while the con-side will be speaking against the claim being made in the argument. There is no third position of an argument like, “*I don’t know.*” You are either for or against the claim. When you clash against an argument you are taking the con side of the argument.

A discussion is different. In a discussion, you can have a variety of different opinions on a topic. But when you get to the point of deciding on a particular answer, you have an argument. To better understand this, we need to look at the structure of the argument. And to do that we need to go back 2500 years to the Greek foundation for argumentation.

Enthymemes and Syllogisms

We often argue in what the Greeks referred to as an *enthymeme*. There are two parts to this type of argument, an observation that leads to a conclusion. Examples of an enthymeme could include:

- Ernie is going to be a violent person because he plays violent video games.
- If Terri exercises often she will be healthy.
- Vote for John Doe, he won’t raise taxes.
- Bill Gates is brilliant because he started Microsoft.

This list of arguments contains an implicit assumption. For example: “*Ernie is going to be a violent person because he plays violent video games*” implies that “*people who play violent video games become violent people.*” These general assumptions are left out in many, many arguments. The person making the argument assumes that you will just accept the general assumption. The Greeks decided to add this assumption as the third part of their argumentative analysis.

To expand the argument the Greeks used a format called the **syllogism**. This format is a form of deductive reasoning that starts with two initial propositions that lead to a conclusion. The initial proposition is the assumption implied in the enthymeme.

All professors are brilliant.

Jim Marteney is a professor.

Jim Marteney is brilliant.

First note that the name of any professor could be placed here.

As accurate as we might like the conclusion to be in this argument, what if we found one college professor that was not brilliant? This Greek style of argumentation was an all or nothing approach. The argument was either 100% valid, or 0% valid. Classical Greek argumentation would suggest the entire argument is invalid and we could never make any conclusions.

But, in critical thinking we would argue that if there is just one example of a professor who is not brilliant there is still a high degree of validity, or probability, that the conclusion is still accurate. The argument may still be valid enough to reach the threshold of the target audience to accept the claim. In critical thinking, we make decisions when an argument reaches our threshold. The threshold does not have to be absolute 100%. Even in a court case that threshold is “Beyond a Reasonable Doubt” and not “Beyond any Doubt” which is less than 100% certainty.

This realization was the basis for Dr. Toulmin’s approach to analyzing arguments.

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7.6: Toulmin Approach to Argument

In order to determine the most effective strategy to respond to a case, the con-side of an argument needs to analyze the argument to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the pro-side. The Toulmin Model gives us an effective tool to successfully clash with the pro-side.

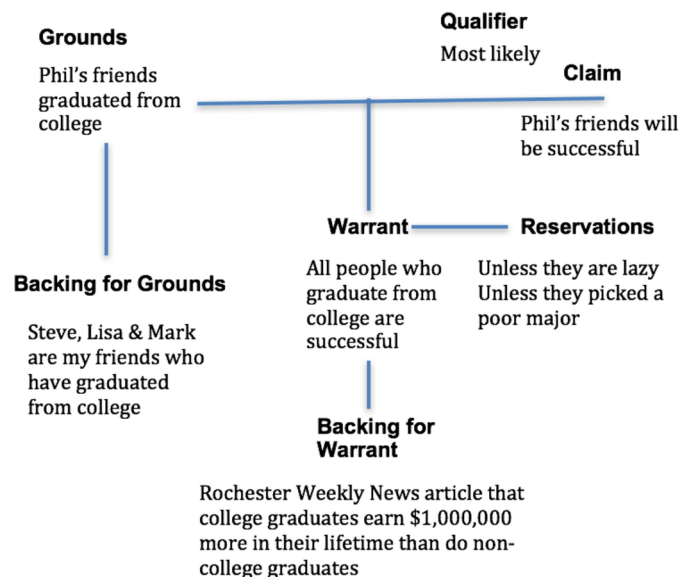
Stephen Toulmin was one of the modern-day leaders of rhetorical theory. He looked at the classical structure of arguments, and found a problem. The conclusions of the classical approaches to arguing needed to be absolute. That is, the conclusions of a correctly structured argument were either absolutely, 100% valid (true) or absolutely 0% invalid (untrue). There were no grey areas.

In his work on logic and argument, *The Uses of Argument* (Toulmin, 2008), Toulmin defines six parts that make up an argument:

- Claim
- Grounds
- Warrant
- Backing
- Reservations (rebuttals)
- Qualifier

In this approach he breaks down an argument into its component parts to demonstrate the degree of confidence you should have in the argument. Analyzing the argument allows the con-side to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the argument, so a counter argument can be effectively delivered.

Here is a simple argument that is diagrammed using the Toulmin approach.



3.6.1: "Sample Toulmin Model" (CC BY 4.0; J. Marteney)

- **Claim:** This is the main point or thesis of the argument. This is what the pro-side is attempting to convince you of or trying to prove. If the claim is not directly stated, just ask, "What is the pro-side trying to prove?" In the sample argument, the conclusion, the claim you are attempting to prove is that "Phil's friends will lead successful lives."
- **Grounds:** Here is the starting point of your argument that leads to your Claim. This is what you have observed, read or what you believe to exist. In this sample argument, the grounds are that "Phil has several friends who have graduated from college."
- **Warrants:** This is the overall logical underpinning of the argument. A general rule that can apply to more than one Grounds. The Warrant can be a universal law of nature, legal principle or statute, rule of thumb, mathematical formula, or just a logical idea that appeals to the person making the argument. Warrants usually begin with words like; all, every, any, anytime, whenever, or are if-then, either-or, statements. The Warrant is a general rule that has no exceptions. Those come later

- Warrants are important because they provide the underlying reasons linking the claim and the grounds. You can infer the warrants by asking, "What's causing the advocate to say the things he/she does?" or "Where's the advocate coming from?" In our example argument, the warrant is that "All people who graduate from college are successful." No exceptions.
- **Backing:** Backing is the specific data, which is used to justify and support the grounds and warrant. In Toulmin's original work, he only includes Backing for the Warrant. I am adding Backing to also look at the quality of the original Grounds of the argument. Critical thinkers realize that there must be backing for their statements or they are merely assertions. When clashing with an argument, we need to look at the quality of evidence that supports the initial grounds.
 - In our diagrammed argument, the Backing for the Grounds are the names of the specific friends who graduated from college. The Backing for the warrant comes from an LA Times article that college graduates earn \$1,000,000 more in their working lifetime than non-college graduates do. I like to separate the Backing from the Grounds and Backing for the Warrant as they are two different areas that can affect the strength of the argument. Toulmin makes no such distinction.
- **Reservations and Rebuttals:** They are the "unlesses" to the Warrant. Reservations do not change the wording of the warrant. Reservations do not change the "universality" of the Warrant. But Reservations are exceptions to the warrant. These exceptions weaken the validity of the conclusion because the Grounds may just be one of these exceptions, thus meaning that the Claim is invalid. In our example, your uncle has a Reservation to the Warrant. He states that people who get a college degree will succeed, unless they are lazy. The "unless they are lazy" is the Reservation to the Warrant.
 - Note that a Reservation does not refer to a rejection of the Warrant. In this example "Unless they did not graduate" would not be a Reservation because it implies that the Warrant did not happen. Instead a Reservation is a statement that suggests that even though the Warrant took place, the Claim may not occur.
- **Qualifiers:** Suggest the degree of validity of the argument. If there is no Qualifier, then the argument is 100% valid. But if a Qualifier exists then the conclusion is less than absolute. With a qualifier, the argument is about probability and possibility, not about certainty. You cannot use superlatives like all, every, absolutely or never, none, and no one. Instead you need to qualify (tone down) your claim with expressions like; most likely, many, probably, some or rarely, few, possibly, etc.
 - In our sample argument, it is argued that Phil's friends will "most likely" be successful. The "most likely" is the Qualifier.

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7.7: Counter Argument Strategies

If you are arguing against this claim:

- You might want to add additional Reservations.
 1. Unless there is an economic downturn
 2. Unless they have health issues
- You might want to challenge the backing for the Warrant
 1. You could suggest that earning \$1,000.000 over a lifetime would not automatically make you successful.
 2. You could argue that there was a problem with the analysis conducted by the Rochester Weekly News

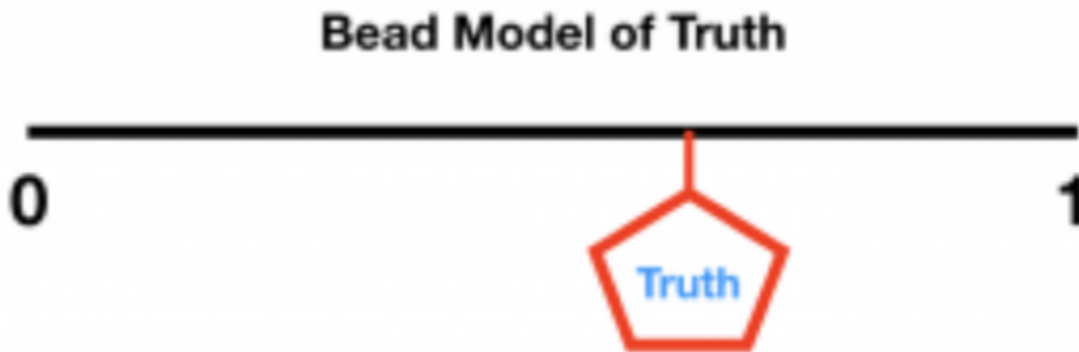
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7.8: No Absolute Certainties

In argumentation, we don't deal with absolute certainty of a claim. The skeptic and scientist both have the attitude that there are no absolute certainties. In other words, there are doubts on each claim that is argued. One scientist, **R. A. Lyttleton**, has described this process as the "Bead Model of Truth." It is important to note here that Lyttleton does not use the word "Truth" as the absolute "Truth" but instead uses the word "Truth" to represent the validity of a claim.¹

To understand his model Dr. Lyttleton imagines a bead on a horizontal wire. The bead can move left or right on that wire. On the far-left side of the wire is the number which corresponds to total disbelief. On the far-right hand side of the wire is the number 1 which is related to a position of total belief or where you would believe the claim with absolute certainty.



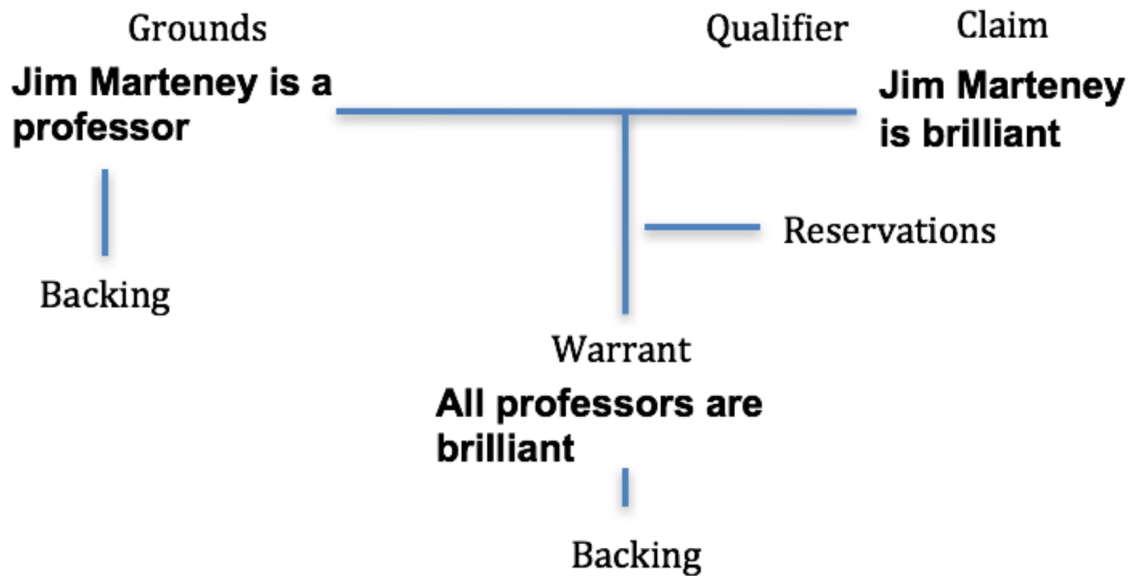
3.8.1: "Bead Model of Truth" (CC BY 4.0; J. Marteney)

Dr. Lyttleton would argue that the bead should never reach the far left or right end. As additional evidence is presented the belief is true the closer the bead moves to the number 1. The more unlikely the belief is to be accepted the closer the bead moves to 0.

According to **Toulmin**,

"Any claim is presented with certain strengths or weakness, conditions, and/or limitations. We possess a familiar set of colloquial adverbs and adverbial phrases that are customarily used to mark these qualifications. Such adverbs are: presumably, in all probability, so far as the evidence goes, all things being equal, for all that we can tell, very likely, very possibly, maybe, apparently, plausibly, almost certainly, so it seems, etc. All of these phrases can be directly inserted into the claim being advanced, and as a result, would modify the claim indicating what sort of reliance the supporting evidence entitles us to place on the claim." ²

Let's go back to the "**Jim Marteney is brilliant**" syllogism. Below is how Dr. Toulmin would analyze the argument. Now you can ask questions about the parts of the argument that are blank, the backing, reservations and qualifier.



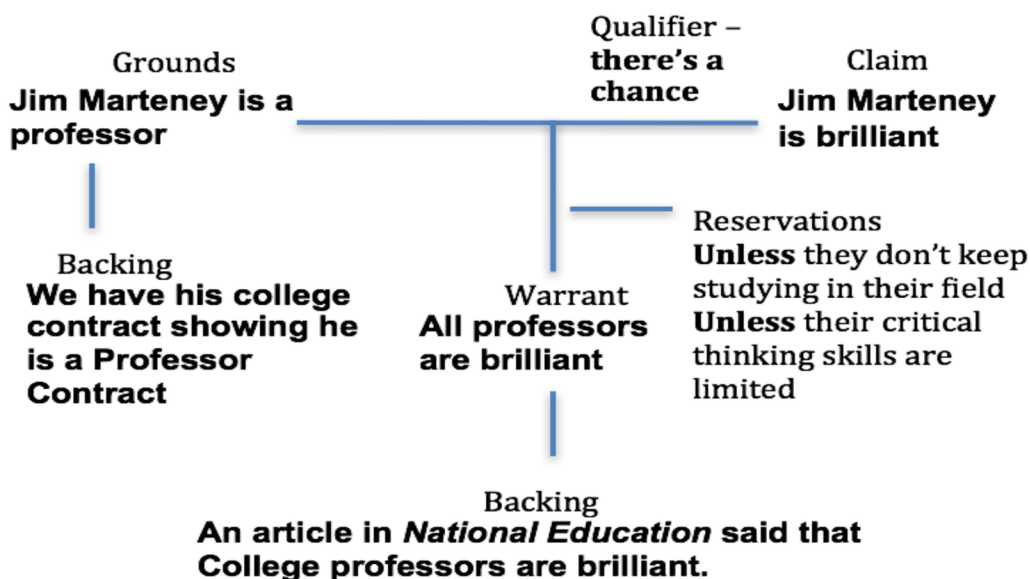
3.8.2: "Second Sample Toulmin Model" (CC BY 4.0; J. Marteney)

The argument as presented is 100% valid because there are no Reservations leading to a Qualifier. There is also no Backing presented for the Grounds and Warrant, so at this point they are just assertions.

- Now you begin your analysis by asking questions, or as we will be calling them, Issues. What is the Backing for the idea that all professors are brilliant? Poor backing would create doubt with the Warrant and its ability to be an absolute, general rule.
- Are there any professors who are not brilliant? If so, that could be part of the Reservation? This is where you show your skepticism.

The answers to these questions could damage the argument. If there are Reservations there is a Qualifier. The more reservations, the weaker the Qualifier becomes the Claim becomes less valid. If there are no exceptions the Qualifier is 100% and you would be 100% certain that the Claim is correct. But with a couple of Reservations your Qualifier could be reduced to maybe 80% sure. Now, does that reach your threshold? There is still a degree of validity, but it may not be enough for you to accept the claim.

Examining the quality of the backing of the Grounds and Warrant might lead us to question the accuracy of those statements. With questionable backing the accuracy of the argument is challenged. The weaker the accuracy the less valid is the Claim. This is what a completed Toulmin might look like.



3.8.3: "Third sample Toulmin Model" (CC BY 4.0; J. Marteney)

With this completed Toulmin analysis of the argument we can immediately see two weaknesses in the argument.

- The publication, *National Education* which supports the Warrant that “All professors are brilliant,” might be prejudiced in favor of professors. This weakens the accuracy of the warrant.
- Since there are two Reservations to the Warrant, the Claim cannot be 100% valid. There then has to be a Qualifier that suggests a lower level of validity.

Notice that the Qualifier is now, “There’s a chance.” This would lead me to reject the Claim that Jim Marteney is brilliant.

This is what defense attorneys attempt to do in a courtroom. They don’t have to prove that their client is innocent. They have to attack the prosecution case to reduce the validity of the Claim that their client is guilty. They want the Qualifier to reflect a low number by questioning the backing and adding more and more examples to the Reservations. If in a criminal case they can reduce the validity to below reasonable doubt, the jury should find their client “not guilty.” Notice they don’t say the accused is “innocent.” They can only say that the prosecution did not have a valid enough case for them to find the accused guilty.

Stephen Toulmin developed this model for analyzing the kind of argument you read and hear every day—in newspapers and on television, at work, in classrooms, and in conversation. The Toulmin Model is not meant to judge the success or failure of an attempt to prove an argument; instead it helps break an argument down to its most basic pieces. The Toulmin Model helps to show how tightly constructed arguments are, and how each part of an argument relates to the overall validity or reasonableness of that argument.

Reference

1. Hale, Jamie. “Limitations of Science.” *PsychCentral*, <https://psychcentral.com/blog/the-limitations-of-science/>. Accessed 30 October 2019.
2. Toulmin, Stephen E. *The Uses of Argument*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008

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7.9: Arguing from the Con-Side

The con-side is the side rejecting the acceptance of the persuasive goal. They are arguing against the Claim by maintaining that we should stay with the status quo, or current system. Assume the Claim being argued is:

- **Resolved: The State of California should eliminate capital punishment.**

The goal of the con-side is to demonstrate the weaknesses or problems with the change from the status quo to this new policy, and why we should maintain the current capital punishment position. The con-side can win an argument if they just demonstrate there are not enough reasons to change to a new system.

Maintaining the current system is a powerful position. Tradition always suggests that because we have had a certain policy or outlook for so long that there has been some degree of success. So why take the chance and change? Remember, stasis is powerful. We are naturally comfortable with existing ways of doing things and so we argue to continue them. This is one reason why political incumbents have an advantage in an election to be re-elected to office.

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7.10: Using Toulmin To Develop Con Strategies

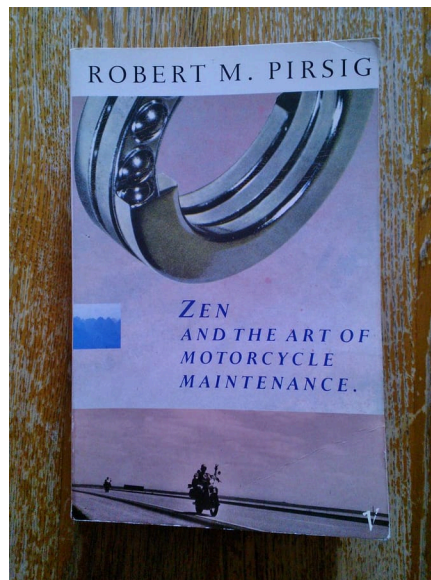
After analyzing an argument using the Toulmin approach you can begin arguing against that argument. There are two overall con-side strategies when clashing with the pro- side.

Reducing the significance of the problem or potential advantage. The only reason we ever change from something we have been doing is that there is a significant reason to change. This reason may be that there is a problem that is getting worse and worse, or that there may be an advantage out there if we make the change. Currently more than one state legislature is arguing that all social welfare recipients should be tested for drugs before they are allowed to receive welfare payments. The con-side could argue that the problem is not significant to warrant the change in policy and that the status quo should be maintained.

The Scientific Method

The real purpose of the scientific method is to make sure nature hasn't misled you into thinking you know something you actually don't know."

--R.Pirsig Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance



3.10.1: "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance by Robert M Persig" (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0; Tony Roberts via flickr)

This goal then is to weaken the impact of the contentions and thereby the certainty of the Claim is lessened. Those involved grow more skeptical of the Claim. The hope of the con-side is that the certainty of the Claim will fall below the threshold needed to accept the Claim. At this point, the Claim will be rejected and the con-side will win the argument.

The pro-side solution will not solve the problem they intend to solve. The con-side argues that the Claim argued by the pro-side will not work, or in some cases may make the problem even worse. Clashing against the argument that the state should drug test welfare recipients, the con-side may say that the test is not accurate and makes too many mistakes or false positives. They may also talk about how many ways there are to cheat the test. If the con-side can demonstrate that that the pro-side solution cannot work, then the Claim should be rejected.

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7.11: Creating A Counter Argument

Once we have determined the strengths and weaknesses in the argument by effectively using the Toulmin Model, we can create our counter argument and begin our clash.

In the Toulmin analysis that concluded that Phil's friend will be successful, two possible counter arguments reveal themselves. One argument can focus on the backing for the Warrant, while another looks at the Reservations.

The Backing for the Warrant "that all who graduate from college will be successful" is from the Rochester Weekly. The con-side might question the quality of that source. How did they determine that conclusion? If the con-side can demonstrate a problem with the Warrant, the entire argument is invalid.

A second con-side argument might be with the reservations. The more significant the reservation that exists, the more of a chance that the instances described in the grounds might apply to those reservations. Maybe Phil's friends are lazy or picked a poor major. There might be additional reservations like they live in an economically depressed area with few employment chances. The more Reservations to an argument, the less valid is the Claim.

Note

An argument is not merely denying the claim. Just denying the claim is what we might call "squabbling" or "bickering." It is not an argument. For clash to be effective you need to explain **why the claim should be denied**.

Note 2

The con-side does not have to create a counter argument. If they can find problems with the pro-side's case, they can weaken the validity of the argument to the point where it rests below the Threshold needed to win approval. And thus, the con-side wins the argument.

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7.12: Con side Case Alternatives

To accomplish the two, overall con-side strategies the con side can select one of the following alternatives.

Straight Refutation

In straight refutation, the con-side directly refutes, point-by-point, the arguments brought up by the pro-side. In using this approach, the con-side argues for keeping the status quo in place. The status quo is the current fact, value or policy that is being challenged by the pro-side. The con-side argues against any of the pro-side case approaches by:

- Refuting the problem and/or solution
- Denying all advantages from a change in the status quo
- Arguing against the alternative(s) being presented

If the pro-side stated that there were two reasons why we need to test welfare recipients for drugs:

- Many recipients of welfare are using drugs.
- Testing will find out who the drug users are.

The con-side using straight refutation would say, "The people promoting the claim state that many recipients of welfare are using drugs, but I argue that there are not that many recipients of welfare that are using drugs." and "They also say that their tests will find out who the drug users are, but I will argue that the testing that is proposed will not give us an accurate picture of who is actually using drugs. The con-side will still need to use evidence to prove their contentions or else they are just assertions and not real arguments.

Defense of the status quo with just minor repairs

This approach is that the status quo is generally doing an effective job. If there is a problem, it can be dealt with by making a minor change or repair in the status quo. There is no need to make a major change or an overhaul of the system like the claim suggests.

An example of minor repairs occurs when, a couple needs a larger house to accommodate their growing family. Instead of purchasing a new home, they adopt the minor repair approach and add-on to their existing home. Another example is when people avoid the cost of buying a new car by getting their old one repaired.

How to Win An Argument Every Time

Forbes Magazine, April 23, 2015

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/travisbradberry/2015/04/23/how-successful-people-master-conflict/#d79024e788fd>

When someone takes an opposing view on a topic you care deeply about, the natural human response is "defense." Our brains are hard-wired to assess for threats, but when we let feelings of being threatened hijack our behavior, things never end well. In a crucial conversation, getting defensive is a surefire path to failure.

How to beat this? Get curious.

A great way to inoculate yourself against defensiveness is to develop a healthy doubt about your own certainty. Then, enter the conversation with intense curiosity about the other person's world. Give yourself a detective's task of discovering why a reasonable, rational and decent person would think the way he or she does. As former Secretary of State Dean Rusk said, "The best way to persuade others is with your ears, by listening." When others feel deeply understood, they become far more open to hearing you.

Counter proposal

In this approach, the con-side admits that the overall goals of the pro-side's case are good, but the way the pro-side had offered to reach them is not a good approach. In this alternative, the con-side presents what they feel is a better alternative. The con side admits that the pro-side has shown a weakness in the present system, which cannot be denied or refuted. The con side, however, does not agree with the way the pro side wants to remedy the weakness, and offers a better plan of attack.

You and that special someone have been living together for a period of time and are having trouble with the relationship. You suggest that it would be best if you broke off the relationship. The other person agrees that the relationship has problems, but suggests a trial separation would be a better solution. Since both of you agree that the status quo has problems, the argument comes down to which alternative will ultimately gain target audience approval.

Hopefully, after this chapter your confidence is growing and you are more willing to "Clash" with those making arguments with which you disagree.

In the next few chapters we will be looking closely at parts of the Toulmin Model. There is an entire chapter on the Claim, Backing (Evidence), and use of Warrants (Reasoning).

"I don't mind arguing with myself. It's when I lose that it bothers me."

-- Richard Powers

"Anytime four New Yorkers get into a cab together without arguing, a bank robbery has just taken place."

-- Johnny Carson

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7.13: The Focus of This Chapter

In this chapter, we examined the skill of “Clashing” when we are faced with an argument that we disagree with. This final chapter looked at the process by focusing on:

- **The importance of “Clashing” as “Silence means consent”** or at least suggests consent.
- **We have different levels of clashing** from “name calling” to “refutation.”
- **The first step in effective refutation is to examine the argument being presented.**
- **By using the Toulmin Model we can find weaknesses in arguments** that occur in the argument including the backing and/or the inclusion of reservations.
- **The more reservations that exist in the argument, the more significant the qualifier**, which lowers the validity of the argument on the “Continuum of Certainty.” This could reduce the validity level to below your “Threshold” of acceptance.
- **There are three traditional approaches used to refute an argument**; Straight Refutation, Defense of the Status Quo with Minor Repairs, and a Counterproposal.



3.13.1: "Edmund Burke" (Public Domain; [Joshua Reynolds](#) via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

– Edmond Burke

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8: LOGICAL REASONING



Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Define critical thinking, deductive reasoning, and inductive reasoning;
- Distinguish between inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning;
- Know the four types of inductive reasoning;
- Know the common logical fallacies;
- Become a more critical listener to public speeches and more critical reader of source material.

8.1: What is Correct Reasoning?

8.2: Deductive Reasoning

8.3: Inductive Reasoning

8.3.1: Types of Arguments

8.4: Logical Fallacies

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8.1: What is Correct Reasoning?

In Chapter 13, we reviewed ancient and modern research on how to create a persuasive presentation. We learned that persuasion does not just depend on one mode, but on the speaker using his or her personal credibility and credentials; understanding what important beliefs, attitudes, values, and needs of the audience connect with the persuasive purpose; and drawing on fresh evidence that the audience has not heard before. In addition to fresh evidence, the audience expects a logical speech and to hear arguments that they understand and to which they can relate. These are historically known as *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. This chapter will deal with the second part of *logos*, logical argument and using critical thinking to fashion and evaluate persuasive appeals.

We have seen that *logos* involves composing a speech that is structured in a logical and easy-to-follow way; it also involves using correct logical reasoning and consequently avoiding fallacious reasoning, or logical fallacies.

Although it is not a perfect or literal analogy, we can think of correct reasoning like building a house. To build a house, a person needs materials (premises and facts) a blueprint (logical method), and knowledge of building trades (critical thinking ability). If you put them out in a field with drywall, nails, wiring, fixtures, pipes, wood and other materials and handed them a blueprint, they would need knowledge of construction principles, plumbing, and reading plans (and some helpers), or no building is going up. Logic could also be considered like cooking. A cook needs ingredients, a recipe, and knowledge about cooking. In both cases, the ingredients or materials must be good quality (the information and facts must be true); the recipe or directions must be right (the logical process); and the cook must know what they are doing.

In the previous paragraph, **analogical reasoning** was used. As we will see in Section 14.2, analogical reasoning involves drawing conclusions about an object or phenomenon based on its similarities to something else. Technically, the comparisons of logic to building and cooking were examples of **figurative analogy**, not a literal one, because the two processes are not essentially the same. A figurative analogy is like a poetic one: “My love is like a red, red rose,” (Robert Burns, 1759-1796); love, or a loved person, and a flower are not essentially the same. An example of a **literal analogy** would be one between the college where the authors work, Dalton State, and another state college in Georgia with a similar mission, similar governance, similar size, and similar student bodies. Analogical reasoning is one of several types of logical reasoning.

Analogical reasoning is one of several types of logical reasoning methods which can serve us well if used correctly, but it can be confusing and even unethical if used incorrectly. In this chapter we will look first at “good” reasoning and then at several of the standard mistakes in reasoning, called **logical fallacies**. In higher education today, teaching and learning critical thinking skills are a priority, and those skills are one of the characteristics that employers are looking for in applicants (Adams, 2014). The difficult part of this equation is that critical thinking skills mean slightly different things for different people.

Involved in critical thinking are problem-solving and decision-making, the ability to evaluate and critique based on theory and the “knowledge base” (what is known in a particular field), skill in self-reflection, recognition of personal and societal biases, and the ability to use logic and avoid logical fallacies. On the website Critical Thinking Community, in an article entitled “Our Concept and Definition of Critical Thinking” (2013), the term is defined this way:

Critical thinking is that mode of thinking — about any subject, content, or problem — in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing it. Critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It presupposes assent to rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use. It entails effective communication and problem-solving abilities, as well as a commitment to overcome our native egocentrism and sociocentrism.

Critical thinking is a term with a wide range of meaning, one of which is the traditional ability to use formal logic. To do so, you must first understand the two types of reasoning: inductive and deductive.

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8.2: Deductive Reasoning

The second type of reasoning is called **deductive reasoning**, or deduction, a type of reasoning in which a conclusion is based on the combination of multiple premises that are generally assumed to be true. It has been referred to as “reasoning from principle,” which is a good description. It can also be called “top-down” reasoning. However, you should not think of deductive reasoning as the opposite of inductive reasoning. They are two different ways of thinking about evidence.

First, formal deductive reasoning employs the **syllogism**, which is a three-sentence argument composed of a major premise (a generalization or principle that is accepted as true), a minor premise (an example of the major premise), and a conclusion. This conclusion has to be true if the major and minor premise are true; it logically follows from the first two statements. Here are some examples. The most common one you may have seen before.

All men are mortal. (Major premise: something everyone already agrees on)

Socrates is a man. (Minor premise: an example taken from the major premise.)

Socrates is mortal. (Conclusion: the only conclusion that can be drawn from the first two sentences.)

Major Premise: All State College students must take COMM 1110.

Minor Premise: Brittany is a State College student.

Conclusion: Brittany must take COMM 1110.

Major Premise: All dogs have fur.

Minor Premise: Fifi is a dog.

Conclusion: Fifi has fur.

Of course, at this point you may have some issues with these examples. First, Socrates is already dead and you did not need a syllogism to know that. The Greek philosopher lived 2,400 years ago! Second, these seem kind of obvious. Third, are there some exceptions to “All Dalton State College students must take COMM 1110”? Yes, there are; some transfer students do not, and certificate students do not. Finally, there are breeds of dogs that are hairless. Some people consider them odd-looking, but they do exist. So while it is true that all men are mortal, it is not absolutely and universally true that all State College students must complete COMM 1110 or that all dogs have fur.

Consequently, the first criterion for syllogisms and deductive reasoning is that the premises have to be true for the conclusion to be true, even if the method is right. A right method and untrue premises will not result in a true conclusion. Equally, true premises with a wrong method will also not result in true conclusions. For example:

Major premise: All dogs bark.

Minor premise: Fifi barks.

Conclusion: Fifi is a dog.

You should notice that the minor premise is stated incorrectly. We know other animals bark, notably seals (although it is hard to think of a seal named “Fifi”). The minor premise would have to read “Fifi is a dog” to arrive at the logical conclusion, “Fifi barks.” (Also, there are dog breeds that do not bark.) However, by restating the major premise, you have a different argument.

Major premise: Dogs are the only animals that wag their tails when happy.

Minor premise: Fifi wags her tail when happy.

Conclusion: Fifi is a dog.

Another term in deductive reasoning is an **enthymeme**. This odd word refers to a syllogism with one of the premises missing.

Major premise: (missing)

Minor premise: Daniel Becker is a chemistry major.

Conclusion: Daniel Becker will make a good SGA president.

What is the missing major premise? “Chemistry majors make good SGA presidents.” Why? Is there any support for this statement? Deductive reasoning is not designed to present unsupported major premises; its purpose is to go from what is known to what is not known in the absence of direct observation. If it is true that chemistry majors make good SGA presidents, then we could conclude Dan will do a good job in this role. But the premise, which in the enthymeme is left out, is questionable when put up to scrutiny.

Major premise: Socialists favor government-run health care.

Minor premise: (missing)

Conclusion: Candidate Fran Stokes favors government-run health care.

The missing statement in the minor premise, “Fran Stokes is a socialist,” is left out so that the audience can make the connection, even if it is erroneous. Consequently, it is best to avoid enthymemes with audiences and to be mindful of them when used by persuaders. They are mentioned here to make you aware of how commonly they are used as shortcuts. Enthymemes are common in advertising. You may have heard the slogan for Smucker’s jams, “With a name like Smucker’s, it has to be good.”

Major premise: Products with odd names are good products. (questionable!)

Minor premise: “Smucker’s” is an odd name.

Conclusion: Smucker’s is a good product.

To conclude, deductive reasoning helps us go from known to unknown and can lead to reliable conclusions if the premises and the method are correct. It has been around since the time of the ancient Greeks. It is not the flipside of inductive but a separate method of logic. While enthymemes are not always errors, you should listen carefully to arguments that use them to be sure that something incorrect is not being assumed or presented.



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8.3: Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning (also called “induction”) is probably the form of reasoning we use on a more regular basis. Induction is sometimes referred to as “reasoning from example or specific instance,” and indeed, that is a good description. It could also be referred to as “bottom-up” thinking. Inductive reasoning is sometimes called “the scientific method,” although you don’t have to be a scientist to use it, and use of the word “scientific” gives the impression it is always right and always precise, which it is not. In fact, we are just as likely to use inductive logic incorrectly or vaguely as we are to use it well.

Inductive reasoning happens when we look around at various happenings, objects, behavior, etc., and see patterns. From those patterns we develop conclusions. There are four types of inductive reasoning, based on different kinds of evidence and logical moves or jumps.

Generalization

Generalization is a form of inductive reasoning that draws conclusions based on recurring patterns or repeated observations. Vocabulary.com (2016) goes one step further to state it is “the process of formulating general concepts by abstracting common properties of instances.” To generalize, one must observe multiple instances and find common qualities or behaviors and then make a broad or universal statement about them. If every dog I see chases squirrels, then I would probably generalize that all dogs chase squirrels.

If you go to a certain business and get bad service once, you may not like it. If you go back and get bad treatment again, you probably won’t go back again because you have concluded “Business X always treats its customers badly.” However, according to the laws of logic, you cannot really say that; you can only say, “In my experience, Business X treats its customers badly” or more precisely, “has treated me badly.” Additionally, the word “badly” is imprecise, so to be a valid conclusion to the generalization, badly should be replaced with “rudely,” “dishonestly,” or “dismissively.” The two problems with generalization are over-generalizing (making too big an inductive leap, or jump, from the evidence to the conclusion) and generalizing without enough examples (hasty generalization, also seen in stereotyping).

In the example of the service at Business X, two examples are really not enough to conclude that “Business X treats customers rudely.” The conclusion does not pass the logic test for generalization, but pure logic may not influence whether or not you patronize the business again. Logic and personal choice overlap sometimes and separate sometimes. If the business is a restaurant, it could be that there is one particularly rude server at the restaurant, and he happened to wait on you during both of your experiences. It is possible that everyone else gets fantastic service, but your generalization was based on too small a sample.

Inductive reasoning through generalization is used in surveys and polls. If a polling organization follows scientific sampling procedures (sample size, ensuring different types of people are involved, etc.), it can conclude that their poll indicates trends in public opinion. Inductive reasoning is also used in science. We will see from the examples below that inductive reasoning does not result in certainty. Inductive conclusions are always open to further evidence, but they are the best conclusions we have now.

For example, if you are a coffee drinker, you might hear news reports at one time that coffee is bad for your health, and then six months later that another study shows coffee has positive effects on your health. Scientific studies are often repeated or conducted in different ways to obtain more and better evidence and make updated conclusions. Consequently, the way to disprove inductive reasoning is to provide contradictory evidence or examples.

Causal reasoning

Instead of looking for patterns the way generalization does, **causal reasoning** seeks to make cause-effect connections. Causal reasoning is a form of inductive reasoning we use all the time without even thinking about it. If the street is wet in the morning, you know that it rained based on past experience. Of course, there could be another cause—the city decided to wash the streets early that morning—but your first conclusion would be rain. Because causes and effects can be so multiple and complicated, two tests are used to judge whether the causal reasoning is valid.

Good inductive causal reasoning meets the tests of directness and strength. The alleged cause must have a direct relationship

on the effect and the cause must be strong enough to make the effect. If a student fails a test in a class that he studied for, he would need to examine the causes of the failure. He could look back over the experience and suggest the following reasons for the failure:

1. He waited too long to study.
2. He had incomplete notes.
3. He didn't read the textbook fully.
4. He wore a red hoodie when he took the test.
5. He ate pizza from Pizza Heaven the night before.
6. He only slept four hours the night before.
7. The instructor did not do a good job teaching the material.
8. He sat in a different seat to take the test.
9. His favorite football team lost its game on the weekend before.

Which of these causes are direct enough and strong enough to affect his performance on the test? All of them might have had a slight effect on his emotional, physical, or mental state, but all are not strong enough to affect his knowledge of the material if he had studied sufficiently and had good notes to work from. Not having enough sleep could also affect his attention and processes more directly than, say, the pizza or football game. We often consider “causes” such as the color of the hoodie to be superstitions (“I had bad luck because a black cat crossed my path”).

Taking a test while sitting in a different seat from the one where you sit in class has actually been researched (Sauffley, Otaka, & Bavaresco, 1985), as has whether sitting in the front or back affects learning (Benedict & Hoag, 2004). (In both cases, the evidence so far says that they do not have an impact, but more research will probably be done.) From the list above, #1-3, #6, and #7 probably have the most direct effect on the test failure. At this point our student would need to face the psychological concept of locus of control, or responsibility—was the failure on the test mostly his doing, or his instructor's?



Causal reasoning is susceptible to four fallacies: historical fallacy, slippery slope, false cause, and confusing correlation and causation. The first three will be discussed later, but the last is very common, and if you take a psychology or sociology course, you will study correlation and causation well. This video of a Ted Talk (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8B271L3NtAw>) will explain the concept in an entertaining manner. Confusing correlation and causation is the same as confusing causal reasoning and sign reasoning, discussed below.

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



Sign Reasoning

Right now, as one of the authors is writing this chapter, the leaves on the trees are turning brown, the grass does not need to be cut every week, and geese are flying towards Florida. These are all signs of fall in this region. These signs do not make fall happen, and they don't make the other signs— cooler temperatures, for example—happen. All the signs of fall are caused by one thing: the rotation of the earth and its tilt on its axis, which make shorter days, less sunshine, cooler temperatures, and less chlorophyll in the leaves, leading to red and brown colors.

It is easy to confuse signs and causes. **Sign reasoning**, then, is a form of inductive reasoning in which conclusions are drawn about phenomena based on events that precede or co-exist with, but not cause, a subsequent event. Signs are like the correlation mentioned above under causal reasoning. If someone argues, "In the summer more people eat ice cream, and in the summer there is statistically more crime. Therefore, eating more ice cream causes more crime!" (or "more crime makes people eat more ice cream."), that, of course, would be silly. These are two things that happen at the same time—signs—but they are effects of something else – hot weather. If we see one sign, we will see the other. Either way, they are signs or perhaps two different things that just happen to be occurring at the same time, but not causes.

Analogical reasoning

As mentioned above, **analogical reasoning** involves comparison. For it to be valid, the two things (schools, states, countries, businesses) must be truly alike in many important ways—essentially alike. Although Harvard University and your college are both institutions of higher education, they are not essentially alike in very many ways. They may have different missions, histories, governance, surrounding locations, sizes, clientele, stakeholders, funding sources, funding amounts, etc. So it would be foolish to argue, "Harvard has a law school; therefore, since we are both colleges, my college should have a law school, too." On the other hand, there are colleges that are very similar to your college in all those ways, so comparisons could be valid in those cases.

You have probably heard the phrase, "that is like comparing apples and oranges." When you think about it, though, apples and oranges are more alike than they are different (they are both still fruit, after all). This observation points out the difficulty of analogical reasoning—how similar do the two "things" have to be for there to be a valid analogy? Second, what is the purpose of the analogy? Is it to prove that State College A has a specific program (sports, Greek societies, a theatre major), therefore, College B should have that program, too? Are there other factors to consider? Analogical reasoning is one of the less reliable forms of logic, although it is used frequently.

To summarize, inductive or bottom-up reasoning comes in four varieties, each capable of being used correctly or incorrectly. Remember that inductive reasoning is disproven by counter evidence and its conclusions are always up to revision by new evidence—what is called "tentative," because the conclusions might have to be revised. Also, the conclusions of inductive reasoning should be precisely stated to reflect the evidence.

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8.3.1: Types of Arguments

8.4: Logical Fallacies

The second part of achieving a logical speech is to avoid **logical fallacies**. Logical fallacies are mistakes in reasoning—getting one of the formulas, inductive or deductive, wrong. There are actually dozens upon dozens of fallacies, some of which have complicated Latin names. This chapter will deal with eighteen of the most common ones that you should know to avoid poor logic in your speech and to become a critical thinker.

False Analogy

A **false analogy** is a fallacy where two things are compared that do not share enough key similarities to be compared fairly. As mentioned before, for analogical reasoning to be valid, the two things being compared must be essentially similar—similar in all the important ways. Two states could be analogous, if they are in the same region, have similar demographics and histories, similar size, and other aspects in common. Georgia is more like Alabama than it is like Hawaii, although both are states. An analogy between the United States and, for example, a tiny European country with a homogeneous population is probably not a valid analogy, although common. Even in the case where the two “things” being compared are similar, you should be careful to support your argument with other evidence.

False Cause

False cause is a fallacy that assumes that one thing causes another, but there is no logical connection between the two. A cause must be direct and strong enough, not just before or somewhat related to cause the problem. In a false cause fallacy, the alleged cause might not be strong or direct enough. For example, there has been much debate over the causes of the recession in 2008. If someone said, “The exorbitant salaries paid to professional athletes contributed to the recession” that would be the fallacy of false cause. Why? For one thing, the salaries, though large, are an infinitesimal part of the whole economy. Second, those salaries only affect a small number of people. Third, those salaries have nothing to do with housing market or the management of the large car companies, banks, or Wall Street, which had a stronger and more direct effect on the economy as a whole. In general, while we are often tempted to attribute a large societal or historical outcome to just one cause, that is rarely the case in real life.

Slippery Slope

A **slippery slope** fallacy is a type of false cause which assumes that taking a first step will lead to subsequent events that cannot be prevented. The children’s book, *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* is a good example of slippery slope; it tells all the terrible things (from a child’s point of view) that will happen, one after another, if a moose is given a muffin. If A happens, then B will happen, then C, then D, then E, F, G and it will get worse and worse and before you know it, we will all be in some sort of ruin. So, don’t do A or don’t let A happen, because it will inevitably lead to Z, and of course, Z is terrible.

This type of reasoning fails to look at alternate causes or factors that could keep the worst from happening, and often is somewhat silly when A is linked right to Z. A young woman may say to a young man asking her out, “If I go out with you Thursday night, I won’t be able to study for my test Friday. Then I will fail the test. Then I will fail the class. Then I will lose my scholarship. Then I will have to drop out of college. Then I will not get the career I want, and I’ll be 30 years old still living with my parents, unmarried, unhappy, and no children or career! That’s why I just can’t go out with you!” Obviously, this young woman has gone out of her way to get out of this date, and she has committed a slippery slope. Additionally, since no one can predict the future, we can never be entirely certain on the direction a given chain of events will lead.

Slippery slope arguments are often used in discussions over emotional and hot button topics such as gun control and physician-assisted suicide. One might argue that “If guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns,” a bumper sticker you may have seen. This is an example of a slippery slope argument because it is saying that any gun control laws will inevitably lead to no guns being allowed at all in the U.S. and then the inevitable result that only criminals will have guns because they don’t obey gun control laws anyway. While it is true criminals do not care about gun laws, we already have a large number of gun laws and the level of gun ownership is as high as ever.

However, just because an argument is criticized as a slippery slope, that does not mean it is a slippery slope. Sometimes actions do lead to far-reaching but unforeseen events, according to the “law of unintended consequences.” We should look below the

surface to see if the accusation of slippery slope is true.

For example, in regard to the anti-gun control “bumper sticker,” an investigation of the facts will show that gun control laws have been ineffective in many ways since we have more guns than ever now (347 million, according to a website affiliated with the National Rifle Association). However, according to the Brookings Institution, there are

“...about 300 major state and federal laws, and an unknown but shrinking number of local laws’. . . Rather than trying to base arguments for more or fewer laws on counting up the current total, we would do better to study the impact of the laws we do have.” (Vernick & Hepburn, 2003, p. 2).

Note that in the previous paragraph, two numerical figures are used, both from sources that are not free of bias. The National Rifle Association obviously opposes gun restrictions and does not support the idea that there are too many guns. Their website gives the background to show how that figure was discovered. The Brookings Institution is a “think-tank” (a group of scholars who write about public issues) that advocates gun control. Their article explains how it came to its number of state and federal laws, but admits that it omitted many local laws about carrying or firing guns in public places. So the number is actually higher, by its own admission. The Brookings Institution does not think there are too many laws; it thinks there should be more, or at least better enforced ones. Also, it should be noted that this article is based on data from 1970-1999, so the information may be out of date.

This information about the sources is provided to make a point about possible bias in sources and about critical thinking and reading, or more specifically, reading carefully to understand your sources. Just finding a source that looks pretty good is not enough. You must ask important questions about the way the information is presented. An interesting addition the debate is found at <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/essays/what-science-tells-us-about-the-effects-of-gun-policies.html> Although most people have strong opinions about gun control, pro and con, it is a complicated debate that requires, like most societal issues, clear and critical thinking about the evidence.

Hasty Generalization

Making a **hasty generalization** means making a generalization with too few examples. It is so common that we might wonder if there are any legitimate generalizations. The key to generalizations is how the conclusions are “framed” or put into language. The conclusions should be specific and be clear about the limited nature of the sample. Even worse is when the generalization is also applied too hastily to other situations. For example:

Premise: Albert Einstein did poorly in math in school.

Conclusion: All world-renowned scientists do poorly in math in school.

Secondary Conclusion: I did poorly at math in school, so I will become a world-renowned scientist.

Or this example that college professors hear all the time.

Premise: Mark Zuckerberg dropped out of college, invented Facebook, and made billions of dollars.

Premise: Bill Gates dropped out of college, started Microsoft, and made billions of dollars.

Conclusion: Dropping out of college leads to great financial success.

Secondary conclusion: A college degree is unnecessary to great financial success.

Straw Man

A **straw man** fallacy is a fallacy that shows only the weaker side of an opponent’s argument in order to more easily tear it down. The term “straw man” brings up the image of a scarecrow, and that is the idea behind the expression. Even a child can beat up a scarecrow; anyone can. Straw man fallacy happens when an opponent in a debate misinterprets or takes a small part of their opponent’s position in a debate. Then they blow that misinterpretation or small part out of proportion and make it a major part of the opponent’s position. This is often done by ridicule, taking statements out of context, or misquoting.



Politicians, unfortunately, commit the straw man fallacy quite frequently, but they are hardly the only ones. Someone may argue that college professors don't care about students' learning because professors say, "You must read the chapter to understand the material; I can't explain it all to you in class." That would be taking a behavior and making it mean something it doesn't. If someone states, "College A is not as good as College B because the cafeteria food at College A is not as good" is a pretty weak argument— and making too big of a deal over of a minor thing—for attending one college over another.

Post hoc ergo propter hoc

This long Latin phrase means "After the fact, therefore because of the fact." Also called historical fallacy, this one is an error in causal reasoning. Historical fallacy uses progression in time as the reason for causation, but nothing else. In this scenario, A happens, then B happens; therefore A caused B. The fallacy states that because an event takes place first in time, it is the cause of an event that takes place later in time. We know that is not true, but sometimes we act as if it is.

Elections often get blamed for everything that happens afterward. It is true that a cause must happen first or before the effect, but it doesn't mean that everything or anything that happens beforehand must be the cause. In the example given earlier, a football team losing its game five days earlier can't be the reason for a student failing a test just because it happened first.

Argument from Silence

You can't prove something from nothing. If the constitution, legal system, authority, or the evidence is silent on a matter, then that is all you know. You cannot conclude anything about that. "I know ESP is true because no one has ever proven that it isn't true" is not an argument. Here we see the difference between fallacious and false. Fallacious has to do with the reasoning process being incorrect, not with the truth or falseness of the conclusion. If I point to a girl on campus and say, "That girl is Taylor Swift," I am simply stating a falsehood, not committing a fallacy. If I say, "Her name is Taylor Swift, and the reason I know that is because no one has ever told me that her name is not Taylor Swift" (argument from silence), that is a fallacy and a falsehood. (Unless by some odd circumstance her name really is Taylor Swift or the singer Taylor Swift frequents your campus!)

Statistical fallacies

There are many ways that statistics can be used unethically, but here we will deal with three. The first type of statistical fallacy is "small sample," the second is "unrepresentative sample," and the third is a variation of appeal to popularity (discussed below). In small sample, an argument is being made from too few examples, so it is essentially hasty generalization. In unrepresentative sample, a conclusion is based on surveys of people who do not represent, or resemble, the ones to whom the conclusion is being applied. If you ever take a poll on a website, it is not "scientific" because it is unrepresentative. Only people who go to that website are participating, and the same people could be voting over and over. In a scientific or representative survey or poll, the pollsters talk to different socio-economic classes, races, ages, and genders and the data-gathering is very carefully performed.

If you go to the president of your college and say, “We need to have a daycare here because 90% of the students say so,” but you only polled ten students, that would be small sample. If you say, “I polled 100 students,” that would still be small, but better, unless all of them were your friends who attended other colleges in the state. That group would not be representative of the student body. If you polled 300 students but they were all members of the same high school graduating class and the same gender as you, that would also be unrepresentative sample.

In the end, surveys indicate trends in opinions and behaviors, not the future and not the truth. We have lots of polls before the election, but only one poll matters—the official vote on Election Day.

Non Sequitur

Non sequitur is Latin for “it does not follow.” It’s an all-purpose fallacy for situations where the conclusion sounds good at first but then you realize there is no connection between the premises and the conclusion. If you say to your supervisor, “I need a raise because the price of BMWs went up,” that is a **non sequitur**.

Inappropriate Appeal to Authority

There are appropriate appeals to authority, such as when you use sources in your speech who are knowledgeable, experienced, and credible. But not all sources are credible. Some may be knowledgeable about one field but not another. A person with a Nobel Prize in economics is not qualified to talk about medicine, no matter how smart he/she is (the economist could talk about the economic factors of medicine, however). Of course, the most common place we see this is in celebrity endorsements on commercials.

False Dilemma

This one is often referred to as the “either-or” fallacy. When you are given only two options, and more than two options exist, that is false dilemma. Usually in false dilemma, one of the options is undesirable and the other is the one the persuader wants you to take. False dilemma is common. “America: Love it or Leave It.” “If you don’t buy this furniture today, you’ll never get another chance.” “Vote for Candidate Y or see our nation destroyed.”

Appeal to Tradition

Essentially, appeal to tradition is the argument, “We’ve always done it this way.” This fallacy happens when traditional practice is the only reason for continuing a policy. Tradition is a great thing. We do many wonderful things for the sake of tradition, and it makes us feel good. But doing something only because it’s always been done a certain way is not an argument. Does it work? Is it cost effective? Is some other approach better? If your college library refused to adopt a computer database of books in favor of the old card catalog because “that’s what libraries have done for decades,” you would likely argue they need to get with the times. The same would be true if the classrooms all still had only chalkboards instead of computers and projectors and the administration argued that it fit the tradition of classrooms.

Bandwagon

This fallacy is also referred to as “appeal to majority” and “appeal to popularity,” using the old expression of “get on the bandwagon” to support an idea. Essentially, bandwagon is a fallacy that asserts that because something is popular (or seems to be), it is therefore good, correct, or desirable. In a sense it was mentioned before, under statistical fallacies. Of course, you’ve probably heard it or said it many times: “Everybody is doing it.” Well, of course, everybody is not doing it, it just seems like it. And the fact (or perception) that more than 50% of the population is engaging in an activity does not make that a wise activity.

Many times in history over 50% of the population believed or did something that was not good or right, such as believing the earth was the center of the solar system and the sun orbited around the earth. In a democracy we make public policy to some extent based on majority rule, but we also have protections for the minority. This is a wonderful part of our system. It is sometimes foolish to say that a policy is morally right or wrong or wise just because it is supported by 50% of the people. So when you hear a public opinion poll that says, “58% of the population thinks...” keep this in mind. Also, all it means is that 58% of the people on a survey indicated a belief or attitude on a survey, not that the belief or attitude is correct or that it will be the majority opinion in

the future.

Red Herring

This one has an interesting history, and you might want to look it up. A herring is a fish, and it was once used to throw off or distract foxhounds from a particular scent. A red herring, then, is creating a diversion or introducing an irrelevant point to distract someone or get someone off the subject of the argument. When a politician in a debate is asked about his stance on immigration, and the candidate responds, “I think we need to focus on reducing the debt. That’s the real problem!”, he is introducing a red herring to distract from the original topic under discussion. If someone argues, “We should not worry about the needs of people in other countries because we have poor people in the United States,” that may sound good on the surface, but it is a red herring and a false dilemma (either-or) fallacy. It is possible to address poverty in this country and other countries at the same time.

Ad Hominem

This Latin term means “argument to the man,” and generally refers to a fallacy that attacks the person rather than dealing with the real issue in dispute. A person using **ad hominem** connects a real or perceived flaw in a person’s character or behavior to an issue he or she supports, asserting that the flaw in character makes the position on the issue wrong. Obviously, there is no connection. In a sense, ad hominem is a type of red herring because it distracts from the real argument. In some cases, the “hidden agenda” is to say that because someone of bad character supports an issue or argument, therefore the issue or argument is not worthy or logical.

A person using **ad hominem** might say, “Climate change is not true. It is supported by advocates such as Congressman Jones, and we all know that Congressman Jones was convicted of fraud last year.” This is not to say that Congressman Jones should be re-elected, only that climate change’s being true or false is irrelevant to the fraud conviction. Do not confuse ad hominem with poor credibility or ethos. A speaker’s ethos, based on character or past behavior, does matter. It just doesn’t mean that the issues they support are logically or factually wrong. A speaker’s ethos, based on character or past behavior, does matter. It just doesn’t mean that the issues they support are logically or factually wrong.

Ad Misericordium

This Latin term means “appeal to pity” and sometimes that term is used instead of the Latin one. There is nothing wrong with pity and human compassion as an emotional appeal in a persuasive speech; in fact, that is definitely one you might want to use if it is appropriate, such as to solicit donations to a worthwhile charity. However, if the appeal to pity is used to elicit an emotional appeal and cover up a lack of facts and evidence, it is being used as a smokescreen and is deceiving the audience. If a nonprofit organization tried to get donations by wrenching your heartstrings, that emotion may divert your attention from how much of the donation really goes to the “cause.” Chapter 3 of this book looked at ethics in public speaking, and intentional use of logical fallacies is a breach of ethics, even if the audience accepts them and does not use critical thinking on its own.

Plain Folks

Plain folks is a tactic commonly used in advertising and by politicians. Powerful persons will often try to make themselves appear like the “common man.” A man running for Senate may walk around in a campaign ad in a flannel shirt, looking at his farm. (Flannel shirts are popular for politicians, especially in the South.) A businessman of a large corporation may want you to think his company cares about the “little guy” by showing the owner helping on the assembly line. The image that these situations create says, “I’m one of the guys, just like you.” There is nothing wrong with wearing a flannel shirt and looking at one’s farm, unless the reason is to divert from the real issues.

Guilt by Association

This fallacy is a form of false analogy based on the idea that if two things bear any relationship at all, they are comparable. No one wants to be blamed for something just because she is in the wrong place at the wrong time or happens to bear some resemblance to a guilty person. An example would be if someone argued, “Adolf Hitler was a vegetarian; therefore being a vegetarian is evil.” Of course, vegetarianism as a life practice had nothing to do with Hitler’s character. Although this is an extreme example, it is not uncommon to hear guilt by association used as a type of ad hominem argument. There is actually a fallacy called “reductio ad

Hitlerum”— whenever someone dismisses an argument by bringing up Hitler out of nowhere.

There are other fallacies, many of which go by Latin names. You can visit other websites, such as <http://www.logicalfallacies.info/> for more types and examples. These eighteen are a good start to helping you discern good reasoning and supplement your critical thinking knowledge and ability

Conclusion

This chapter took the subject of public speaking to a different level in that it was somewhat more abstract than the other chapters. However, a public speaker is responsible for using good reasoning as much as she is responsible to have an organized speech, to analyze the audience, or to practice for effective delivery.

Something to Think About

You cannot hear logical fallacies unless you listen carefully and critically. Keep your ears open to possible uses of fallacies. Are they used in discussion of emotional topics? Are they used to get compliance (such as to buy a product) without allowing the consumer to think about the issues? What else do you notice about them?

Here is a class activity one of the authors has used in the past to teach fallacies. With a small group of classmates, create a “fallacy skit” to perform for the class. Plan and act out a situation where a fallacy is being used, and then be able to explain it to the class. The example under Slippery Slope about the young woman turning down a date actually came from the author’s students in a fallacy skit.

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9: A COMPENDIUM OF PERSUASION THEORIES

9.1: Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviors

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9.1: Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviors

Over the years, many of my persuasion students have told me that they are taking this class because they "want to learn how to get other people to do stuff." I encourage those students to take a marketing class.

Persuasion is more than a tool; it is social science and it is strategy. To understand persuasion is to understand and respect human thought processes and human behavior. Persuasion is much more than a "how-to." We've probably all heard the joke, "How many psychologists does it take to change a light bulb?" Answer: "None. The light bulb has to *want* to change!"

One cannot say they've sold something if nobody bought it. One cannot say they taught something if nobody learned it. We have not persuaded anyone if no one chooses to make a change. Persuasion cannot *make* people change (though force or coercion can). We can influence people, but ultimately, people with free will choose to change—or not. Persuasion is not something that one *does* to someone else. It is something that one influences others to do.

Persuasion – influence – can be powerful, so we must be respectful of this power and be ethical, knowledgeable persuaders.

Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviors

We have learned in previous chapters that persuasion is about influencing change. What, exactly, are we trying to change? In almost every persuasive context, the goal is to change beliefs, attitudes, and/or behaviors.

Beliefs are things we accept, consider to be true, or hold as an opinion ("Belief" def. 2). Typically, beliefs are divided into two basic categories: core and dispositional. Core beliefs are beliefs that people have actively engaged in and created over the course of their lives (e.g. belief in a higher power or belief in extraterrestrial life forms). Dispositional beliefs, on the other hand, are beliefs that people have not actively engaged in but rather judgments that they make, based on their knowledge of related subjects, and when they encounter a proposition. For example, imagine that you were asked the question, "Can stock cars reach speeds of one thousand miles per hour on a one-mile oval track?" Even though you may never have attended a stock car race or even seen one on television, you can make split-second judgments about your understanding of automobile speeds and say with a fair degree of certainty that you believe stock cars cannot travel at one thousand miles per hour on a one-mile track.

Persuading audiences to change core beliefs is more difficult than persuading audiences to alter dispositional beliefs.

People have attitudes about pretty much everything. The color beige? Even if we don't think about it much, we each have an attitude about the color beige. An **attitude** is defined as an individual's general predisposition toward something as being good or bad, right or wrong, or negative or positive. You have attitudes about activities, people, laws, policies, the color beige—you name it.

Behaviors come in a wide range of forms. **Behaviors** are what people do, how people act, how people behave. Most behaviors are readily observable. How a person votes, eats, shops, moves, speaks, and reacts to things are all examples of behavior. A great deal of persuasion, particularly advertising, public health announcements, and political campaigns, has the goal of influencing the behavior of particular listeners.

So if attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are WHAT persuasion tries to change, HOW do we change attitudes, beliefs and behaviors?

Before we can develop persuasive strategies, which are action plans for changing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, we must differentiate between strategy and theory.

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9.2: Strategy vs. Theory

In business, strategy is often defined as a plan for success. A strategy is a careful plan or method, and it must be convertible to action to succeed (White 133). A strategy is a "how-to", a way to accomplish something. A persuasive strategy is a technique or plan used to more effectively influence beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Theories, on the other hand, are more general, scientifically acceptable principles offered to explain phenomena ("Theory" def. 1).

As Kenneth R. Miller, a cell biologist at Brown University, has said, a theory "doesn't mean a hunch or a guess. A theory is a system of explanations that ties together a whole bunch of facts. It not only explains those facts, but predicts what you ought to find from other observations and experiments" (Zimmer).

The better one understands theories that attempt to explain the persuasive process, the better one is able to select or develop appropriate and effective persuasive strategies. It's a pretty good idea to understand how something works before we attempt to operate it!

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9.3: Theories of Persuasion

Again, persuasion theories are general, scientifically acceptable principles that attempt to explain persuasion. Persuasion theories are not how-to's or strategies.

There are many theories related to persuasion. Many of these theories were developed in the discipline of communication studies, while others come from other disciplines, such as psychology, behavioral psychology, behavioral economics, and others. The list of theories below is by no means exhaustive, but represents prevalent theories on the subject.

Balance Theory - 1946

Heider's Balance Theory in psychology proposes that people strive for cognitive consistency in their attitudes and perceptions, particularly in triadic (groups of three) interpersonal relationships. "It suggests that when there's an imbalance (e.g., a person likes another person who dislikes something they like), there's a motivational drive to restore balance, either by changing attitudes or perceptions" (Guy-Evans).

"If no balanced state exists, then forces toward this state will arise (Heider, "Attitudes" 107). Let's say I love metal music and I really like a person, but this person does not like metal music. This can create a sense of imbalance that I might be compelled to change. I could do this in several ways: I could change how I feel about the person and decide to like them less or not at all because they're not a metalhead. I could also engage in some of what Heider called "cognitive reorganization." I could reorganize my way of thinking so that I believe that this person not liking my kind of music simply isn't that big of a deal. Heider noted that, "If a change is not possible, the state of imbalance will produce tension" ("Attitudes" 107).

For instance, if looking at two individual's attitudes toward going to the gym:

If you like someone and you both like going to the gym, you have a balanced relationship. If you like someone and neither of you like going to the gym, you have a balanced relationship. If you like someone and you like going to the gym but they don't like going to the gym, an imbalanced relationship exists. Due to the psychological discomfort of this unbalanced relationship, you might be more likely to change your attitude towards going to the gym due to liking this person (Guy-Evans).

Aronson and Cope conducted research which supported the following result: "We like someone who likes someone that we like; we like someone who dislikes someone we dislike; we dislike someone who likes someone we dislike; and we dislike someone who dislikes someone we like. This follows even though it is clear that the respective reasons for liking or disliking the target person are unrelated (12).

The implication for balance theory in persuasion is that, if an imbalance is perceived, people may be compelled to change their attitudes or behaviors in order to restore balance.

Yale Attitude Change Approach - 1953



During World War II, the U.S. War Department created a series of training films entitled "Why We Fight." The Armed Forces created this series to quickly and effectively indoctrinate the mass influx of drafted soldiers and help them understand the events that led up to U.S. participation in the war (Baronne). Yale professor and researcher Carl Hovland was brought in to determine if the film series was effective as a means of communicating information and creating lasting change in opinion and attitude (Lumsdaine 198). By the end of the war, Hovland and his team of researchers had conducted nearly 200 studies involving more than half a million soldiers from the Army and Navy. This research focused largely upon opinion control and the affect of media upon public opinion (Baronne).

Upon returning to Yale after the war, Hovland founded the Yale Communication and Attitude Change Program, which "coordinated systematic research on variables determining the effects of persuasive communication" (Hovland et al. 2). Out of this work came a model called the Yale attitude change approach, which describes the conditions under which people tend to change their attitudes. Hovland demonstrated that certain features of the source of a persuasive message, the content of the message, and the characteristics of the audience will influence the persuasiveness of a message (Hovland, et al. 13-14).

This framework of source, message and audience characteristics as drivers of persuasion largely directed decades of persuasion research. Source characteristics such as speaker credibility, attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness; message characteristics such as subtlety, sidedness, and timing; and audience characteristics such as intelligence, self-esteem, age, are discussed at greater length elsewhere in this book.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory - 1957

When we are hungry, we feel uncomfortable. Our stomachs rumble, we may feel irritable or shaky, we may have low energy. We become very much aware that we need to eat, and we are motivated to find food!

Cognitive dissonance is akin to being hungry. Cognitive dissonance is psychologically uncomfortable, just like hunger is physically uncomfortable. Whereas a lack of food causes hunger, inconsistency in our thinking causes cognitive dissonance, or psychological discomfort. Whereas hunger motivates us to find food, cognitive dissonance motivates us to reduce or prevent the psychological discomfort.

In 1957, Leon Festinger described cognitive dissonance as a drive-like state of discomfort resulting from psychological inconsistencies in people's thinking which motivates efforts to reduce or prevent the discomfort (qtd. in de Vries 1). A common example of cognitive dissonance relates to smoking. People know smoking can cause lung cancer, yet many continue to smoke, which may cause guilt, embarrassment, defensiveness, or some other form of psychological discomfort. According to cognitive dissonance theory, people are highly motivated – whether they realize it or not – to resolve or stop this discomfort. How could a person resolve the inconsistency between their smoking and the health risk? Some might quit smoking. Some might convince themselves that they don't smoke enough to cause harm. Some might tell themselves that they will quit after one more cigarette.

All of these folks have reduced or prevented their mental discomfort.

Although a lot of examples of cognitive dissonance focus on ways people rationalize or justify negative choices or mistakes, cognitive dissonance can also motivate people to engage in positive behaviors and make positive changes. When dissonance occurs, people are primed to adjust their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to reduce the dissonance/discomfort and restore psychological balance. This has major implications for persuasion.

Inoculation Theory - 1961

At the core of inoculation theory is a biological metaphor (Compton). Much like our bodies can be inoculated against viral attacks, our attitudes can be inoculated against persuasive attempts. The theory's originator, William McGuire, contended that "by exposing individuals to a persuasive message that contains weakened arguments against an established attitude, individuals would develop resistance against stronger, future persuasive attacks (Compton). McGuire believed that people tended to defend their beliefs by avoiding exposure to counterarguments rather than by developing positive support for their beliefs. In essence, this selective exposure weakened their "immune systems", making people highly vulnerable to strong counterarguments when exposed (McGuire 184).

So how can we avoid selective exposure and strengthen our beliefs? Both threat and refutational preemption can reduce selective exposure.

Threat refers to recognition by message recipients that their existing position on an issue is vulnerable; it functions as a motivating force for a protective response. One type of threat is forewarning; a direct, explicit warning that one's position on a topic is susceptible to change. Refutational preemption "provides specific content that receivers can employ to strengthen attitudes against subsequent change" (Pfau et. al 188). A typical inoculation message forewarns the audience of impending challenges to their held position, then raises the challenges and counterarguments that opponents might articulate, and then refutes those counterarguments.

Social Judgment Theory - 1961

Muzafer Sherif and Carl Hovland presented their social judgment theory in the 1961 book, *Social Judgment: Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Communication and Attitude Change*. Social judgment theory "seeks to specify the conditions under which [attitude] change takes place and predict the direction and extent of the attitude change, while attempting to explain how likely a person might be to change their opinion, the probable direction of that change, their tolerance toward the opinion of others, and their level of commitment to their position" (Mallard 197).

Social judgment theory is an attempt to predict attitude change and the conditions under which it will take place (Rand 6). Integral to this theory are the concepts of latitude of acceptance, latitude of rejection, and latitude of non-commitment. Rand explains: "The latitude of acceptance is a range of positions including the most acceptable position and other acceptable positions. Similarly the latitude of rejection is a range of positions which include the most objectionable position plus other objectionable positions. The latitude of non-commitment consists of those positions on an issue which are not responded to by the individual as either acceptable or objectionable" (Rand 5-6).

Take, for example, your personal attitude towards artificial intelligence (AI). If you are a big fan of AI, you have a pro-AI position and AI is very much within your latitude of acceptance, as are messages that are supportive of or in favor of AI. Messages that denigrate or disfavor AI would be in your latitude of rejection. A message that neither accepts nor rejects AI, such as, "AI is not a replacement for creativity," would likely fall in your latitude of non-commitment.

Social judgment theory specifies that the individual will change in the direction of a communication only when the communication falls within their initial latitude of acceptance. Thus, social judgment theory would predict that with small discrepancies between the initial position of the individual and the position advocated in a communication, the greater the probability that it will fall within their latitude of acceptance and thereby create some position change. The greater the discrepancy between the individual's initial position and advocated position the greater the probability that it will fall into the latitude of rejection" (Rand 6-7).

Sherif contended that the more ego-involved a person is in an issue, that is, the more important that issue is to a person, the less susceptible they are to changing their position (Rand 9).

Based upon this theory that people will change only if a message falls within their latitude of acceptance on an issue, what strategy might a persuader employ to effect attitude change?

Psychological Reactance Theory - 1966

Have you ever walked by a "Don't Walk on the Grass" sign and then immediately stepped on the grass? Or started a diet and found yourself eating an entire family-size bag of potato chips? Although many persuasive messages and campaigns are successful, sometimes these messages result in audience members adopting opposite behaviors. When a person is presented with a persuasive message and then adopts the opposite stance, a "boomerang effect" occurs. A theoretical framework that helps us understand these oppositional reactions is Brehm's psychological reactance theory.

Brehm states: "people become motivationally aroused by a threat to or elimination of a behavioral freedom. This motivational state is what is called psychological reactance. It impels the individual to restore the particular freedom that was threatened or taken away. It does not impel the individual to acquire just any freedom—only the one threatened or taken away will do" (Brehm 72). So if a doctor advises a patient to stop smoking, and the patient feels that their freedom to smoke is being threatened or taken away, the patient may very well light up the second they leave the doctor's office!

"Reactance is an unpleasant motivational arousal that emerges when people experience a threat to or loss of their free behaviors" (Steindl et al. 2005). "People who are threatened usually feel uncomfortable, hostile, aggressive, and angry" (Steindl et al. 2005). Threatened people may exhibit a range of behavioral and cognitive reactions, such as engaging in the restricted behavior, counterarguing, denigrating the source of the threat, to generally acting out in hostile or aggressive ways.

So what, exactly, triggers this reactance? Forceful, dogmatic, and triggering language – language designed to stifle the receiver's freedom to maintain an opinion – tends to elicit reactance (Quick and Stephenson 256). Triggering words include such terms as "should", "ought", "must" and "need". People are typically energized to act in ways that will restore their freedom when their values are affected (Steindl 207). Culture appears to play a role in reactance. Jonas et. al found that individualists or people with an independent self-construct are more likely to exhibit reactance when their individual, personal freedom is threatened, whereas collectivists or people with an interdependent self-construct are more affected by threats to their collective freedom (1078).

Although reactance is often associated with undesirable outcomes such as anger and opposition, reactance can produce desirable outcomes. Reactance can elicit heightened achievement motivation, and recent studies show that reactance can activate positive affect, such as feeling strong, determined, and capable of changing an unpleasant situation (Steindl et. al 210-211).

Theory of Reasoned Action - 1967 / Theory of Planned Behavior - 1985

According to the theory of reasoned action, the most important predictor of behavior is behavioral intention (Montaño and Kasprzyk 98). If one has no intention of keeping up with the readings for a class, the chances of that person reading the class materials are very, very slim. If one has every intention of keeping up with the reading, something might still prevent them from doing so, but their chances of reading the class materials are much higher because of their behavioral intention. So where does intention come from?

According to the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior, the three direct determinants of our behavior intentions are our behavioral beliefs, our normative beliefs, and our perceived control over the behavior (Fishbein and Azjen 20; Montaño and Kasprzyk 98).

The theory of reasoned action, which later expanded into the theory of planned behavior, assumes that human behavior follows the beliefs that people have about that behavior. Beliefs guide the decision to perform or not perform the behavior in question (Fishbein and Azjen 20). These theories distinguish three types of belief about behavior. *Behavioral beliefs* are about the positive or negative consequences a person might experience if they performed the behavior. If a person believes that a positive outcome will result, the theory of reasoned action posits that the person will have a positive attitude about that behavior. *Normative beliefs* are about perceived social pressure. Do important people and groups in one's life approve or disapprove of a behavior, and do these people engage in this behavior themselves? If one's important referent groups approve of a behavior and practice it themselves, TRA holds that people will feel pressure to perform this behavior. If one's important people disapprove of the behavior and do not engage in it, they will perceive pressure not to perform this behavior (Fishbein and Azjen 20-21).

Going back to the example of keeping up with the reading in a class: does keeping up with the reading have positive or negative consequences? If one believes the consequences would be positive, TRA forwards the idea that they will have a positive attitude about that behavior. Do the people one looks up to approve of keeping up with course work? Would they engage in this behavior themselves? If so, TRA argues that this normative belief creates social pressure to engage in this behavior.

The theory of reasoned action was expanded to the theory of planned behavior with an additional determinant of intention: *control beliefs*. Control beliefs are about personal and environmental factors that can help or impede peoples' attempts to carry out the behavior (Fishbein and Azjen 21). If one believes that reading class material is beneficial and feels positive social pressure to keep up with the readings, but perceives a very busy work and school schedule to be an impediment, this influences one's intentions to perform the behavior.

"In combination, attitude toward the behavior, perceived norm, and perception of behavioral control lead to the formation of a behavioral intention, or a readiness to perform the behavior. As a general rule, the more favorable the attitude and perceived norm, and the greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger should be the person's intention to perform the behavior in question" (Fishbein and Azjen 21).

Elaboration Likelihood Model - 1980

Petty and Cacioppo's elaboration likelihood model originally set out to understand how individuals use information to arrive at judgments in persuasive situations (Trumbo 397). ELM asserts that when one encounters some form of communication, this information is processed with varying degrees of thought. "When conditions foster people's motivation and ability to engage in issue-relevant thinking, the elaboration likelihood is said to be high" (Petty and Cacioppo, "Elaboration" 673). The elaboration likelihood model contends that, when a high degree of thought or mental elaboration is being used to process information, a central route is being used, whereas when a low degree of thought or elaboration is being employed, a peripheral route is being used.

The central route is associated with a person's motivation and ability to think: therefore, effort, reasoning and mental energy are at play. High elaboration means that people "attend to the appeal; attempt to access relevant associations, images, and experiences from memory; scrutinize and elaborate upon the externally provided message arguments in light of the associations available from memory; draw inferences about the merits of the arguments for a recommendation based upon their analyses of the data extracted from the appeal and accessed from memory; and consequently derive an overall evaluation of, or attitude toward, the recommendation" (Petty and Cacioppo, "Elaboration" 673). The peripheral route, on the other hand, is associated with the message recipient having little motivation or ability to process a message. In the elaboration likelihood model, the peripheral route relies on association with positive or negative cues, which have no intrinsic link to the persuasive message, such as source attractiveness or number of arguments (Petty and Cacioppo, "Elaboration" 673). In short, the central route relies upon the processing of and engagement with information; the peripheral route relies upon cues, associations, or simple inferences.

Research has demonstrated that the quality of the arguments contained in a message has a greater impact on persuasion under conditions of high than low issue involvement. Conversely, peripheral cues such as the expertise or attractiveness of the communicator have a greater impact on persuasion under conditions of low involvement. People who are not engaged in an issue will be influenced by the simple number of arguments. People who are highly engaged with an issue and believe the persuasive appeal is important are influenced by the quality of the arguments (Petty and Cacioppo, "Elaboration" 674).

Essentially, research supports that the elaboration likelihood model, which focuses upon the manner in which people relate persuasive appeals to their prior knowledge, predicts one's ability to achieve susceptibility or resistance to persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo, "Elaboration" 674). When elaboration likelihood is low, experts are more persuasive than non-experts, and celebrities are more persuasive than average citizens (Petty and Cacioppo, "Source" 669). When elaboration likelihood is moderate, "characteristics of the message source [e.g., physical attractiveness, background, prestigious hobbies, etc.] can help a person decide whether or not the message is worth considering" (Petty and Cacioppo, "Source" 670).

Heuristic-Systemic Model - 1980

Another dual-processing model of attitude change is the heuristic-systematic model. The heuristic-systematic model of persuasion asserts that systematic processing is defined by effortful scrutiny and comparison of information; systematic processing involves attempts to thoroughly understand any available information through careful attention, deep thinking, and intensive reasoning (Chaiken and Ledgerwood 246). Heuristic processing, on the other hand, is defined by the use of cues to arrive more easily at a judgment. These cues, or "simple decision rules" manifest as agreement with expert opinion, a tendency to agree with perceived social consensus, or a willingness to rely on currently held information. This mode requires less effort and fewer resources than systematic processing (Trumbo 392). In this model, heuristics, or indicators, such as consensus ("everyone is doing it"); expertise ("experts know what they're talking about") or argument length ("a long argument is a strong argument") tend to influence opinions and attitudes (Chen and Chaiken 75).

Two principles proposed by the systematic-heuristic processing theory are the *least effort principle* and the *sufficiency principle*.

The *least effort principle* reflects the assumption that individuals try to arrive at attitudinal decisions as efficiently as possible; the *sufficiency principle* "asserts that individuals are sometimes motivated to exert additional cognitive effort in order to reach a certain level of judgmental confidence" (Chaiken and Ledgerwood 247).

Considerable research relating to this model supports the claim that individuals will process information heuristically unless they are both motivated and able to engage in more effortful systematic processing. Ultimately, as ability and motivation increase, systematic processing plays an increasing role in influencing attitudes (Chaiken and Ledgerwood 253).

Narrative Paradigm - 1984

"A good story is more convincing than a good argument." - Walter Fisher

Once upon a time—1984, to be precise—a USC professor named Walter Fisher published a provocative article. At that time, you see, most communication scholars viewed rhetoric as practical reasoning. "Formal, rational modes of argument should be the measure of effective persuasion," said the Establishment. But Professor Fisher politely disagreed. "Reasoning need not be bound to argumentative prose or be expressed in clear-cut inferential or implicative structures," he said (Fisher, "Narrative" 1).

Whereas most of us would describe humans as *homo sapiens*, or wise humans, Professor Fisher very much viewed humans as *homo narrans*: storytelling humans. He believed that when it comes to human nature or what it means to be human, storytelling is as important, possibly more so, than language or reasoning. "Humans as rhetorical beings are as much valuing as they are reasoning animals," said the professor (Fisher, "Toward" 376).

"So what is this 'narrative' you promote?" asked the Establishment. Fisher explained that narration is "a theory of symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them." He saw the narrative paradigm as bringing together the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme (Fisher, "Narrative" 2). Fisher people accepted or reject the "truthfulness" of competing stories. His innovative work explored how individuals consider whether or not stories cohere and hold together internally according to cultural understanding – an idea he named narrative probability – and whether or not a story seems true given other stories people hear, experience and come to believe – a principal he named narrative fidelity. "These may be thought of as tests that we apply – whether instinctively or through conscious reasoning – to decide whether a narrative coheres and offers good reasons for action and belief. A message that is judged by a particular audience to be high in narrative probability and narrative fidelity enhances identification and is more likely to be adopted or adhered to by members of that audience" (Engebretsen and Baker).

The Unimodel - 1999

In 1980, both the elaboration likelihood model and the systemic-heuristic model appeared in persuasion scholarship. Both models put forward the idea that persuasive messages are processed in two ways; either by effortful (central or systemic) processing or by less effortful (peripheral or heuristic) processing. Nearly two decades later, Kruglanski and Thompson challenged this idea, and argued that "the function fulfilled by cues and heuristics and message arguments is essentially the same" (93). In other words, it does not matter whether persuasive messages are peripheral/central or heuristic/systemic, all serve as forms of evidence and are therefore functionally equivalent (Kruglanski and Thompson 93). All persuasive messages, despite their characteristics, serve as evidence for the evaluative inferences perceivers draw (104).

According to the unimodel, central processing isn't qualitatively different from peripheral processing (Gass and Seiter 47). El Hidihi and Zourrigb posit that the main contention of the unimodel is that individuals, in a persuasion context, seek to reach conclusions based on pieces of information within the persuasive message (436). They further state that the unimodel rejects the idea that there is a qualitative distinction (such as peripheral vs. central) in the "route" of persuasion; all persuasive material is simply used by the receiver as evidence to draw message-related conclusions (436). Ultimately, the unimodel contends that all messages, regardless of type, serve as evidence for attitude change.

Nudge Theory - 2008

When I was a child, my family had one trash can. Everything – garbage, glass, aluminum cans, food waste, yard waste – went into the same can. Now, when we go out for fast food or walk into a membership warehouse or walk on to campus, we see several kinds of waste cans: some for compost, some for recycling, some for garbage, and sometimes even special receptacles for batteries or light bulbs. When we sort our waste into the correct bin, we are being what Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein would call "nudged."

What, exactly is a nudge? It is "any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives" (Thaler and Sunstein 13). No one is forcing us to sort our garbage, nor rewarding us if we do, nor fining us if we don't. We tend to do the right thing because the "right" choice has been made available to us, typically without fanfare or even our knowledge.

Nudge theory comes from the field of behavioral economics, and co-founder of nudge theory Richard Thaler won the 2017 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his contributions to behavioral economics.

At its heart, nudge theory is what Thaler and Sunstein call "libertarian paternalism", which they define as "... an approach that preserves freedom of choice but authorizes both private and public institutions to steer people in directions that will promote their welfare" ("Libertarian Paternalism" 175). The paternalism comes in where Thaler and Sunstein posit that "it is legitimate for choice architects to try to influence people's behavior in order to make their lives longer, healthier, and better" (*Nudge* 5). The hallmark of libertarianism is individual choice: "people should be free to do what they like - and to opt out of undesirable arrangements if they want to do so" (*Nudge* 5). In short, nudge theory is the idea that governments, systems, leaders, and organizations can arrange choices - a concept they call "choice architecture" - for the betterment of society. Freedom of choice is preserved, but people's behavior has been influenced by *how* the information is presented.

Common examples of nudges include everything from default settings on our phones, to product placement on store shelves, to push notifications/reminders, to website design, to automatic savings plans. These nudges tend to be subtle and we have free choice to resist or opt out of the nudge.

More Theories Related to Persuasion

Although this chapter has addressed eleven of the most popular theories relating to persuasion, there are several others that attempt to explain mechanisms that lead to changes in beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors. These include:

- unimodel theory of persuasion
- functional attitude theory
- attribution theory of persuasion
- social learning theory
- language expectancy theory
- ACE model of persuasion

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9.4: THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR

9.4.1: Theory of Planned Behavior

9.4.2: Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior

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9.4.1: Theory of Planned Behavior

Mary J. Ryan & Amber K. Worthington

Persuaders are oftentimes most interested in persuading others to adopt voluntary actions. An individual's intentions to voluntarily behave in a particular way are most immediately determined by their intentions to do so. For example, getting someone to meditate will, at a bare minimum, require them to intend to meditate. One key issue within persuasion is therefore to determine what influences behavioral intentions. The Theory of Reasoned Action, and its extension the Theory of Planned Behavior, are commonly used theories of persuasion that explain what variables predict behavioral intentions.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) posits that behavior is directly determined by an individual's behavioral intentions. In other words, as an individual's intentions to perform a behavior increase, they are more likely to actually perform the behavior. Behavioral intentions are oftentimes assessed with a questionnaire. An example is shown here:

I intend to meditate everyday.
Strongly Disagree _____ Strongly Agree

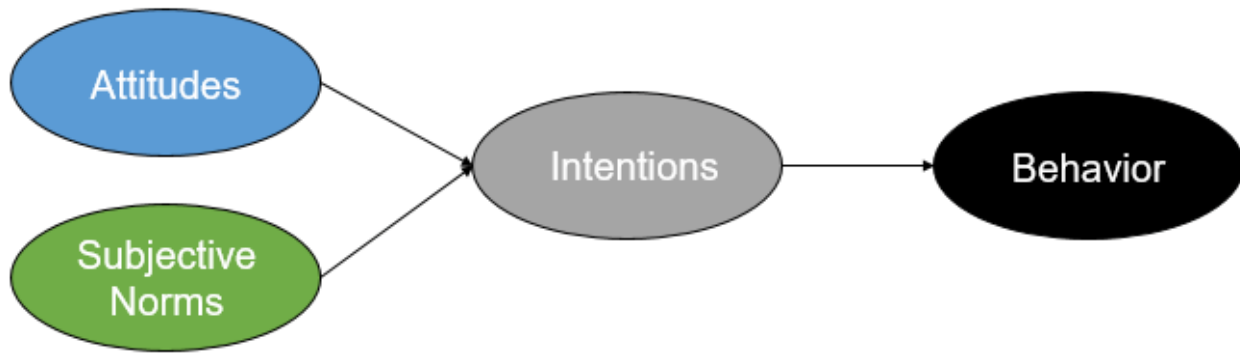
The Theory of Reasoned Action posits that intentions are directly predicted by (1) an individual's attitude towards the behavior and (2) subjective norms. An attitude is defined as an individual's evaluation of a given behavior. Someone might have a positive, negative, or neutral attitude about a given behavior. As an individual's attitude becomes more positive, their intentions to perform a behavior will increase. Attitudes are oftentimes assessed with a questionnaire. An example is shown here:

Meditating everyday is:	
Bad _____ Good	
Harmful _____ Beneficial	
Unimportant _____ Important	

Subjective norms are defined as an individual's beliefs about the importance others place on them performing a given behavior. In other words, it is the degree to which an individual perceives that other people want them to engage in the behavior. As an individual's subjective norms increase, their intentions to perform a behavior will increase. Subjective norms are oftentimes assessed with a questionnaire. An example is shown here:

Most people who are important to me think I should meditate everyday.
Strongly Disagree _____ Strongly Agree

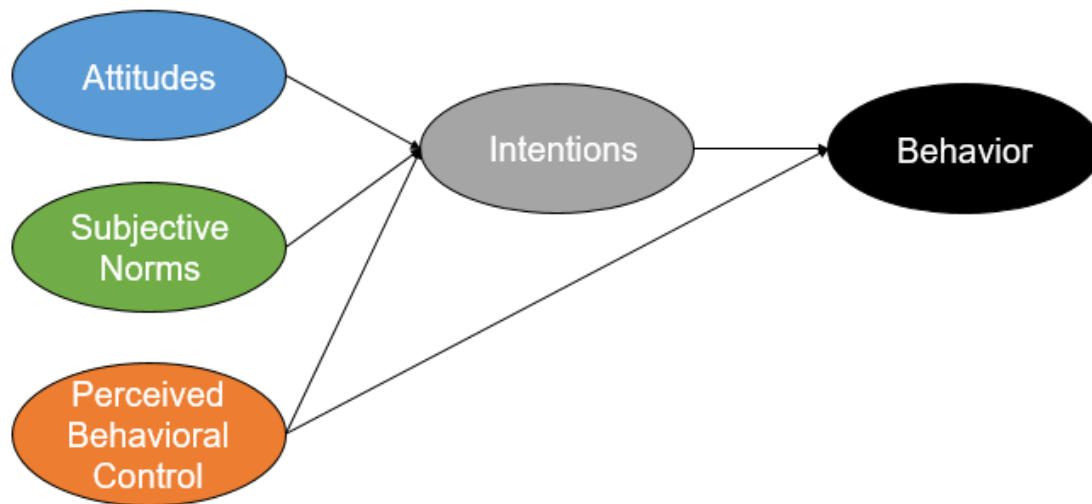
The Theory of Reasoned Action is depicted below:



The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1988, 1991) extends the Theory of Reasoned Action by including perceived behavioral control. The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that a behavior is directly determined by an individual's intentions and perceived behavioral control. Perceived behavioral control, also referred to as self-efficacy, encompasses the extent to which an individual believes they have control over performing that behavior. Intentions, in turn, are directly predicted by (1) an individual's attitude towards the behavior, (2) subjective norms, and (3) perceived behavioral control. Perceived behavioral control is oftentimes assessed with a questionnaire. An example is shown here:

Meditating everyday is easy.	
Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree

The Theory of Planned Behavior is depicted below:



How are the predictors weighted in the Theory of Planned Behavior?

Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control do not always contribute equally to predicting intentions. Sometimes, an individual's intentions may be determined largely by attitudes, and subjective norms may have little or no influence. Other times, an individual's intentions may be determined largely by subjective norms, and attitudes may have little or no influence. For example, college students' intentions to meditate may largely be driven by their attitudes that meditating everyday is good, beneficial, and important; whether or not other people think they should meditate may not influence their

intentions as strongly. The only way to determine the relative importance of (or weighting) of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on intentions is to measure these variables across a group of study participants and run a statistical analysis.

What influences the relationship between intentions and behavior?

The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that intentions lead to behavior; however, intentions do not always guarantee behavior. For example, someone might intend to meditate everyday but not follow through. There are several factors that influence the strength of the relationship between intentions and behavior.

First, the Theory of Planned Behavior underscores a principle of specificity. This means that in order to best predict behavior, the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control beliefs must relate to specific intentions and a subsequent specific behavior. These frameworks note that any given behavior includes an action, target, context and time period. For example, a goal might be “to meditate for 20 minutes before bed each day in the upcoming month.” In this example, “meditating” is the action, “20 minutes” is the target, “before bed each day” is the context, and “in the upcoming month” is the time period. As the specificity of the behavior increases, intentions become a better predictor of behavior.

Additionally, the temporal stability of intentions influences the strength of the relationship between intentions and behavior. If an individual's intentions fluctuate over time (e.g., some days I intend to meditate, and other days I do not), then intentions measured at one particular time might not predict subsequent behavior (e.g., Rhodes & Dickau, 2013). As the stability of an individual's intentions increases over time, intentions become a better predictor of behavior.

What additional predictors have been examined in the Theory of Planned Behavior?

The Theory of Planned Behavior focuses on rational reasoning and excludes the role of emotional and subconscious influences (see, e.g., Sniehotta, Pesseau, & Araújo-Soares, 2014). Scholars have argued for the importance of these variables and have therefore suggested that anticipated emotions and past, habitual behaviors should be added to the Theory of Planned Behavior to better predict intentions and subsequent behavior.

People anticipate the emotions they will experience after performing a particular behavior — for example, an individual might anticipate feeling regret, guilt, or pride if they do or do not perform a given behavior. Anticipated emotions can therefore shape and motivate behaviors as people strive to avoid negative feelings and attain positive feelings (Baumeister, Vohs, DeWall, & Zhan 2007; O’Keefe, 2065). Past research has found that anticipated emotions have added to the explanatory power of the Theory of Planned Behavior for predicting, for example, cancer screening (McGilligan, McClenahan, & Adamnson, 2009), vaccination (Gallagher & Povey, 2006), seat belt use (Şimşekoğlu & Lajunen), caregiving behaviors (Tracy & Robins, 2004), bone marrow donation (Lindsey, Yun, & Hill, 2007), and organ donor registration (Wang, 2011).

Specific anticipated emotions that have been studied include anticipated regret, guilt, and pride. For example, one meta-analysis found that anticipated regret added significantly and independently to the prediction of both intentions and prospective behavior over and above Theory of Planned Behavior variables (Sandberg & Conner, 2008). Past research also notes that people will avoid actions that they anticipate will make them feel guilty. Thus anticipated guilt serves as an important predictor of intentions (O’Keefe, 2002). Finally, anticipated pride can impact intentions and behaviors, specifically for behaviors that conform to social standards and prosocial behaviors (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007; Tracey & Robins, 2004).

Past behavior can have a significant influence on future behavior, specifically when the past behavior is habitual or routine (Ouellette & Wood, 1998; Sniehotta, 2014). This habitual behavior is oftentimes automatic instead of fully intentional and thus can influence intentions themselves or directly influence behavior by sidestepping intentions. As the behavior becomes more habitual, the relationship between past behavior and future behavior increases. Past research has found this to be the case for, for example, cancer screening (Norman & Cooper, 2011), riding a bicycle (de Bruijn & Gardner, 2011), eating behaviors (de Bruijn, 2010; de Bruijn, Kroeze, Oenema, & Brug, 2008), exercise (de Bruijn & Rhodes, 2010), and alcohol consumption (Norman & Conner, 2006).

How can the Theory of Planned Behavior be used to create persuasive messages?

The Theory of Planned Behavior specifies that it is possible to change someone’s intentions by influencing one or more of the three determinants of intentions (attitudes, subjective norms, and/or perceived behavioral control).

Attitudes

An individual's attitude towards a given behavior could be influenced in a number of different ways. The Theory of Planned Behavior specifies the determinants of attitudes, which are useful to identify specific strategies to do so.

The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that an individual's attitudes towards a given behavior are a joint function of their evaluation of each belief about the behavior and the strength with which each belief is held. The strength of a belief can be assessed with a questionnaire. An example is shown here:

Meditating everyday would reduce my anxiety:	
Unlikely _____ Likely False _____ True	

The evaluation of each belief can be assessed with a questionnaire. An example is shown here:

Reducing my anxiety is:	
Bad _____ Good Harmful _____ Beneficial	

Changing an individual's attitudes could therefore be achieved by changing the evaluation of an existing salient belief. This might involve increasing the salience of an existing negative belief (e.g., "You probably already know that anxiety can be harmful, but you may not realize just how consequential it really can be") or decreasing the salience of an existing positive belief (e.g., "Maybe you think your anxiety helps motivate you to complete your work, but there are other ways to accomplish your tasks").

Changing an individual's attitudes could also be achieved by changing the strength of an existing salient belief. This might involve increasing the belief strength of an existing positive belief (e.g., "You probably already know that meditation can reduce anxiety, but maybe you don't realize just how likely it is to decrease") or decreasing the belief strength of an existing positive belief (e.g., "Anxiety won't actually motivate you to complete your work").

Finally, changing an individual's attitudes could be achieved by adding a new salient belief. This can be accomplished by providing the individual with additional information about the behavior and outcome of interest (e.g., "You might not realize that anxiety can increase your risk of heart disease").

Subjective Norms

An individual's subjective norms about a given behavior could be influenced in a number of different ways. The Theory of Planned Behavior specifies the determinants of subjective norms, which are useful to identify specific strategies to do so.

The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that an individual's subjective norms about a given behavior are a joint function of their evaluation of normative beliefs that they ascribe to important others and their motivation to comply with those others. An individual's normative beliefs can be assessed with a questionnaire. An example is shown here:

My romantic partner thinks I should meditate everyday.	
Strongly Disagree _____ Strongly Agree	

The motivation to comply with those important others can be assessed with a questionnaire. An example is shown here:

Generally, how much do you want to do what your romantic partner thinks you should do?
Not at all _____ Very much

Changing an individual's subjective norms could therefore be accomplished by increasing the salience of a particular referent (e.g., "Have you considered whether your girlfriend thinks it is important for you to decrease your anxiety and meditate everyday?"), changing the normative belief associated with a specific reference (e.g., "You're actually wrong – I talked to your girlfriend, and she thinks you should meditate everyday to decrease your anxiety"), or altering the motivation to comply with a current referent (e.g., "You should really consider what she thinks about this").

Perceived Behavioral Control

An individual's perceived behavioral control for a given behavior could be influenced in a number of different ways. The Theory of Planned Behavior specifies the determinants of perceived behavioral control, which are useful to identify specific strategies to do so.

The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that an individual's perceived behavioral control for a given behavior are a joint function of their assessment of the likelihood or frequency that a specific control factor will occur and the potential for the control factor to impede or facilitate the behavior. An individual's assessment of the likelihood or frequency that a given control factor will occur can be assessed with a questionnaire. An example is shown here:

In my daily schedule, I have free time:
Very rarely _____ Very frequently

The potential for the control factor to impede or facilitate the behavior can be assessed with a questionnaire. An example is shown here:

A lack of free time makes it
Very difficult _____ Very easy
to meditate everyday.

Changing an individual's perceived behavioral control can be accomplished in many ways. The persuader could directly remove the obstacle, create the opportunity for successful performance of the given behavior (e.g., "I've done it before, so I can do it again"), provide examples of others who have successfully performed the behavior (e.g., "If they can do it, I can do it"), or provide verbal encouragement (e.g., "You can do it!"); O'Keefe, 2016). Any of these strategies individually, or concurrently, could influence an individual's assessment of the control factor, thus positively influencing their perceived behavioral control.

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9.4.2: Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior

Mary J. Ryan & Amber K. Worthington

Loneliness is a widespread and significant problem in the United States (Halpert, 2020), particularly for university students (American College Health Association, 2019). Loneliness in university students is associated with lower social adjustment to university life, lower perceptions of social support, and lower feelings of belonging on campus (Hopmeyer, Troop-Gordon, Medovoy, & Fischer, 2017; Sadoughi & Hesampour, 2016). One way to solve this problem is through volunteering, as volunteering increases community connectedness and belonging and decreases loneliness (Bowe et al., 2020).

Hyde and Knowles (2013) used the Theory of Planned Behavior to examine university students' intentions to volunteer. The study included a convenience sample of 235 university students in Australia. The study used an observational design and asked the participants to self-report on the main predictors in the Theory of Planned Behavior (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control), additional predictors (past behavior and moral obligations), and intentions to volunteer. The findings indicated that 67% of the variance in intentions to volunteer were explained by the predictor variables. Attitudes and perceived behavioral control had the strongest influence on intentions. These results are correlational, not causal, due to the observational nature of the study design. The results cannot be generalized due to the convenience sample. The authors did find theoretical support for the Theory of Planned Behavior.

The Theory of Planned Behavior can be applied to design messages to persuade university students to volunteer, specifically at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) chapter of Hope Worldwide. Hope Worldwide is an international, faith-based organization established in 1991. Its mission statement is to "change lives through the compassion and commitment of dedicated staff and volunteers to deliver sustainable, high-impact, community-based services to the poor and needy" (Hope Worldwide, 2020). Hope Worldwide connects university students to volunteering opportunities in Alaska.

A persuasive message to increase UAA students' intentions to volunteer with Hope Worldwide would require designing a message that influences their attitudes, subjective norms, and/or perceived behavioral control. One way to change a university student's attitudes towards volunteering might be to add a new salient belief by providing the individual with additional information about the behavior and outcome of interest (e.g., "You might not realize that volunteering can reduce your feelings of loneliness"). One way to change a university student's subjective norms about volunteering might be to increase the salience of a particular reference, specifically their friends and peers (see Park & Shin, 2017; e.g., "Have you considered whether other students at UAA think it is important for university students to volunteer to better our community?"). One way to change a university student's perceived behavioral control might be to provide verbal encouragement (e.g., "You can do it!") or remove a perceived barrier (e.g., "Even if you don't have much time to volunteer, any time you can spare is worth it").

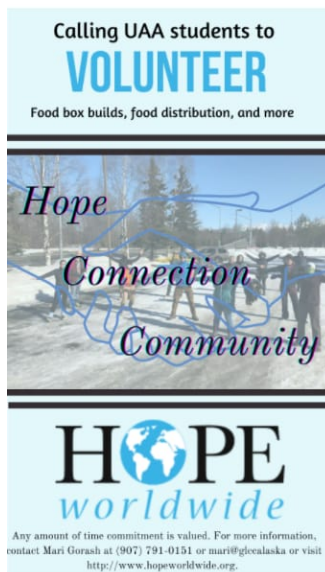
Example by Mary J. Ryan

The poster I created with Canva is designed to address the components of the Theory of Planned Behavior. It would be shared via social media to reach the target audience, UAA students. It could also be printed and distributed on campus.

It affects attitudes with the words "hope," "connection," and "community." These are the benefits of volunteering and add a new salient belief. The hands graphic gives a visual representation of connection and friendship. I also hope that it gives a sense of equality. The helping hand is not reaching down to another, but across. The image beneath shows the group of volunteers that a student would be joining.

Subjective norms are addressed with the invitation "calling UAA students to volunteer." In other words, Hope Worldwide at UAA, a group of students, wants other UAA students to volunteer. This increases the salience of a particular referent (i.e., other students).

Perceived behavioral control is influenced by giving the viewer an action. They can gain hope, connection, and community by volunteering. They can help people by participating in the food box builds and distribution. The contact information is given as a first step. Mari can then help whoever contacts her by sharing the latest opportunities and discussing how the students can and want to help. The main reservation for volunteering is a lack of time (Hyde & Knowles, 2013). By stating that any amount of time commitment is valued, I increased perceived behavioral control.



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9.5: Questions for Consideration and Works Cited

Questions for consideration:

1. Given today's high levels of media saturation and fast pace, what implications might there be for how people are persuaded?
2. True or false: "A good story is more persuasive than a good argument." Justify your position.
3. Now that many popular news channels display clear bias in presenting the news, e.g., Fox News being unabashedly conservative and MSNBC being unabashedly liberal, what persuasive theory or theories might explain why news channels have shifted from more neutral reporting?
4. In your opinion, which theory best explains how or why people change their beliefs, attitudes, or behavior?

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10: CRITICAL-CULTURAL APPROACHES TO PERSUASION

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10.2: The Critical-Cultural Approach

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10.1: Introduction and Objectives

Learning Objectives

- Explore other forms of persuasive rhetorical approaches.
- Understand how the critical-cultural approach impacts motive and goal of persuasion.
- Understand and apply critical-cultural approaches to rhetorical analysis.

So far, we've explored the understanding and application of rhetoric, persuasion, and argumentation from a Western, Eurocentric lens, specifically from an Aristotelian rhetorical approach. Aristotle is the "godfather" of persuasion and his approach to rhetoric has significantly influenced Western approaches to examining and enacting persuasion, generally, and American approaches, specifically.

But there are *other* rhetorical approaches! One paradigmatic approach that has gained attention and popularity is the critical-cultural approach. The critical-cultural approach is rooted in critical theory, a perspective that emerged in the aftermath of World War I. Critical theory is considered a post-modern theory developed from the Frankfurt school of social and philosophical thought. It has evolved over time, is the subject of critique, and is no way limited in its scope or applications.

Despite critical theory's lack of comprehensive form and its disputed impact and relevance, critical theory's commitment is clear - its aim is the "unveiling the political stakes that anchor cultural practices" (Conquergood 351). The goal of critical theory is to examine, interrogate, and critique the power dynamics that create and uphold the structures and practices that keep folks in power.

In this chapter, we will learn more about three approaches that emerge from this paradigmatic perspective: critical-cultural approaches, the ancient Eastern rhetorical approach, and a Feminist approach.

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10.2: The Critical-Cultural Approach

Some of the assumptions of the Western, Eurocentric approach to rhetoric posit that we, as human communicators, are rational beings – that we will be presented with evidence that will aid us in making a “good” decision; when presented with the “truth”, we, as rational beings, will be convinced of the truth. This assumption is reflected in Aristotle’s approach to persuasion, which is grounded in the idea of the ethical integrity of the persuader and the ethical integrity of the message. Much of Aristotelian rhetorical practice emphasizes development of an argument and expression of that argument through oration. Prior to 1970, much of the rhetorical analysis of persuasive messages explored the influence and impact of oration on public, civic life (McKerrow 198).

However, in the 1970s, with the growing influence of the critical paradigm, a shift started to occur. One shift questioned the assumption that persuasion is based upon the “truth” that humans are rational beings. First, Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm argued that humans are storytellers and are more convinced, or persuaded, by a “good story” (Fisher 1) . Fisher also called out inequities in academe, stating:

I was concerned with the concept of technical reason and the way it rendered the public unreasonable; with the idea of rationality being a matter of argumentative competence in specialized fields, leaving the public and its discourse irrational; with the apparent impossibility of bridging the gaps between experts and the public and between segments of the public; and with the necessity to learn what was supposed to be of the essence of persons–rationality–so that one class of citizens can always be superior to another” (Fisher 15).

Then, in the early 1990’s, communication scholars Sonja Foss and Nancy Griffin proposed a new approach to examining rhetoric from a distinctly feminist perspective: invitational rhetoric. More recently, in the last couple of decades, there is more access and attention to the larger global community of rhetorical scholars, past and present, who have taken the opportunity to challenge ethnocentric Western approaches to rhetoric and persuasion. These approaches amplify non-Western approaches to rhetoric in persuasion. Let’s take a closer look at some of these approaches, starting from the past and working our way to the present.

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10.3: Ancient Eastern Rhetorical Tradition

In the 2019 edition of *Argumentation: an International Journal on Reasoning*, university professor Yun Xie makes the case that the Ancient Chinese philosophers also followed a systematized approach to argument. Like Aristotle's approach, the Ancient Chinese rhetorical tradition seeks to persuade, however, Aristotle sought to persuade through evidence that could be proven, whereas the Ancient Chinese approach focuses more on reasoning from shared or understood principles in the metaphysical or epistemological level. This approach can be understood as argumentation by analogy.

Ancient texts refer to *tu lei* or argument by kind (sort). According to some Chinese philosophers, an effective argument will contain three elements:

- Gu (Reason)
- Li (Principle)
- Lei (kind/sort)

"More specifically, a claim should be established on the basis of some reason(s), and this establishment, or the inference from the reason(s) to the claim, needs to comply with an underlying principle. And more importantly, the legitimacy of both the reasons (*Gu*) and the underlying principle (*Li*) will have to be based on the knowledge about the kind in question" (qtd. in Xie 238).

The effectiveness of an argument examined whether the analogy effectively reflected the comparison of the two issues at hand (alignment) or whether the analogy effectively and correctly categorized the issues at hand. It is important to remember that many Asian cultures are collectivistic and indirect in their communication patterns. Meaning is often embedded in context; therefore, this rhetorical approach and analysis of argument is more flexible and contextual than typical, Western cultural communication patterns.

An example of *tu lei*: Human nature and flowing water both belong to the same kind of "things that can be 'channeled' (or developed) arbitrarily", and it is clear that flowing water has no tendency (to go east or west), therefore, human nature also has no tendency (of being good or bad) (Xie 345).

Aristotle also included analogical arguments as an acceptable form of argumentation in his epistle on persuasion, *Rhetoric*. However, a key difference between the ancient Eastern rhetorical tradition and Aristotle's perspective is that the Eastern philosophers compare agreed-upon principles ("truths" from a metaphysical or epistemological perspective) whereas Western analogies tend to compare principles of natural and physical law.

This difference in approach to persuasion is key to understand how assumptions and perceptions of the world are shaped by our culture, society, politics, etc... which in turn shape our understanding of persuasion as a process and as a practice.

The next critical cultural approach is another example of how our world and life perspective can shape our view of persuasion as a process and practice.

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10.4: Narrative Paradigm- Challenging the Rational Paradigm

Usually, when one thinks of rhetoric, the Aristotelian pillars of persuasion come to mind: ethos, logos and pathos. Western rhetorical thought and practice operated on the assumption that humans are rational beings and when presented with complete data (evidence), humans will make a rational decision. In the late 70's, Walter Fisher challenged that assumption with the introduction of his narrative paradigm.

The narrative paradigm is a theory that rests on the assumption that all meaningful communication happens through storytelling or first-hand accounts. This was already a stunning proposition, but Fisher went further to propose that humans are essentially storytellers and that stories – narratives – are more persuasive than arguments. Talk about a paradigm shift! Fisher posited that narrative is a more compelling and intriguing tactic that is naturally persuasive because it invites and encourages connection between people and the issue(s) involved. He summarized this new paradigm as follows:>

1. Humans are...storytellers.
2. The paradigmatic mode of decision making and communication is "good reasons," which vary in form among situations, genres, and media of communication.
3. The production and practice of good reasons are ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character...
4. Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings - their inherent awareness of narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story, and constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives....
5. The world as we know it is a set of stories that must be chosen among in order for us to live in a process of continual re-creation. (Fisher 5).

Holihan and Baaske make the following observation: "Virtually all arguments can be understood and evaluated as stories" (31). But how do we evaluate these stories? Fisher maintains that decision making is based on "good reasons." What does that mean?

There are a few considerations to keep in mind when evaluating persuasive stories. The first is **narrative probability**. This concept explores the coherence and consistency of the story or persuasive message. A few questions that one may ask in assessing a narrative argument could be: is the story complete? Does the story make sense? Are the characters involved credible and do they act realistically? These are just a few of the questions that "test" the reliability and probability of the argument.

The second consideration is **narrative fidelity**. Narrative fidelity examines whether or not the story aligns with social reality. Does the story ring true for what we know about history or what we know about natural law or according to our experience? This second evaluative measure allows for us to assess the values embedded in the argument. As mentioned earlier, Fisher claims that people make their decisions based on their own values. These values are the basis of the "good reasons." If the story makes sense in terms of narrative probability and in terms of narrative fidelity then we have "good reason" to make a decision.

The other consideration is the **credibility of the storyteller**. Is the speaker a person of character? Can we trust the story they are telling? The integrity and character of the speaker is another important element when evaluating the persuasive story.

Fisher's narrative paradigm expands our understanding of persuasion and how it can work in our everyday experiences. By understanding how we, as humans, use story to advance our arguments, perspectives, and values, we can examine and gain insight into how some stories can persuade us, and others do not.

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10.5: The Feminist Approach- Invitational Rhetoric

This approach is a feminist take on the art and science of rhetoric. Developed by sister scholars (literally!) Sonja Foss and Karen Foss, invitational rhetoric provides another framework to explore how we argue, approach controversial issues, and participate in decision making. Just as the critical perspective interrogates power dynamics in our rhetorical practices, invitational rhetoric addresses the patriarchal bias that is embedded in many traditional rhetorical theories and the positive value they accord to changing and thus dominating others (Foss and Griffin 2). Invitational rhetoric is an alternative rhetoric grounded in the feminist principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination. "Its purpose is to offer an invitation to understanding, and its communicative modes are the offering of perspectives and the creation of the external conditions of safety, value, and freedom" (Foss and Griffin 2).

Foss and Griffin further argued that that the very definition of rhetoric as persuasive embodies patriarchal values: "Implicit in the conception of rhetoric as persuasion is an assumption that humans are on earth to alter the environment and to influence the social affairs of others" (2). They argue that embedded in the Western idea of "rhetoric" is the desire for power, influence, control, and even domination. "The act of changing others not only establishes the power of the rhetor over others but also devalues the lives and perspectives of others" (Foss and Griffin 3). By contrast, invitational rhetoric seeks to reflect feminist principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination. These principles serve as a foundation that introduces a new attitude and approach in engaging in persuasive argumentation. Invitational rhetoric can be understood as "an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and see it the way the rhetor does" (Foss and Griffin 4). Change may occur while using invitational rhetoric, but change is not the main goal. The main goal is understanding, and thus, any change that occurs is more transformational because it is based upon understanding and insights gained through the open exchange of ideas.

A few characteristics of invitational rhetoric are as follows:

1. Openness - openness to other perspectives, but also openness in minimizing possible impediments to understanding. This could be being more flexible in the choice of language, construction of the argument, and/or even tone of communication.
2. Offering perspectives - the goal is to offer a viewpoint, without the expectation that all participants will hold or accept that viewpoint.
3. Safe, inclusive, and respectful environment - if participants are invited to share their true perspective, the environment should offer a safe space where others can respect and hold a variety of, and possibly differing, perspectives
4. Freedom of choice - the audience is free to accept or reject the rhetor's perspective; the rhetor has the freedom to not be upset or bothered by the audience's decision. (Foss and Griffin 5-6).

Invitational rhetoric offers another approach to engage in persuasive communication where influence is based upon understanding through exchange of ideas and insight. The relationship between rhetor and participants centers on mutual respect, freedom of choice, and preserving one's value. Invitational rhetoric is also concerned with how participants in persuasion *feel* after the argumentation process. Rather than having a competitive environment, where one perspective "wins" over another, the environment is one where everyone leaves feeling heard, respected and valued, and understood. Invitational rhetoric can be a one way to encourage more collaborative decision making.

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10.6: Summary and Works Cited

In Summation

Although traditional, Western approaches to persuasion are still largely regarded and favored in academia and popular culture, there are other approaches to understanding and practicing persuasion. In this chapter we explored how the critical perspective paved the way for more diverse understandings of persuasion and rhetoric. Eastern approaches to rhetoric shows us that reasoning and argument can be based upon more than natural law to be valid and logical. The narrative paradigm offers another approach to engage in and evaluate argument through narrative. Invitational rhetoric provides another perspective and process to understand and engage in rhetoric as persuasion. All of approaches to rhetoric help us understand how we, as humans, seek to understand, influence, and persuade one another.

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11: PERSUASION IN ACTION

11.1: Persuasion in Advertising

11.2: Persuasion in Political Campaigns

11.1: Persuasion in Advertising

How Ads (and People) Persuade You

YouTube Video

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[View this YouTube Video online](#)



11.2: Persuasion in Political Campaigns

Persuasive politics: why emotional beats rational for connecting with voters

Politics is mired in a communications crisis. Across the world voters are disillusioned, while in the UK the stock of politicians has [never been lower](#).

The task before the next generation of would-be leaders is daunting. They face an electorate that is openly hostile, dismissive of track records, and suspicious of motives.

Yet politicians do seem incapable of helping themselves. The aim of media relations rarely extends beyond underlining previous announcements. Interviewees stick to scripted responses, wilfully evade difficult questions, and rarely add anything new beyond the press release.

Reactions to the UK local elections results in May 2019 were a case in point. With thudding inevitability, senior members of all the major parties reported that everyone else had fared [much worse](#).

It is perhaps with some irony that in order to affect a turnaround in their standing, politicians will likely turn to the only group of professionals with a lower trustworthy rating than themselves: [advertising executives](#). But can the persuasion industries help them to win over a cynical audience worn down by decades of spin?

The art of appeal

Political campaigns have historically been constructed using an approach known as the “[message-into-action](#)” model or the “[rational appeal](#)”. Indeed, this is the way in which almost all brand communication was put together during the 20th century.

Using this approach to generate communications is a fairly straightforward process. It begins with an interrogation of the “product”, to identify a unique benefit or selling point. This is then matched to an insight into the needs of the target audience (usually gleaned from research) to produce a proposition that can be delivered in the form of messages.

The rational appeal has been finessed over the years and remains the go to for many strategists. It has been used to sell everything from soap powder (“Persil Washes Whiter”) to continued British membership of the EU (“[Stronger In Europe](#)”).

YouTube Video

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Unfortunately, while the process is simple to understand, putting together an effective campaign based on messages is not so straightforward. Often a proposition just doesn't cut any ice. Effective communication needs to be based on some truth, otherwise the claims made [can sound ludicrous](#).

This was one of the issues with the UK Conservative Party's 2017 general election campaign, “[Forward Together](#)”. The proposition was based on the unique selling point that Theresa May was a stronger leader than Labour's Jeremy Corbyn, matched with the insight that voters perceived strong leadership to be a positive quality. But people [just didn't buy it](#), and the election left her [significantly weaker](#).

That campaign also highlights another major drawback with rational appeals. They require the audience to use what the

psychologist Daniel Kahneman terms [“System 2” thinking](#) – an effortful, slow and considered way of thinking [that becomes more difficult](#) the older we get.

As a consequence tactics typically involve hammering home key messages through a process of repetition. That’s why in 2017 the British electorate became so familiar with [May’s favourite phrases](#): “Strong and stable government”, “Labour’s magic money tree”, and “Hard working families”. The problem is that for the audience this [“rhetorical carpet bombing”](#) quickly becomes boring.

Getting emotional

Over in the commercial world companies have been getting wise to the shortcomings of the rational appeal. The beer company Carlsberg, for example, [recently ditched](#) its famous “Probably the best lager in the world” slogan in favour of the rather more nebulous “Danish Pilsner”.

In stark contrast to its predecessor, the phrase “Danish Pilsner” does not appear to be making any claims for the product at all. This is because it’s an [“emotional appeal”](#), a different method of brand communication. Rather than explicitly promote a product’s quality and benefits the aim is simply to make an emotional connection with consumers.

In this case, it is hoped that potential customers will buy into a connection with a particular country. It might not be saying anything, but “Danish” implies qualities – provenance or heritage perhaps – that are popular with consumers, leading them to think positively about the beer.

Basing brand communication on emotional rather than rational appeal is a fairly recent – but highly effective – development. Its strength lies in the fact that it is focused on the consumer rather than than product. It considers the wants and needs of the audience – how they actually think, and most importantly, the way they prefer to receive information.

If we think of a rational appeal as a lecture, then an emotional appeal is more like [a story](#). Stories and storytelling are central to achieving a deep understanding of consumer psychology.

As I set out in my book, [The Persuasion Industries](#), learning through storytelling is more memorable and retrievable than lecture based learning. Forms of communication that are lecture based tend to elicit challenging or argumentative responses.

Conversely, communication with a narrative element tends to encourage vicarious participation on the part of the audience. Whatever you think of him politically, there is no doubting Nigel Farage’s capabilities as a [compelling storyteller](#).

Emotional communication not only influences what people pay attention to, but also channels their thoughts and encourage associations, which in turn guide judgements and simplify decision making. It manages to do this because it requires only [“System 1”](#) thinking: an automatic and often unconscious way of thinking that is effortless and demands little or no attention.

With Brexit, Vote Leave’s successful [“Take Back Control”](#) campaign was based on emotional appeals. Instead of presenting a rational argument and a list of supporting reasons that voters could either accept or push against, it told a good story and invited people to project their own meaning onto its slogans.



Are you going to [#VoteLeave](#) on Thursday? RETWEET this pledge card to show your support!



7:40 PM · Jun 20, 2016



1.6K 103 Copy link to Tweet

[https://twitter.com/vote_leave/status/](https://twitter.com/vote_leave/status/744857384410058752?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E744857384410058752%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5)

[744857384410058752?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E744857384410058752%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5](https://twitter.com/vote_leave/status/744857384410058752?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E744857384410058752%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5)
[politics-why-emotional-beats-rational-for-connecting-with-voters-116098](https://twitter.com/vote_leave/status/744857384410058752?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E744857384410058752%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5)

“Emotion-into-action” communication takes place not on the page or screen, but in the mind of the consumer. Phrases such as “Take Back Control” or “Make America Great Again” only resonate once the recipient has decided what it is trying to tell them.

One might just as well ask what is the meaning of “Danish Pilsner” or Nike’s “Just do it”. Ask 100 different people and you’ll get [100 different answers](#), each one nuanced by their individual hopes, desires, and beliefs.

The temptation for many political strategists is to focus on the creation of messages. But that really is the wrong approach today.

Not only are emotional appeals more effective than messages, but by focusing on rational appeals they are likely to [inhibit their chances of success](#). Ultimately they will also be producing less efficient communication – because the objective should be to influence how people feel, not just what they think.

Reference:

Persuasive politics: why emotional beats rational for connecting with voters

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12: ESOTERIC APPEALS

12.1: Introduction

12.2: Color

12.3: Music and Sonic Persuasion

12.4: Olfactory Persuasion

12.5: Typography

12.6: Conclusion and Works Cited

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12.1: Introduction

Chapter Objectives:

- To define esoteric persuasion
- To relate esoteric persuasion to dual process theories of persuasion
- To examine esoteric forms of persuasion, including color, music, sonic persuasion, aroma/smell, and typography
- To discuss the scientific validity of these forms of persuasion

Introduction

On my last trans-Atlantic flight, I noticed that Miley Cyrus' "Flowers" was playing as we boarded the plane. They played the same song when we were deplaning. Why? Did one of the flight attendants have a serious thing for that song? It turns out that boarding music "is a common practice among airlines to create a calming and relaxing atmosphere for passengers, making the flight experience more enjoyable" (Foster). As for deplaning, research by airlines has shown that people move faster to up-tempo music (Odom). It turns out that music is used intentionally and persuasively to change the experience of travelers - and to hustle them off the plane!

Music isn't the only form of esoteric persuasion, however. I have also found myself moved to the line at a cookie counter in a shopping mall, after having been assailed by the aroma of freshly-baked chocolate chip cookies. Can people be influenced by things such as music, sound, color, smell, or even a font? And if so, how?

Esoteric Persuasion: A definition.

What, exactly, is esoteric persuasion? "Esoteric" is defined as being understood by or meant for only the select few who have special knowledge or interest. Words synonymous with esoteric include abstruse (meaning hard to understand); arcane (known or understood by few); recondite (beyond ordinary knowledge or understanding); and enigmatic (puzzling, perplexing, or mysterious). According to these definitions, one might think that esoteric persuasion is either a somewhat elite form of influence understood by a select, erudite few, or that esoteric persuasion is not considered to be a mainstream, widely accepted form of persuasion. Regardless of how one defines esoteric persuasion, its various forms are fascinating.

What constitutes this esoteric or extraordinary form of influence? This chapter will examine color, music, sonic persuasion, aroma/smell, and typography.

Esoteric Persuasion: Theoretical Implications.

Before examining various forms of esoteric persuasion, it is important to understand some possible explanations as to why or how esoteric forms of persuasion might work. Elsewhere in this book, dual processing models of persuasion, such as Petty and Cacioppo's elaboration likelihood model and the heuristic-systematic information processing model, have been examined. Both of these theoretical models assert that when one encounters some form of communication, this information is processed with varying degrees of thought. The elaboration likelihood model contends that, when a high degree of thought or mental elaboration is being used to process information, a central route is being used, whereas when a low degree of thought or elaboration is being employed, a peripheral route is being used. The heuristic-systematic model of persuasion asserts that systematic processing is defined by effortful scrutiny and comparison of information, whereas heuristic processing is defined by the use of cues to arrive more easily at a judgment (Trumbo 391).

In these models, the central and systematic routes are associated with a person's motivation and ability to think: therefore effort, reasoning and mental energy are at play. The peripheral and heuristic routes, on the other hand, are associated with the message recipient having little motivation or ability to process a message. In the elaboration likelihood model, the peripheral route relies on association with positive characteristics such as positive emotions (Petty and Cacioppo). In the heuristic-systematic information processing model, certain heuristics or indicators, such as consensus ("everyone is doing it"); expertise ("experts know what they're talking about") or argument length ("a long argument is a strong argument") tend to influence opinions and attitudes (Chen and Chaiken 75). In short, central and systematic routes rely on processing information; peripheral and heuristic routes rely on cues or associations.

How are color, music, smell, sound, and typeface processed? When we encounter the smell of freshly-baked cinnamon rolls, hear the tell-tale sound of a beating heart, or fill our ears with music, we are probably not engaging in critical analysis, the evaluation of

evidence, or heavy reasoning. And yet, evidence shows that, in some instances, persuasion is occurring. Esoteric communication is largely persuasion through association; we associate color, smells, music, etc. with emotions and memories.

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12.2: Color

It is strange how deeply colours seem to penetrate one, like scent. –George Eliot



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Color has long been associated with emotional states. When we're mad, we're "seeing red." We can be green with envy. When we are sad, we say we are feeling blue. An evil or malicious person is said to be black-hearted. Because the association between a feeling and color can be strong, some wish to conclude that colors *cause* feelings, that color is somehow tied to affective states, or that color causes certain behavioral outcomes. Research does not bear this out, however. "There aren't many clinical studies that prove the effectiveness of color psychology, and the ones that exist are somewhat inconclusive" ("How Do Colors"). No matter the color of a team's jersey, skill levels (and testosterone levels) do not appear to be affected by color. If color were causal, it would be hard to explain how the color blue is associated both with sadness and with calmness, or how the color yellow is associated with happiness as well as with cowardice. "Elements such as personal preference, experiences, upbringing, cultural differences, context, etc., often muddy the effect individual colors have on us" (Karthikeyan and Joy 65). In short, different life and cultural experiences equal different color associations. "According to color-in-context theory, color effects are rooted in the repeated pairing of color and particular concepts, messages, and experiences, and in this way, the mere perception of the color may evoke meaning-consistent affect, cognition and behavior" (Kesong et al.).

If colors have no objective bearing on our psychological states, they certainly have power over our purchasing decisions! Just as colors are often associated with feelings, colors are very much associated with brands. Marketing and branding rely heavily upon color association. Try to imagine Coca-Cola or Target without seeing the color red, or the Barbie logo in a color other than hot pink. Is it even McDonald's without the iconic golden arches? Just a hint of dark green gets me thinking about Starbucks! Most companies carefully consider color in their branding.

The IDEalogic Brand Lab, a branding agency, states: "When it comes to choosing a brand's color scheme, it's critical that designers understand how each color will resonate with various target audiences. This can vary depending on the demographic or behavioral differences in consumers ("The Science of Color").

IDEalab features colors frequently used in marketing and "their influence:"

- *Red* – creates a sense of urgency, triggers powerful emotions, and encourages appetite. It is associated with movement, excitement, power, fearlessness, and passion.
- *Blue* – trust, loyalty, dependability, logic, security, and serenity. Provides a sense of security and stimulates productivity. It is also known to be the preferred color of men.
- *Green* – health, tranquility, growth, freshness, prosperity, hope, and nature. Used to promote environmental issues. Green can

encourage balance and harmony.

- *Purple* – commonly associated with wisdom, wealth, spirituality, imagination, and sophistication.
- *Yellow* – cheerful color that promotes optimism, warmth, happiness, creativity, intellect, and extroversion. Can be used to create a sense of anxiety that can draw in impulsive buyers and window shoppers.
- *Orange* – creates a sense of courage, confidence, warmth, innovation, friendliness, and energy.
- *Pink* – imaginative, passionate, caring, creativity, innovative, quirky. Often associated with femininity.
- *Black* – associated with sophistication, security, power, elegance, authority, and substance. Often associated with luxury and power.
- *White/Grey* – innocence, purity, cleanliness, simplistic, pristine. Represents cleanliness and can provide a modern feel.



"Color Emotion Guide" by The Logo Company is used with permission.

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12.3: Music and Sonic Persuasion

"Music evokes emotion, and emotion can bring with it memory... it brings back the feeling of life when nothing else can." - British Neurologist Oliver Sacks

Most of us hear music shortly after we are born, usually in the form of lullabies. We hear music during the most momentous occasions in our lives, from weddings to graduations to funerals. Music brings people closer together and helps us form communities (Rosas). Music emanates from our alarms in the morning, fills our cars, gives us chills, and makes us cry (Changizi). "Music has been culturally selected to sound like an emotionally expressive human" (Changizi).

Music induces emotions in listeners (Juslin and Västfjäll 562). "Positive emotions dominate musical experiences. Pleasurable music may lead to the release of neurotransmitters associated with reward, such as dopamine. Listening to music is an easy way to alter mood or relieve stress. People use music in their everyday lives to regulate, enhance, and diminish undesirable emotional states (e.g., stress, fatigue)" (Heshmat). In addition, listening to pleasurable music alters the time-processing areas of our brain, making us less aware of the passage of time (Droit-Volet, et al. 417).

Music and emotions are strongly related to memory. Dr. Oliver Sacks stated that "musical emotions and musical memory can survive long after other forms of memory have disappeared" (Kakutani). Part of the reason for the durable power of music appears to be that "listening to music engages many parts of the brain, triggering connections and creating associations" (Hashmet).

Music affects more than mood and memory; music affects behavior. Hashmet notes that music creates strong tendencies to move with the music; people will find themselves swaying, tapping their feet, snapping their fingers, and even dancing. Our heart rate will speed up or slow down to become one with the music. In addition, listeners will mirror their emotions to the music, smiling and cheering with happy music or feeling sad to sad music.



"Drummer John Otto of Limp Bizkit in 2006" by [Childishknack](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](#) license

Music affects consumer behavior. One study (North, et al. 271) exposed customers in a supermarket drinks section to either French music or German music. The results showed that French wine outsold German wine when French music was played, whereas German wine outsold French wine when German music was played. Background music affects shoppers' moods (Hashmet). Classical music influenced shoppers to purchase more expensive wines than Top 40 music (Arendi and Kim 336). Slower tempo music resulted in a slower shopping pace in the store and increased sales volume (Milliman 89-90). Thus, music is an important consideration for most retailers; they spend billions of dollars on music systems, music providers and royalty fees (Allan 34).

Sonic Persuasion

"One could always look away, but as sound theorists know, one can never close one's ears." -Stephen Connor

Somewhat akin to music is the concept of sonic persuasion, or persuasion through sounds. Sonic persuasion includes paralinguistic cues, which are related to speech (volume, pauses, intonation, accents, etc.) as well as sounds in general. Greg Goodale asserts in his book, *Sonic Persuasion: Reading Sound in the Recorded Age* that "a pause, or an intonation, or even a noise can make a forceful argument" (3). Why? Because "the plethora of platitudes reaching our ears during the day would be unbearable if we encountered them in print. And so it is that whatever is human, personal, or intimate seems favored by auditory communication" (Cantril and Allport).

Goodale recounts one of the most famous instances of sound persuasion:

"Orson Welles' [1938] broadcast of *War of the Worlds* during the Columbia Broadcasting System's *Mercury Theater* was intended to manipulate. Listeners were frightened by sound effects that producers and actors employed to portray an alien attack on the United States. Actors sounded like panicked reporters or government officials (one actor adopted the cadence of FDR's Fireside Chats), while Welles' staff put on all the sonic tricks they could muster to imitate sonic expectations about an alien attack. The audience's panic is enlightening." (Goodale 3)

Although Welles' radio production of *War of the Worlds* is remembered because "it so perfectly captures our unease with the media's power over our lives" (Pooley and Socolow) and because of the ensuing controversy over how widespread the resulting panic actually was, the broadcast is also a phenomenal example of early sonic persuasion. Would the "breaking news" format of the broadcast have been convincing without the sounds of panic and war machines, punctuated by what people believed to be voices of authority and "alarming-sounding on-the-scene reports" (Campbell 28)?

Michel Chion points out in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* that, because individuals who are able to hear cannot NOT hear, "sound more than image has the ability to saturate and short-circuit perception" (34). Think about how iconic the following sounds have become: crickets chirping; the whistle of a bomb falling; the ringing of a bell; the clickety-clack of a locomotive; the sounds of laughing and applause. These sounds elicit associations and emotions for listeners. "Voices and noises produce meaning beyond words uttered and recorded, particularly when they are broadcast to millions of listeners. Noises like the ticking of a clock, the dulcet tones of the deep-voiced announcer, and the moaning of the air-raid siren make persuasive arguments to us" (Goodale 4).

Psychology of Radio includes several early studies that analyzed auditory processing effects in radio listeners. Listeners were made more comfortable laughing along with a radio comedy if they heard the sound of others laughing. Arguments were judged to be more convincing if they were spoken slowly. "Recognition is a mental function definitely favored when the material to be recognized is heard rather than read" (Cantril and Allport). In other words, we recognize sounds more readily than text.

Although research has been done on voice characteristics such as speed of speech, accent, and tone, very few studies have been done upon the persuasive effects of sound effects, and yet, radio, television, videos and even speakers — particularly comedians — frequently use them. Sounds and sound effects appear to inject a "real-world" element to the listener's experience that in turn affects their perceptions. And, like music, certain sounds appear to affect a listener's mood and emotional state.

Collins and Dockwray examined how the spatial positioning of sound effects can significantly influence an audience by placing the audience in a particular subjective perspective. Such things as microphone distance, volume, reverberation, and sound mixing were examined. They looked at how sounds are used in public service announcements, which frequently rely upon emotional, and in particular, fear appeals. They analyzed how sounds are used to emphasize key themes in a message and how they are used to draw audience focus, demonstrating how volume, reverb and the manipulation of sounds are used to "place listeners intimately within the scene" (55). They posit that sound proxemics create underlying messages that "work on an emotional level that may not be obvious in the visual or verbal message" (56). "In particular, because we are rarely taught a language with which to unpack auditory aspects of communication, it is especially important to understand how audio can be used as a rhetorical device to persuade audiences" (56).

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12.4: Olfactic Persuasion

Olfactic Persuasion: Aroma & Smell



"Woman Smelling Flowers" by Petr Kratochvil is Licensed under [CC0 Public Domain](#)

"Odors have a power of persuasion stronger than that of words, appearances, emotions, or will. The persuasive power of an odor cannot be fended off, it enters into us like breath into our lungs, it fills us up, imbues us totally. There is no remedy for it."

—Patrick Süskind, *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*

"Olfaction is the most ancient sense and is directly connected with emotional areas in the brain. It gives rise to perception linked to emotion both in everyday life and in memory-recall activities" (Pizzoli et al.). Unlike the other senses, smell does not synapse in the thalamus before connecting to the cerebral cortex. This intimate connection between the olfactory system and the cerebral cortex is one reason why smell can be a potent trigger of memories. This side-stepping of the thalamus also causes smells to be powerfully linked with emotions (Van Hartevelt and Kringelbach 1220).

Author Marcel Proust coined the term "involuntary memory" to describe the triggering of a powerful memory by a smell, a taste, or even a sound. A famous anecdote from his book *In Search of Lost Time* (*À la recherche du temps perdu*) recounts how the taste of a madeleine cake dipped in lime-flower tea takes his main character back to his childhood, with all its colors, smells, and feelings (Van Campen 2).

A Norwegian friend of mine was once stopped in his tracks by such a Proust effect. I was making glögg, a Nordic mulled wine and brandy concoction that is heavily spiced with cinnamon sticks, cardamom pods, peeled ginger, orange and cloves. He walked into our kitchen and abruptly stopped, looking completely awestruck, and began recounting the vivid memory he was experiencing: his dad, standing at the stove in their 1970's kitchen, fishing the bundle of cheesecloth-wrapped spices out of the glögg. He could recall what his dad had been wearing and even the sounds of the party in the next room. This vivid memory was suddenly, powerfully, and involuntarily triggered by a smell.

Memories elicited by smell are more emotional and more evocative than those triggered by images or sounds (Herz and Schooler 27), which may explain the persuasiveness of olfactory cues. Haberman examined the interactive effects of argument strength and olfactory cues on behavior, and concluded that scents in a persuasive advertising context can have a strong influence on consumers' affective reactions, product evaluations, and purchase behavior (14). In their study, when no scent was present, customers were very critical and showed a negative reaction to weak arguments and a positive reaction to strong arguments, suggesting that customers were engaging in systematic processing when no heuristic cues were present. However, when pleasant scents were present, customers appeared to be more influenced by the scent than by the strengths of the arguments, and weak and strong arguments elicited similar positive reactions. "Customers' cognitive resources seem to divert away from the presented

information and the scent appears to provide sufficient diagnostic information for forming a judgment and making a choice” (15). A similar study demonstrated that customer attitudes toward a store, its products, and their intention to loyally patronize the store, as well as actual purchases, were significantly impacted by scent complexity. Simple or more familiar scents led to more positive responses from customers (i.e., more favorable attitudes, greater loyalty and increased sales). In contrast, more complex or unfamiliar scents had no effect on retail patrons (Haberman et al. 10). Spangenberg et al. found that gender-scent congruity affects consumer behavior. Shoppers in a clothing store scented either with rose maroc, previously determined to appeal to males, or vanilla, previously determined to appeal to females, had a positive impact on that gender. “Each gender evaluated the store and its merchandise more favorably and spent about 50% more time there, bought almost twice as many items and spent more than twice as much money” (1286). Ambient scents, or scents in the environment, improve both recall and recognition of familiar and unfamiliar brands (Morris and Ratneshwar 10).

Olfactory persuasion does not appear to be limited to shopping behavior. In a museum setting, a noticeable number of visitors slowed down their step or even stopped and spent more time overall in the area where scent was diffused. This suggests that museum and art gallery curators can guide people to certain locations with the help of scents (Seljanko and Tookmaa 20). In a nightclub setting, pleasant scents increased dancing activity, improved the evaluation of the evening, the evaluation of the music, and the mood of the visitors (Shifferstein et al.).

Although research in olfactory persuasion and scent marketing is relatively new, these early studies demonstrate not only that the sense of smell is powerfully linked to memory and emotion, but also to behavior.

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12.5: Typography

“When typography is on point, words become images.” — Shawn Lukas

Typeface and Mood

Handwritten letters can communicate information about the writer and convey this feeling to the readers. A person writing from the trenches in WWII might reveal pain or fear through shaky script. A 13-year old might use hearts to replace the dot on an “i” as a demonstration of true love. Cursive writing can convey tradition and formality.

Today, computers offer a wide range of fonts in various weights and sizes. The challenge in the modern world is to select a font that matches the feeling the words are meant to convey.



Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

For example, this “I Want You to Panic” protest sign uses a font to convey a sense of urgency in dealing with climate change. The font matches the feeling of panic the protester hopes to create in the reader.

TikTok and *Instagram* use fonts that appeal to younger users, while *The New York Times* and *The Globe and Mail* use serif fonts to reinforce the credibility that comes with older and experienced organizations. Serif fonts are thought to inspire confidence and meet the expectations of an older reading audience.

Consider the ability of fonts to convey feelings as you craft business documents and slides. Ask yourself,

- What is the mood or feeling of the typeface(s) I have chosen?
- What image or impression is suggested by this choice?
- Does the typeface communicate the feeling I wish to convey?

For example, Jim would like to open an accounting business. What mood does each typeface convey? Does the typeface suggest the image Jim would like to convey?

- Jim's Accounting Services
- Jim's Accounting Services
- Jim's Accounting Services

Among other possible impressions, the first typeface conveys playfulness, the second conveys immaturity, and the third may indicate that Jim is bossy or possibly self-absorbed. Not the impressions that Jim would like to send. A better choice is one that

conveys reliability and credibility:

- Jim's Accounting Services

This typeface is Times New Roman, a serif font carrying “a distinguished feeling of heritage and pedigree” (Gendelman 2015). The font may look familiar to you: many businesses and agencies use this typeface.

Serif and Sans Serif

Because they convey a professional tone, serif fonts (those with letters that have small tags on them) like Times New Roman, Garamond, Georgia, Baskerville, and Palatino are all popular for printed business and academic documents. When you write a cover letter for a loan application or a formal report for a client, you need a font that appears trustworthy and reliable. As designer Dylan Todd says, “When you are designing with type, the typeface you choose tells a story” (“The Science of Color”). The font conveys and affirms the story you would like the audience to hear about you as a young professional or a representative of the organization. Serif fonts are harder to read on lower quality monitors, but some can work well for online content if the font size is adjusted, if the letters do not appear to touch, and if the line height (the space between lines of text) is big enough.

Arial	Λ Λ Λ Λ
Bookman Old Style	Λ Λ Λ Λ
Buxton Sketch	Λ Λ Λ Λ
Century Gothic	Λ Λ Λ Λ
Franklin Gothic Book (+)	Λ Λ Λ Λ
Gabriola	Λ Λ Λ Λ
Garamond	Λ Λ Λ Λ
Monotype Corsiva	Λ Λ Λ Λ
Palatino Linotype	Λ Λ Λ Λ
Segoe Print	Λ Λ Λ Λ
Segoe Script	Λ Λ Λ Λ

"Characters Rendered in Several Fonts" by Alan M1 is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0](#) license.

Restraint and Consistency

Documents and slides can look busy, cluttered, or incoherent if too many typefaces and sizes are used in a single document or slide set.

Use type styles like bold, capitalization, or italics to add emphasis. Keep in mind that if too much is emphasized, nothing is emphasized at all.

Layout & Composition

The arrangement of visual elements on a page also contributes to its persuasive appeal. A single-spaced block of text with no paragraph breaks or headings can overwhelm a reader. Densely packed PowerPoint slides can have the same detrimental effect.

In reports, negative space (or white space) provides a place for the eye to rest and is essential for distinguishing sections. This white space adds rhetorical appeal by emphasizing organizational structure (an element of logos). Consistency in heading styles and alignment of visual elements add to readability.

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12.6: Conclusion and Works Cited

Conclusion

Esoteric messages via color, music, sound, smell, and typography rarely constitute the substance of a persuasive message, but by appealing to our senses of sight, taste, hearing and smell, these unusual messages add dimension and association to more conventional persuasive messages. Pay attention to the thoughts, moods, and feelings that colors, sounds, songs, and smells evoke; you are being influenced!

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13: VISUAL PERSUASION

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13.1: Introduction to Visual Persuasion

Visual Persuasion

"People might decide not to read an article, or tune out the radio, but they won't be able to unsee images that are published." - Margarida Alpuim and Katja Ehrenberg

The idea that humans are visual creatures is debatable, however, there are some fascinating facts about how humans process visual images. A team of neuroscientists from MIT found that the human brain can process entire images that the eye sees for as little as 13 milliseconds (Trafton). This is 13 one-thousandths of a second! We not only recognize images very quickly; we are also more likely to remember pictures than words. This phenomenon is known as the **picture superiority effect**: "It has been clearly established that pictures are remembered better than words in tests of recall and tests of item recognition" (Hockley 1351). Although there are several explanations as to why visual images are better remembered than words, it has become evident that our memories find pictures to be more elaborate, distinctive, or meaningful than words (Hockley 1351).



"Rage, Flower Thrower Banksy 2003 Palestina" by GualdimG - Own work, is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

Visual images also affect our emotions. "When we 'see' an image, it's not just the visual cortex that's involved. The brain region for emotional processing - the amygdala - is also activated" (Alpuim and Ehrenberg). The amygdala is "considered the single most important region of interest in the brain when considering the impact of visual images on fear, anxiety, and pain" (Nanda et al. 40). Sub-cortical brain structures like the amygdala are shaped by evolution to generate emotional responses such as fear, anger, and disgust that are meaningful for survival and adaptation; "compared to words, pictures may be perceived as more biologically relevant and are therefore more capable of eliciting emotional reactions" (Feng et al. 338).

In addition to being memorable and emotion-evoking, pictures also have a "truthiness" effect (Newman et al. 1337). "Photos influence people's judgments...and help people generate pseudoevidence to support claims" (1337). For example, people more often judged the claim "Macadamia nuts are in the same evolutionary family as peaches" to be true when the claim appeared with a photo of a bowl of macadamia nuts than when it appeared alone. The photo was related, but offered no proof (or disproof) of the claim. Related photos tend to inflate the subjective truth of claims (1337).

As advancements in printing, television, and digital media have made visual images easy to produce, reproduce and share, visual messages have proliferated. Because visual images can communicate multiple ideas rapidly and simultaneously, because they are more memorable, because they elicit emotional responses, and because they boost "truthiness", images are used heavily in advertising and other forms of persuasive communication.

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Indexicality



"Froot Loops Cereal Bowl" by [Evan Amos](#) is licensed under the [Creative Commons CCO 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication](#).

One way images persuade is through **indexicality** (Messaris x). This refers to the ability of images, in particular photos and video, to document that an event happened or that something took place. *Indexicality* is the idea that "a photographic image can serve as documentary evidence or proof of an advertisement's point" ("Visual Persuasion"). Photographs and videos can have a documentary aspect; they can "serve as documentary evidence or proof of an advertisement's point" (Gass and Seiter 359). "Any picture made through photographic means, whether on film or video, fits {the} notion of a sign produced as a physical trace of its object...they are, in certain respects, direct physical imprints of the reality recorded in them (Messaris x). In the photo above, for example, you can see what the cereal looks like; it is documented in the photograph. This is indexicality.

When we see influencers trying products on social media, when we see "before & after" photos, products being used in infomercials, and sadly, when we see video footage of riots or murders, we are experiencing indexicality: not the actual events or products, but rather photos or footage of the event or product. When we see an image of something, it is just that: an image. It is NOT the actual thing, but the image serves as "proof" of the thing.

Younger generations tend to have greater experience with the realities of easy video editing, AI-generated images, and deepfakes. Whereas there may have been a time when "seeing was believing," people today should exercise caution and discernment when viewing images.



"Off to Puerto Vallarta" and "More Like Puerto Backyarda" by Paula Cardwell are licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 Deed](#) (For the record, that is a brand-new toilet seat.)

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13.3: Iconicity

Iconicity

An icon is widely defined as a celebrity, character or item whose exposure constitutes a defining characteristic of a society or era. Oxford Dictionary defines an icon as "a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol or as worthy of veneration ("Icon" def. 2). Betty White is a U.S. cultural icon, the Eiffel Tower is iconic of France, and the Statue of Liberty is strongly associated with the United States by people all over the world. Basically, some images are so strongly associated with places, feelings, and ideas that the image becomes representative of those places, feelings and ideas.



Rosie the Riveter" by J. Howard Miller, [CC0 Public Domain](#)

Messaris explains how iconicity persuades in his book, *Visual Persuasion: The Role of Images in Advertising*: "When we look at the real world that surrounds us, the sights we see do not register in our brains as neutral, value-free data. Rather, each visual feature, from the smallest nuances of a people's facial expressions to the overall physical appearance of people and places, can come with a wealth of emotional associations. Images can...call forth "preprogrammed" emotional responses" (Messaris *xiii*). More loosely defined, iconic means representative. Again, certain images come to represent ideas, feelings, places, etc. Icons are often used in persuasion to call forth those ideas, feelings, and sense of place.

"If there is one property that most clearly distinguishes pictures from language and other modes of communication, that property is iconicity" (Messaris 3). In marketing, visual icons are used to distinguish brands. One cannot see the green, two-tailed mermaid logo and not think of Starbucks. The golden arches are iconic of McDonald's, the red-and-white bullseye is strongly associated with Target, and the white apple silhouette is iconic of Apple. These icons conjure strong associations, ideas, and feelings with or about the companies they represent. The "Rosie the Riveter" image above is iconic of female empowerment, a "can-do" attitude, and the World War II era.

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13.4: Syntactic Indeterminacy

Syntactic Indeterminacy

Language is an amazing and highly adaptable system. Cultures coin new words, terms or phrases - neologisms - to capture new ideas quite often (one of my recent personal favorites is "splooting"). Language also allows us to be pretty explicit about relationships between things. We have words that express logical relationships; for example, "this *leads to* that" or "such-n-such *causes* that. Words allow us to make a causal claim, draw an analogy, and express other kinds of logical connections between ideas (Messaris *xviii*). Words allow us to make explicit arguments.



Photo by Andres Ayrton, [CC0 Public Domain](#)

Pictures are not words and cannot make explicit arguments. Visuals can, however, imply relationships. Take, for example, an image of happy, smiling people at an amusement park. For most viewers, an association is made between the people being happy and their location, but a picture does not explicitly state that "this place causes people to be happy."

Although some might see the lack of explicitness as a negative, it turns out that in visual persuasion, ambiguity is a positive. Because relationships are not explicitly stated in images, the viewer must work harder to make some sense of the message. More mental participation is needed. As we learned in the dual processing theories of persuasion, this sense-making would lead to a higher amount of cognitive elaboration and engagement with the topic. "Each viewer's interpretation [of the image] is likely to contain nuances of meaning that literally make it her or his own creation" (Messaris *xviii*). If it is true that people are more persuaded by ideas they've helped to construct, visual images could lead to better persuasion.; Another "positive" of visual persuasion is that, because explicit claims cannot be made, there is less accountability. "This ability to imply something in pictures while avoiding the consequences of saying it in words has been considered an advantage of visual advertising since the earliest days of its development as a mass medium" (Messaris *xix*).

So when we see cool, attractive people riding around in certain makes of cars, or political ads juxtaposing candidates with good (or bad) events and situations, or rugged people smoking cigarettes, or any image that creates an association between things, we are experiencing syntactic indeterminacy.

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13.5: Framing Images- More Than Decoration

Framing: More Than Decoration

"When we look at a picture, we know perfectly well that it's a picture and not the real thing, but we suspend disbelief. For a moment, the picture is 'real'" (Bang 52).

Although some might believe that images are decorative or "extra" in the persuasive context, this is rarely the case. Visuals in persuasion and advertising are purposeful, intentional, and strategically placed. "Creators of visual messages...are in control of where the viewer's eye looks within an image, the information it delivers, and the emotions that it evokes" (Jordan). One should not assume that an image's function is decorative, particularly in persuasion, because, as Bang so eloquently states, for a moment that image is very real to us.

Images, camera angles, colors, design; all of these are chosen, and they are usually chosen for a reason. Case in point: when searching for a photo to illustrate the concept of syntactic indeterminacy, I chose the first photo of a happy couple drinking wine that I came across that fit the licensing requirements for open source textbooks. As I continued my research on visual persuasion, however, I read this amazing quote in Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others*: "The photographic image...is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude" (39). I realized that in my quest to find an open-source photo, I, too had made a choice and that choice had excluded diversity. Simply by changing my search parameters, I was able to find a more inclusive image that illustrated the same point. Photographers choose what and what not to photograph; others choose which photos to use or not. **Framing** refers to choices about what is included and what is left out. Both the choices made regarding the composition of a visual as well as the choices made about whether to include or exclude a visual ultimately affect the message conveyed.

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13.6: Visual Hierarchy

Visual Hierarchy

Again, creators of visual images are in control of where the eye looks, the informative provided by the image, and the emotions evoked by the image. In his 2021 book, *Techniques of Visual Persuasion: Create Powerful Images that Motivate*, Larry Jordan identifies six priorities that determine the order by which information is delivered in a visual:

1. **Movement.** Our brains are hard-wired to pay attention to anything that moves. Our survival instincts are activated. "Our first thought is, is that food, or are we food? Movement always gets our attention" (Jordan Chapter 2). The eye is drawn to movement or, in the case of still photographs, the illusion of movement. Think of what the advent of "moving pictures" (video) has done for visual persuasion!
2. **Focus.** Next, our eyes move to focus. If focus varies within an image, our eyes travel to objects in focus. If everything is in focus, our eyes travel to the next priority: that which is different.
3. **Different.** Different could be a different shape, a different color, a different clothing style, a different gender, etc. Our eyes are drawn to that which is unique or contrasts with the rest of the visual field.
4. **Brightness.** If there is no movement in an image, everything is in focus, and all elements are similar, our eye turns next towards the brightest object in the visual.
5. **Size.** The next thing our eyes are drawn to is the largest element in the image.
6. **In Front.** Lastly, if all else is equal or consistent in a photo, our eyes tend to fall upon that which is in the front of the photo.



"Contrast" by [Shubhammaideo](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

The photo above has several of the priorities mentioned. Most images combine multiple priorities in an attempt to increase the likelihood that the viewer's eye will go where the creator of the image wants. It is rare for only one priority to be used (Jordan Chapter 2).

When analyzing persuasive images through the lens of these priorities, it's pretty interesting to see the composition efforts that are made in order to capture our attention, and now we know that it takes only thirteen-thousandths of a second for our brains to recognize what we're seeing.

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14: Appendix A- Persuasive Speechmaking- Pitching Your Idea and Making it Stick



Let me tell you about my persuasive journey.

Not long after I graduated high school, I found myself selling electronics. My favorite thing to sell was car stereos. In the salesperson role, I made pitches to individuals, to families, to corporations, and even pitches on the main stage at the trade show. What I learned firsthand is that people usually were there because they liked stereos, they needed stereos, or they were thinking of buying a stereo. I just needed to help them find the right fit stereo. What that meant for me was I needed to learn to read people.

I sold stereos back in the day when CDs were just becoming popular (I guess I'm old, huh?). In my CD bag, I had the best CD from each genre. I was ready to play MC Hammer's *Can't Touch This*, AC/DC Back in Black, The Cure's Boys Don't Cry. I had the top song and top CD from each genre. When someone came into the store, I would "read" the person to guess their musical preferences. I would put the matching CD in the player and crank it up. I would know instantly when I would get it right because the customer's face would light up and they would nod to the music. Often, people would come to me and to the stereo that was playing and buy that unit. It was a valuable lesson. People were not buying the CD player as much as they were buying the song they liked and buying from a salesperson who got could relate to their interests. Yes, they would look at the features and the company name, but the fact that I knew their music was very persuasive.

Knowing your audience is like knowing the customer. You must get a good "read" so you know the right way to pitch your idea. I cannot overemphasize the importance of audience analysis which leads me to my first main point.

Audience Needs are Key

University professor Clay Warren said, "The mistake of a novice persuader is saying what you want to say rather than what the audience needs to hear." That does not mean pandering, but it does mean taking a lot of time to think about them—the audience. When I am asked to give a persuasive speech, I always gather all the details about the audience and then the event, and then I spend time thinking. Thinking about the audience. I imagine their faces and think about who they are. I think about their motivation for listening. I think about how what I have to say can in some way, make their life better. Only after I have a strong mental picture of my audience, do I then begin to write the speech.

[There is an entire chapter to help you think about the audience and needs.](#)

Consider these examples. A popular topic for persuasion speeches in college classes is persuading my classmates to donate blood. Most speakers will talk about the need for blood donations, the need created by a low blood supply, and the need to contribute to the community. When I ask my college students why they *really* donate blood, I get answers like, "Points for my sorority," "To win the homecoming competition," "To get a free T-shirt," and "Because my friends were doing it." The point here is that there are multiple layers to why people are persuaded.

I am currently pitching an idea to the upper administration. As I am carefully researching, someone close to the key administrator said, “Don’t just show him your ideas, show him what will be his return on investment? He is a numbers person, break down your main points in terms of numbers, dollars, and cents, increased enrollment, improves retention.” Information like this is key when analyzing the audience for a persuasive message.

My next story takes us to my time as the director of a not-for-profit. I spent my days making public appearances for publicity, fundraising, and volunteer recruitment. We had impressive numbers to share with funders, we had a large client base, a well-trained group of volunteers, and a good reputation. When I first began making presentations, I felt like while the audience was hearing about our organization and thinking it was a good place to volunteer or donate, many would agree but not act. If the organization was to keep serving the community, we needed more volunteers and more money.

I realized part of the problem was the way we had been “pitching” the organization. We overemphasized the hard data—the number of people served and the number of volunteers and the audience couldn’t visualize what we were doing. They couldn’t “see” the impact of their donation. They couldn’t “see” what they would be doing as a volunteer. I began collecting stories. Here is one such story.

Miss Sally lives out in a small rural city at the end of a long dirt road. She lives alone and her neighbors are just out of sight. One day when she went out back of her house to check how much propane was in her outdoor propane tank, she slipped and fell. She broke her hip. She laid outside for three days unable to get back to her house to call for help. Luckily, the mail carrier noticed her mail building up and looked around and found her. He called an ambulance and after hip surgery, she is on the road to recovery. Social services connected her to our group and now a volunteer calls her every day. If she doesn’t answer, someone goes out and checks on her. Once a week someone stops by at lunchtime and eats with her. They share stories, and laughter. If she needs an errand run, a volunteer picks up items and brings them. Sally is one of the 105 people that with just a little bit of help can remain independent.

As you can imagine, the responses to speeches that included stories were so much different. People were much more likely to give money or to volunteer once they were told a story because they could see, Ms. Sally. Some people even asked about her. They could imagine the pleasure they would get from calling someone to check on them. Donors thought of someone they know and how they want their loved ones cared for. “Seeing” a person instead of an organization made all the difference. This leads me to my second point; the audience needs to “see” to be persuaded.

The Audience Needs to “See” to be Persuaded

If you are persuading an audience to buy a product, they need to visualize how it works and how it fits into their life. If you are persuading an audience to make a social change, they need to visualize how the world will be better because of this change. If you are persuading an audience to donate to an organization, you need to help the audience visualize the impact of their donation.

Visualization can be achieved by literally showing visuals, by demonstrating the product, or by telling a story.

[There is an entire chapter to help you work on incorporating a story into your speech.](#)

Oftentimes a story will help awaken emotions in an audience. This is known as pathos. Pathos is the passion of the speaker and the types of things that the speaker talks about. Warren reminds us “facts go through your brain like water through a sieve. But a story creates an emotional connection. If you get the emotion, you will remember. It is harder to attach an emotion to a number.”

The Audience Needs to Be Given the Facts in a Way that They Can Understand, Relate, and Remember

Yes, you want to identify with an audience and help them feel something, but you also need facts in your speech. You need to do the research and you need to present the arguments. Keep in mind — facts alone are rarely persuasive. It is the *way you present those facts* that makes them persuasive. When giving your numbers, pair them with a story. When giving statistics, helped the audience to visualize them.

[There is an entire chapter to help you work on representing stats, numbers, and charts.](#)

Make sure you chose to talk about facts that match the audience. For some, the review of a social media influencer is more

convincing than the reviews from a publication. For an academic audience, the names of the researchers and the names of the journals they publish in will garner attention, but for other audiences, the title of the person as “cardiologist at a top research institute” would be more persuasive.

One more story. I spent time as a manufacturer’s representative. I traveled to five states setting up distributorships for a “generic” brand of diesel engine parts. The parts we sold were made at the same factory as the name brand, they were just stamped with a different name and then put in different boxes. In that role, I made individual presentations and a lot of board room presentations. The hardest part seemed to be convincing people that our parts were as good as the name-brand ones. Our parts were more than 50% less in price which seems like a good thing. Unfortunately for us, ingrained in many people’s heads is the idea that *expensive means good* and *name brand parts are of better quality*. It took six months to get our first big account, but once we had one major account, sales became much easier. The perceived credibility of the product and the credibility of our sales team came, not from how good the product was or our credentials, but our credibility came from the status of a big-name company that was using our product.

This leads me to my last big point; the audience needs to trust you.

The Audience Needs to Trust You

Credibility is key to the success or failure of a presenter. The whole speech rests on credibility, if they don’t trust you, they won’t listen. You build your credibility by how you are dressed, how you are introduced, how you tell the audience why you are competent in this area helps the audience listen. In my story, our credibility came from the name of the big company that used our parts.

Your credibility helps create trust and trust is essential to persuasion.

Ethos: Credibility

Ethos (credibility) is all about your character, your intentions, your good judgment, as well as your respect for yourself, your speech, and your audience. Aristotle said there are three components of ethos and all three should be employed.

- **Phronesis** (froh-nee-sis) practical wisdom. Prudence. It implies good judgment and excellence of character and habits. “To do the right thing in the right place, at the right time, in the right way.” -Carr
- **Arete** (ah-reh-‘tay) is the moral virtue of your argument. It refers to excellence of any kind but when applied to speech it means to persuade in a morally virtuous way.
- **Eunoia** (you-noh-ia) is the goodwill you establish. It is what happens when a speaker considers the audience and cultivates a relationship of trust with them.

Watch this short TED-Ed video that connects what we have just discussed on credibility and audience needs.

YouTube Video

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Now that I shared with you some of the foundational principles of persuasion, let me share a few more thoughts about persuasion that will help you as you build your speech.

Make it Do-Able

Persuasion needs to be doable. Be specific with what you want the audience to do. Are you wanting them to consider an opposing viewpoint? Are you wanting them to donate blood? Are you wanting them to give to a charity? Are you wanting them to see the

value of a liberal arts education? Are you wanting them to buy your product? Tell them specifically what you want.

The other way to make it doable is to give them realistic goals. I recently took part in a health and fitness program at the university. The program was aimed at helping people engage in healthy practices. If the program told everyone to go and run five miles a day, it would have looked impossible to most of the participants. Instead, the program focused on things you could do at your desk like chair yoga. Instead of telling everyone to change their diet, they asked participants to add one more serving of fruit or vegetable to their diets this week. Having things that were doable increased participants' motivation. The increased motivation increased success. Setting realistic goals was also key when I did sales. Instead of immediately asking groups to take on whole parts lines, we would encourage them to stock two of the most popular items and test out customer satisfaction with those items. When I worked with donors, we would ask some for a one-time donation of five thousand dollars while we would ask others for ten dollars a month based on what we knew about the audience's financial means.

Finally, you should make the persuasion doable by telling them how to accomplish what you've asked. I had a student tell us to go to Mount Ida to dig crystals. I had no idea where that was. His speech was successful because he showed us on the map where it was located. He showed up pictures of what we would see when we got there, and he told us specific things we should pack. He made it easy to comply. Coincidentally, I dug two duffle bags worth of crystals and they are sitting in my garden today. If you are making a sales pitch, you may be telling them how to use the order form or how to access the website. The more you show things, the more they visualize themselves doing it, the more likely it is that they will follow through.

Overcome Objections

Anyone who has been through advanced sales training knows a key part of any sales pitch is the part where you are overcoming objections. In a one-on-one sales pitch, a salesperson might say, "Are there any things standing in your way?" In a persuasive presentation, you do the same thing, just not as overtly. Let me tell you a little about a flu shot and how it relates here.

When you get a flu shot you are given a little dose of the flu so that your body can build immunity from future attackers. Basically, you get a little of the flu so you can become immune. Similarly, giving someone a little dose of an argument can help prepare them for future persuasive attacks. McGuire called this **inoculation theory**. In short, you can help prepare people to deal with objections. This can happen in several ways.

This can happen by **forewarning**. You warn someone they may hear things that disagree. "My opponent will say that..., but that simply isn't true." The simple suggestion that there are different points on the other side helps the individual think about how they might argue for their side. Maybe, I'm trying to persuade you why chiropractic treatment can be helpful for headaches. I might say, "You may hear that chiropractors are just bone crackers that get you addicted to treatment to get money out of you. I certainly heard that before I tried treatment, but my own experience has been..." You warned them of what they might hear (a little dose of the flu) and you helped them to gain immunity.

The other way this can happen is by counterarguments—called **refutational preemption**. You imagine what counterarguments your audience might have and then you address them in your speech. When I sold aftermarket diesel engine parts, I imagined they might object because our product wasn't name-brand so they might think it was inferior. Because of this, I would say, "Let me tell you why the quality of our product is equal to the competition" and then I would show them a chart showing the metallurgical data and quality statistics. When persuading people to donate to the not for profit, I imagined they might object to giving money because they are already giving somewhere else so I would say, "There are many worthy causes to give your money and time to so let me tell you why this is a worthwhile cause...."

When making a good inoculation, make sure you don't try to make the other side's argument too strong, or they might end up agreeing with the other side. In addition, don't distort what the other side represents. That would make it a strawman fallacy (and in my opinion, unethical). Worst of all, making distorted arguments hurts your credibility and you would risk losing the audience's trust.

Try This

When working on a persuasive presentation ask several people, "Why might someone object to this?" or "Why might someone not want to try this?" When they answer. Resist the temptation to justify. Don't be defensive, just listen and write down the things they say. Go back to your speech and see how you might preemptively deal with those objections in your presentation.

Look for Agreement

When someone says, “No.” Their whole body begins to disagree. They may lock their jaw, squint their eyes, or cross their arms. Keeping your speech positive and seeking agreement can draw an audience into your topic. Dale Carnegie in his famous book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* suggested getting the audience to say, “Yes” multiple times. Even better if they nod yes as well. “Can we agree tuition is too high–yes. Can we agree it is hard to eat healthy as a college student–yes. Can we all agree...fill in the blank...yes?”

Begin with the End in Mind

When thinking about your persuasion speech, ask yourself how you will measure success? Success in speech class should always be more than the grade you earned. Earnestly try to persuade your classmates of something that will make their lives better.

Begin with the end in mind and ask yourself, what does success look like? I once had a group of students give a speech asking the city to add a traffic signal out front of the college–the city took it into consideration and added the light. Lives were saved because they gave a speech. That is measurable success. I had a student persuade us why we should go to Kansas City for a weekend trip, several students went and thanked the student for the recommendation. That is measurable success. I spoke before the Kiwanis asking them for a donation and they became a financial partner, because of their donation hundreds of homebound seniors received companions, yet again a measurable success.

What about those speeches that ask people to change attitudes? How will you know if your persuasion worked? If you pitched your product and no one bought it, did you succeed? Sometimes getting the word out is a success. Success will not always be tangible. Sometimes you won’t persuade the audience members listening, but they will talk to their associates who will be persuaded. Write down what you want to happen as a result of your speech.

Always begin with the end in mind.

At this point, I want to share with you some excellent persuasive speeches and draw your attention to a few key elements. This video has to be watched on the TED YouTube channel.

Persuasion to Change your Behavior

YouTube Video

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I’m not saying that we all need to live in 420 sq. ft. But consider the benefits of an edited life. Go from 3,000 to 2,000, from 1,500 to 1,000. Most of us, maybe all of us, are here pretty happily for a bunch of days with a couple of bags, maybe a small space, a hotel room. So when you go home and you walk through your front door, take a second and ask yourselves, “Could I do with a little life editing? Would that give me a little more freedom? Maybe a little more time?”

NOTICE

He tells you what he wants you to do, and he makes it do-able. Notice how he slows down and changes his voice and the ending as he delivers his last words–“Good stuff.”

Persuasion of Fact: The Power of Story

YouTube Video

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Most of society has been acting like race exists but it doesn't matter.

Did you know that race doesn't really exist in scientific terms? 'We' have known this for a while but for some reason we still act like skin color means something. In fact, race doesn't exist, but in our society it does matter.

Notice

He uses stories to draw us in about the topic of race. In doing so, he helps us to avoid being defensive or guarded about the topic and we are more willing to listen.

Culture Makes a Difference

There are a lot of demographic differences that can influence how a person is persuaded, and an important one of those is culture. I want to focus on the biggest three cultural differences that can influence how you approach a persuasive speech.

Individualism vs Collectivism

- Individualistic cultures stress the value of "I." People in individualist cultures typically value independence and uniqueness and are socialized to see themselves as separate and distant.
- Collectivistic cultures stress the value of "we." People in collectivistic cultures value group membership. They tend to work towards the good of the group and are more compliant with authority.
- A speech that tells the audience how to be independent or how to stand out above the crowd would appeal more to an individualistic audience where a speech that tells the audience how they can fit in and be part of the group would appeal more to a collectivistic culture.
- One study showed the difference in detergent ads. "Cleans with a softness that you will love" was preferred by individualistic societies vs "Cleans with a softness your family will love" was preferred by collectivistic societies.

High vs Low Context

- Low context cultures tend to be direct and linear. There is an emphasis on facts as the most important.
- High context cultures tend to be indirect. Because of the indirectness, it may be harder to "read" the situation unless you have taken time to get to know the individual.
- Doctor recommended would appeal more to high context individuals where a focus on the features and advantages of the product would be more persuasive to low context individuals.
- A speech that is very specific and direct would appeal to a low context culture where a speech that implies or "hints" would appeal more to a high context culture.

Persuasive Speech Patterns

There are many patterns you can use as you create your speech. Here is a brief list of the most common ones.

Problem-Solution

State the problem
Tell us why it is a problem
Offer up a solution to the problem

Persuade us to do something based on the solution you offered

Problem-Cause-Solution

State the problem
Tell us why it is a problem
Tell us what caused the problem
Offer us a solution to the problem
Persuade us to do something in reaction to the solution offered

Comparative Advantages

Duh! Compare the advantages of one product or idea to another.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence

This model, designed by Alan Monroe, was originally designed for policy speeches but has been expanded to other types. Sales presenters take note, this one may be for you. Participants in one study appreciated this format because of how organized it made presentations.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence	
Attention: Get the audience's attention (This step usually includes a grabbing statement, a preview, and a credibility statement)	
Need: You make the audience feel a need for a change. This is usually where you should evidence of a need.	
Satisfaction: You satisfy the need. What is the solution or plan to take care of the need you demonstrated?	
Visualization: Help your audience visualize the benefits How will they profit from enacting your plan.	
Action: Tell the audience exactly what you want them to do or to feel. (This step usually includes a review, a call to action, and a closing statement)	

In conclusion, words are powerful. When you are given the privilege of standing before a group of people, they have given you the gift of time. You owe it to them to give them something worthwhile. I have given you some powerful persuasive tools, use them wisely, apply them ethically.

I compiled a few of my favorite persuasive theories and put them in a chapter to help you fine-tune your persuasion. [The Science of Persuasion](#)

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Audience needs are key.
- The audience needs to “see” to be persuaded.
- Credibility is essential.
- Persuasion needs to be doable.
- Look for agreement.
- Overcoming objections.
- Consider how you will measure success.
- Consider cultural differences.
- Use the pattern that best fits your speech.

Bonus Feature

Watch these young voices make persuasion speeches at March for Our Lives

YouTube Video

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15: APPENDIX B- PERSUASIVE RESEARCH AND WRITTING

15.1: How to Evaluate Information and Judge Credibility

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- 15.1.2: When Should You Accept Unusual Statements?
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15.1: HOW TO EVALUATE INFORMATION AND JUDGE CREDIBILITY

Suppose a friend of yours says she just read that several soldiers who were lost in action during the most recent U.S. war in the Middle East have been discovered in graves in Antarctica. She is making an unusual claim. In this chapter you will learn more about assessing the credibility of claims, especially unusual ones, and assessing the credibility of people and sources that might be used in justifying those claims. A person's credibility on some issue is their ability to offer solid grounds for deciding the issue. Credibility is a matter of degree, and it involves both the honesty of the person and how much of an authority they are. The more general knowledge you have about life and the world the better able you are able to judge who is an authority on what. For example, we all know that a man who is loud is usually an authority, and someone who is louder is even more of an authority. Oops! Cancel that last point. The kernel of truth in that last joke is that there is some correlation between someone's outwardly appearing confident and their actually being an authority, but too often the listener over-emphasizes the outward appearance.

15.1.1: The Principles of Charity and Fidelity

15.1.2: When Should You Accept Unusual Statements?

15.1.3: Assessing a Source's Credibility

15.1.4: Seeking a Second Opinion

15.1.5: Trust Me, I Know It on Good Authority

15.1.6: Suspending Belief

15.1.7: Getting Solid Information about Whom to Vote For

15.1.8: Fake News and Misinformation

15.1.9: Review of Major Points

15.1.10: Glossary

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15.1.1: The Principles of Charity and Fidelity

When someone says something that is obviously false, the logical reasoner will look deeper and not be too quick to find fault. Maybe the person meant something true but simply slipped up. "I collided with a stationary truck coming the other way," a male driver wrote in an insurance statement, attempting to summarize the details of an accident. Because a truck cannot simultaneously be moving and be stationary, you note the inconsistency but are charitable and assume that the person didn't literally mean what he wrote. Maybe he meant that he collided with a truck carrying paper stationery, or, more probably, he meant that the truck was stationary but that he, himself, was coming the other way.

By trying to make sense of apparent inconsistencies, and by trying to make sense of false statements that are too obviously false, we are applying the principle of charity or the principle of charitable interpretation. This principle is really a request to be kind and to try to make reasonable sense of odd statements and not to be in "attack mode."

Besides applying the principle of charity, we want to respect the principle of fidelity. That is, we should preserve the intended meaning of the speaker's original statements when interpreting them or analyzing them. We don't want to twist the original so that the speaker would react with, "Hey, I didn't mean that." Nor should we be so charitable that we are blind to real falsehoods and real inconsistencies.

Exercise 15.1.1.1

Suppose you are trying to interpret what someone meant by saying, "You will have some good luck." Which of the following interpretations would violate the principle of fidelity?

- a. You will have some good luck today, or soon.
- b. You will have something positive happen to you.
- c. You will cause somebody to have some good luck.
- d. Eventually good luck will happen to you, but it won't be that far off.

Answer available at the end of this section.

It is important to accurately represent what people are intending to say. If they intend to say something that turns out to be false or inconsistent, they are being false or inconsistent, and that is that. It's their confusion, not yours. But what do you do when faced with a statement that is blatantly inconsistent? For example, suppose a friend of yours says, "I don't believe in God's existence; nevertheless, God exists." Perhaps your friend intended to say something consistent, so you ask yourself, "What else could the sentence mean?" Maybe (but just maybe) it means "I find it hard to believe in God's existence; nevertheless, I actually do believe in God's existence." That would not be inconsistent. When you are in doubt about apparent inconsistencies or weirdness, ask the speaker to clarify, if you can. The burden is on the speaker not to confuse you.

Tension may occur between the principles of fidelity and charity. To maintain fidelity, the analyst will say that a sentence that appears to make a false statement is in fact false, yet to be charitable the analyst will try to find a way to interpret it to be true. Consequently, applying the principles is an art that requires a delicate sensitivity.

Exercise 15.1.1.1

Applying the principles of charity and fidelity to the sentence "The musician Tommy Tutone is dead, but alive," it would be best to say what?

- a. Tommy Tutone is probably not a musician but a detergent.
- b. "Dead" means "not alive."
- c. "Alive" means "his music is still listened to."
- d. There are some people who are biologically both dead and alive.
- e. If a person is dead, then the person cannot be a musician.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Answers

Exercise 15.1.1.1

Answer (c). It twists the original statement by changing who the good luck will happen to, whereas statements (a), (b), and (d) are all reasonable interpretations of what the original statement might have meant

Exercise 15.1.1.1

Answer (c). If you say that a person is physically dead but that his music is still listened to, you are not being inconsistent. Answer (a) also is consistent, but that answer violates the principle of fidelity

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15.1.2: When Should You Accept Unusual Statements?

We all know that observations are not infallible. In ancient Egypt at the time of the pharaohs and their pyramids, a group of magicians would walk into the marketplace and begin displaying their powers. The lead magician would hold up a walking stick that had been carved in the shape of a snake and pass it around the audience. Soon after getting it back, the magician would hold up the stick, call on the supernatural powers of the Egyptian gods, and throw the stick on the ground. There the stick would turn into a live snake and crawl away into the crowd, leaving the audience stunned and even more in awe of the power of the pharaoh and his magicians.

Did the stick really turn into a snake? "No, that's impossible," you are apt to say, "because it's got to be a trick." That is right. Unknown to most people, there is a certain Egyptian snake that can be temporarily paralyzed by applying well-placed pressure to the back of its neck. A physical shock to its head can un-paralyze it. The lead magician's stick looked like this snake. After the stick had been passed around and while other magicians were performing other tricks, the lead magician switched sticks with a magician who had been carrying the paralyzed snake. When the lead magician threw the snake down head first, it woke up and crawled away—naturally, not supernaturally.

The magician's audience accepted the performance as a straightforward demonstration of the powers of magic and the supernatural. The typical Egyptian did not approach the demonstration with the critical attitude of the modern logical reasoner. Instead, he or she was more gullible and already predisposed to accept supernatural explanations for surprising phenomena. A logical reasoner such as yourself would demand better evidence before accepting the magician's explanations, because you have a better feeling for what is a likely explanation and what is not. You know that it's more probable that sleight of hand is behind the snake trick or that some natural but little-known phenomenon is the secret.

Being logical requires the ability to identify strange events, and it requires a knowledge of the best way to go about explaining why the events appear to be happening. A strange event is an improbable one, and probability is **always assessed against a base of background knowledge and available evidence**. Strange events or statements are improbable because they conflict with what else you believe.

The core of background knowledge that you use in making judgments of improbability is called **common sense**. It is the knowledge that most of us acquire in the normal process of growing up in our society, that cars need a steering wheel, that sticks don't become snakes, and all that. The common sense of today's logical reasoner is quite different from the common sense of the ancient Egyptian.

Because of your common sense, you probably won't believe an email from Nigeria offering to pay you to help launder some money, and you wouldn't believe the following headline if it were to appear in a supermarket tabloid:

DYING MAN'S BRAIN PUT IN COMA WOMAN

You probably know a few people who could use a good brain transplant. The gullible person will buy the newspaper to learn more details about the world's first successful brain snatch. However, you as a logical reasoner will first ask yourself, "Why am I finding out about this in the supermarket checkout line?" If it is true, why haven't you heard about it on the TV news, or from your friends? This headline is inconsistent with your background knowledge about the state of medicine today. You don't have to be a doctor to know that brain transplants have yet to be attempted. At most, small bits of brain tissue have been transplanted. If a brain transplant were even going to be attempted, there would have been a lot of advance publicity. A person who did not know these facts of medicine could easily be conned by the headline. For the rest of us, the most it should do is sensitize us to noticing whether other newspapers or the TV news mention any recent brain transplant attempts. Reading the article in the tabloid would be unlikely to provide the logical reasoner with any good reason to believe the original headline.

Acceptance is a matter of degree. Even for claims you accept, you will accept some more strongly than others.

Can you spot the faulty assumption underlying the following word problem in this fifth-grade mathematics book? Look at it from the perspective of a book editor who is trying to decide whether to publish the book and is checking the quality of the math problems.

Dr. Richard Feynman and his daughter Melissa visit a glass factory that makes marbles. Marbles are stored in different colored

bins, and there are signs about the colors and temperatures of the marbles:

green bin marbles: 215 degrees

yellow bin marbles: 150 degrees

blue bin marbles: 70 degrees.

Melissa collects one marble from the green bin and three from the yellow bin. Richard collects one marble from the blue bin and two from the green bin. What is the total of the temperatures of the marbles collected by the father and daughter?

This is a very strange question, isn't it? The ridiculous assumption is that adding these temperatures gives a total worth knowing.

The critical thinker, unlike the naive thinker, is on guard against accepting stupid assumptions. Yet there are situations in which, even though they are ridiculous, you might still need to accept them, at least temporarily. For example, if you are a student in an arithmetic class, and your teacher seems to be serious about wanting you to answer the question above about adding the temperatures of marbles, then you apply your critical thinking skills and think, "OK, it's a dumb question, but I'll do the math computation and get the right answer."

We are continually asked to accept assumptions in arguments, definitions, explanations, and interpretations of the world around us. As critical thinkers, we need to be aware of those assumptions and consider whether we really want to make them.

Exercise 15.1.2.1

Suppose you are having dinner with a married couple from your apartment building. You pass the husband the rice, but he declines and says he doesn't like to eat rice because this was almost the only thing he had to eat for a month while he was captured and held as a P.O.W. (prisoner of war) in the last war. That's an understandable reason to avoid rice, but then his wife comments that she doesn't like to eat rice because she was force fed rice while kidnapped by space aliens. Oops! When you laugh, and she responds that she's not kidding and that four years ago she was captured and held for three days in an alien spaceship that was hiding in a trench in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, then what should you think? You probably should think that she's a little crazy or very foolish. Why are you justified in making this evaluation of your neighbor?

Answer available at the end of this section.

Answers

Exercise 15.1.2.1

First off, her claim about kidnapping by aliens from outer space is an extraordinary claim. Really odd. Common sense says that no one has ever been kidnapped by space aliens. If someone actually were, it would be the biggest news you've ever heard in your life, and everyone you've ever met would know about it, even if the abduction were to have occurred in some obscure country. The experts all say that creatures from outer space have never visited our planet. There's no evidence, and all significant claims that it occurred did not check out. They say serious claims of alien abduction are just the product of foolish misunderstanding or an insane mind. So, that's why it's perfectly OK to evaluate your neighbor as being a little crazy or very foolish. Yes, you have to be open to the possibility that she has access to information that no one else has, but the burden of proof is on her to produce extraordinarily good evidence that what she's saying is correct. Her passing a lie detector test wouldn't count as good evidence, would it?

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15.1.3: Assessing a Source's Credibility

Our most reliable source of information is our own observations, but when these are not available, then we turn to other sources of information. When we don't have access ourselves to information about whether a claim is credible, we can look at the source of the claim, at where it's coming from, at who's saying we should believe it. Some sources are more credible than others.

If the claim is not unusual and it comes from someone you have a reason to trust, then go ahead and believe it. If your friend says he ran out of gas in his car last week, then go ahead and believe it. It is not always unwise to accept unsupported claims if they are not extraordinary and nothing much turns on whether you believe it or not. But if he says he met the Prime Minister of England last week and was invited to speak to a session of their Parliament next Monday, then ask for more evidence before you believe this unusual claim very strongly.

The Weekly World News, The Star, and The National Enquirer, are popular tabloids whose headlines shout out from the racks near the checkout lines of supermarkets and drug stores. Too often they will exaggerate their stories and will print almost anything anybody says, so long as it is entertaining. They will portray the stories as being true without checking whether they are. The editor of the Weekly World News, when asked about the reliability of the stories he prints, admitted this when he said, "Of course we are skeptical about some of the stories, but we wouldn't question ourselves out of a story, particularly when it has no health-related ramifications." The editor added, "If we got a fellow who said he was taken aboard a UFO, for instance, we would really see no reason to check it out if it was entertaining, a good story. If we did some probing, we could find out that he'd been in a mental hospital for the past 60 days and then [have to] kill the story." When the reporters locate a person who calls himself or herself an "expert on UFOs," the reporters are not apt to question the person's credentials and will merely report that "experts on these matters have said...."¹

Tabloids are notorious for trying to convince readers by appeal to **anecdotes**. Anecdotes are reports of individuals' own experiences. There is nothing wrong with gathering information from individuals, but a few unsystematically acquired anecdotes do not constitute a scientific proof. For example, Lupe says to you, "Forget about seatbelts. They do more harm than good. I was in a car accident once, and the doctor said it was lucky that I wasn't wearing one. If I had been wearing one, I would have been burned up with the car. Instead I was thrown through the windshield and only broke my neck and back." This anecdote may support the generalization that car seatbelts shouldn't be used, but it cannot stand up to statistics showing that, overall, people with seatbelts suffer fewer injuries. It is understandable that you might want to pay more attention to your friend Lupe than to some statistical report from people you do not know, but it is more reasonable to pay attention to the statistics. By the same token, if Lupe had asked her doctor, no doubt the doctor would have said she was lucky not to have had the seatbelt buckled in this special case but that in the future she should buckle up. The doctor's own views about seatbelts will probably have been acquired by paying attention to the statistics, not to the anecdotes of his own few patients.

Although the "coma woman" headline in the Weekly World News isn't a good enough reason for you to change your beliefs about brain transplanting, the same headline in more reputable publications should cause you to change your beliefs. The same information backed up by a "Yes, it's true" comment from your doctor, also would be a good reason to believe the story.

Some of our most valuable knowledge is knowledge about which sources are credible sources and which are not.

Let's consider a more credible source of information than a grocery store tabloid, namely the president of the United States. How credible is the president when he tells you something? Well, it depends on what he tells you, doesn't it? If he says Manila in the Philippines has just suffered a 7.0 earthquake, then he's a very credible source of information. If he says the candidate from the opposition party doesn't deserve your vote, he is a much less credible source of information.

Most people think their own observations are a completely reliable source of information. If you saw it, then it's so, right? Not necessarily. Think about magicians and optical illusions. And then there's always the problem of faulty memory. When James says he remembers shaking the hand of the president when he was four years old, does the adult James really remember shaking the hand of the president when he was four years old, or does James just remember being told that he did? Sometimes what

someone wishes to be true can affect what they observe as when they report observing the Madame at the séance talking to their recently deceased grandmother. Memories can be tricky. Logical reasoners know that there's always some small possibility that what they remember observing may not be quite as they remember it.

When you assess a person's credibility as, say, an expert on tropical medicine, you'll not want to make this judgment on the basis of whether they are friendly and smile and give you eye contact and a sincere handshake. That's irrelevant to whether they can speak reliably about tropical medicine, but it's not irrelevant to whether you want to invite the person to lunch tomorrow. If your local doctor were to say, "She is an expert on tropical medicine," that would be much more helpful to you than your noticing that she has a copy of *The Journal of Tropical Medicine* in her hand. Of course, if you were to find out that this copy contained an article written by her, then that would go a long way in telling you she really is an expert and should be trusted when she is speaking about tropical medicine.

But be cautious. Many TV viewers were convinced by this remark in the commercials: More doctors smoke Camels than any other cigarette." The implicit conclusion is that Camels are safe to smoke.

Exercise 15.1.3.1

If you wanted to know whether electricity will flow through certain kinds of plastic, who would be the most credible source of information?

- a. A friend of yours who has invented and patented three kinds of plastic toys.
- b. The county librarian who specializes in government documents.
- c. A professional proofreader who has just worked on a new textbook about plastics and electricity.
- d. Your neighbor who is an electrical engineer.
- e. The sales representative of the largest plastics manufacturer in your state.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Logical reasoners discriminate among sources of information. They trust information from a reputable scientific journal over information from a daily newspaper. They trust the newspaper over their neighbor. Here is a ranking; they trust *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and perhaps *Newsweek* magazine, followed by network TV news, the local daily paper, and then local TV stations. They are cautious about believing TV docudramas, political blogs and even their friends' tweets, and even less so do they trust grocery store tabloids and political leaflets left at their front door.

¹ From Eddie Clontz, Reuters dispatch, reprinted in *The Sacramento Bee* newspaper, November 26, 1988, p. A2.

Answers

Exercise 15.1.3.1

Answer (d). The electrical engineer would be required to learn this sort of thing as part of his or her professional training. Proofreaders need not know anything about what they are reading. Librarians might be able to find the right book, but they themselves wouldn't necessarily be able to understand the book. The inventor might know about electrical flow in some plastics used in some plug-in toys, but the inventor would look to an electrical engineer for advice.

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15.1.4: Seeking a Second Opinion

Suppose you see this headline in the Weekly World News: "Tot Falls 5,000 Feet and Lives!" Should you believe it? Well, that depends on what it means. Does it mean that the tot fell from a plane without a parachute? If so, you'd expect this stunt tot to be a flat tot, wouldn't you? But maybe the tot did have a parachute. If so, the story could well be true. When you see such a headline, you are sensitized, or should become sensitized, to wonder whether some crucial information has been left out.

Even if you were to stop and read the story and find out that the tot did not have a parachute but still lived, you should be cautious about believing it because your common sense says this feat is highly improbable. Before you put much faith in a story like this, you should get some independent verification. That is, you should get a reliable second opinion that supports the story.

What is a reliable second opinion? An expert's opinion would be one. Getting the information from an independent, credible source will help with the reliability. For example, the opinion of an eyewitness interviewed by your local newspaper's reporter, and not by the supermarket tabloid's reporter, should be a good enough second opinion for you to believe the story about the tot's fall. A videotape would also be independent verification. Remember, though, that the more improbable the belief you are considering adopting, the better the evidence has to be. Without the better evidence, then your belief should be lukewarm. A video camera file can be doctored; even three eyewitnesses sometimes can be mistaken about interpreting what they saw. There are videotapes and eyewitnesses who have seen a sea monster in Loch Ness in Scotland, but the experts still believe there is no sea monster there.

Three testimonials of UFOs from members of the UFO Society should be given considerably less credibility than testimonials from three independent people who have no special interest in promoting UFOs.

Time is also an important factor. Verifying the falling tot story is much easier than verifying whether St. Matthew wrote down the Gospel while visiting Mt. Ararat two thousand years ago. Verifying current events is easier than verifying most historical events, because the trail isn't so cold. There are more traces of current events, more eyewitnesses, more available data, more evidence to find, less need to rely on faith.

Suppose the following were another headline from the Weekly World News:

**CASHIER FIRED BECAUSE OF HER BIG BUST
WINS BACK PAY**

Is this headline inconsistent with anything you know? No, and it is not especially improbable, only mildly surprising. So you should believe the headline. It is unlikely that the newspaper is wrong about everything. Still, the tabloid is not a sufficiently reliable source for you to believe anything of importance without first checking elsewhere. If it were important to you to get the facts right about the big bust story, you should not rely solely on this paper's report. Try harder to verify it. Get more information from more reliable and independent sources. Would six more copies of the same issue of the Weekly World News make the story six times more likely to be true?

In 2016, the Stanford University History Education Group published their study of whether American high school students could assess the strength of the evidence offered in support of a news story. Here is one of their famous examples. The students were informed that on March 11, 2011, there was a large nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan. The students were then told that four years later the following image of misshapen flowers with the accompanying comment was posted on a public photo sharing website:

Fukushima Nuclear Flowers

Not much more to say, this is what happens when flowers get nuclear birth defects.

The Stanford Group asked high school students to assess whether the post is strong evidence of Fukushima Daiichi causing an environmental problem. Too many students said it was. Only 20% of the students viewing the picture thought to ask whether

the picture was really from that area of Japan or even from Japan at all, how it was determined that nuclear radiation caused the unusual shape, or whether there are flowers like this at places far from nuclear power plants. In short, too many high school students were uncritical thinkers.

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15.1.5: Trust Me, I Know It on Good Authority

When a woman says you should believe her because she knows it on good authority, you need to mentally ask yourself these four questions. If you get the right answers, then it is OK to believe her.

- Is her authority, an authority on the proper subject?
- Would she know if the authorities disagreed on this subject?
- Can you trust her to have quoted the authority correctly?
- Can the authority be trusted to have told her the truth?

The Defense Minister of Iran may be the world's best authority on whether his country is stockpiling bio-terror weapons, but he may also be the last person to tell the truth about the weapons.

If you get yes answers to your four questions, then you should believe what she has to say, and you are justified in saying you know it, too. Too often you have to answer one of the questions with “I don’t know,” and then you should withhold your belief in what she says or else believe it only tentatively until you can get your questions answered.

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15.1.6: Suspending Belief

When it comes to improbable claims, the first principle is that the burden of proof in producing the good evidence is on the shoulders of whoever makes the claim or adopts the belief. If you decide to adopt a belief, you should have found enough evidence to justify your doing so. It is not good enough to say, "Well, it's never been proved false, so I believe it." Without the evidence, you should suspend your belief. That is, if you are in a situation in which somebody makes an improbable claim but doesn't supply good evidence to back it up, don't believe it until somebody gives you enough evidence or until you get it for yourself. Don't believe it even if you might like to believe it. I'd like to believe that my sweet Aunt Emma is telling me the truth when she introduces her new friends as aliens from beyond our galaxy, but rationally I should not believe her until they show me some ID.

Just kidding. If someone says, "I saw a green alien from outer space," you properly should ask for some proof. If the person responds with, "Prove I didn't," then they are not accepting their burden of proof and are improperly trying to place it on your shoulders. This kind of error in reasoning is called the "fallacy of misplaced burden of proof."

Exercise 15.1.6.1

Here are three reports from a friend of yours, Ramone let's say. All are bizarre, but some are more improbable than others. Which report is the most improbable, and why? The focus of these questions is not on whether Ramone is being truthful but on whether what he says is actually true.

1. I saw my uncle die because he threw salt on the ground. He did it when he and I were camping. My grandmother told us never to throw salt away or else something bad would happen soon. The very next day after the camping trip he was hit by that truck on the freeway.
2. Hey, you won't believe this. Less than ten minutes ago, I saw Mary, the one who moved away to Germany last year. Remember she went to be a gymnastics coach in Berlin? Well, she was running into the grocery store as I drove past on the freeway. She's changed a lot. She looks ten years older, and she has a plastic, prosthetic leg.
3. I swear it's true. The president of the United States called at 3 a.m. this morning. He asked me to join the Defense Intelligence Agency and spy on Bulgarian businessmen visiting Toronto. What a surprise; I've never done any spying in my life, and I don't even know where Bulgaria is. I'm just a shoe salesman, but today is my special day. My brother Bill was home when he called. Ask him.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Answers

Exercise 15.1.6.1

Answer (a) is the strangest. Although all three stories are unusual, the spy story and the plastic leg story are not as unusual as the salt story because the salt story violates our basic understanding about what can cause what in the world; the spy story and the plastic leg story are merely about unusual human actions. Answer (a) is unlikely because our background knowledge about what causes death tells us that throwing salt isn't the kind of thing that will easily hurt anybody. Regarding (b), Ramone probably didn't get a very good look at Mary if he was zipping by on the freeway and Mary was running, but this event is not as impossible as a death caused by salt thrown down on the ground the day before. Mary's return from Germany would not be that big of a deal; people do change their plans. Losing her leg could have caused her to lose the gymnastics coaching job. The remark about Mary running with a plastic leg is odd. Answer (c) is probably an unreliable report, too. If spy agencies want someone to spy for them, they don't usually call on the phone, they don't give the candidate a specific assignment without first making sure he (or she) can keep his mouth shut, and they don't have the president make the call. So this whole story is very unusual. Ramone is joking, or he takes you for a fool. His brother is probably in on the joke, or else he is naive

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15.1.7: Getting Solid Information about Whom to Vote For

A leaflet shows up in your apartment mailbox a week before the election. It says, "David Marr will be the ONE judge accountable to the people, not the politicians." The flyer says Marr will be a "judge for the people" and that "YOU should decide who serves in this courthouse." On the basis of this solid information, you are ready to vote for or against David Marr. Wait, there's more. The leaflet contains two pictures of him smiling. OK, now you are ready to vote. Hmmm.

Suppose an election is coming up and you want to make an informed choice about the ballot measures and candidates. How do you do it? You might ask your parents or friends for advice, then follow their recommendations if they agree. But if you want to think things through for yourself, you should seek out other sources of information. Would it help to reserve one evening before the election and sit down with all the campaign leaflets you have collected during the previous month? If you use these leaflets to figure out who stands where on the issues, you will get frustrated. All candidates sound good, too good, in their own literature. You won't even be able to figure out what the important issues are this way, although you may get some inkling when one candidate's literature attacks the opposition. The government's voter pamphlets that are mailed free to all registered voters can be more helpful. They let the candidates speak to whatever issues they desire, and the statements are fairly informative, given their short length.

Are there better sources of information? Yes. Consider television, their news, not their ads. The advantage of TV is that you can see the candidate in action and get some emotional connection. TV information comes in two forms: paid ads and news. The paid TV advertisement is mostly junk food for the eye and mind—fast and appealing, but nutritionally barren. In fact, the techniques used to sell senators are practically the same as those used to sell soft drinks. Any political advertiser worth a sound bite is aiming for your heart strings.

Commenting on this point, President Nixon's advisor William Gavin wrote, "Voters are basically lazy, basically uninterested in making an effort to understand what we're talking about." In another memo he said,

Reason requires a higher degree of discipline, of concentration; impression is easier. Reason pushes the viewer back, it assaults him, it demands that he agree or disagree; impression can envelop him, invite him in, without making an intellectual demand.... When we argue with him, we demand that he make the effort of replying. We seek to engage his intellect, and for most people this is the most difficult work of all. The emotions are more easily roused, closer to the surface, more malleable.¹

TV news is a better source of political information than TV ads—which is not to say it is a good source. It's more nutritional, but still junk food. The average bloc of uninterrupted speech by presidential candidates in the TV news is only ten seconds. Ten seconds is enough time for a slogan, but not enough for thoughtful argumentation. TV commentators use these ten-second "sound bites" of the candidate to provide flavor, although they know it is not much information. Commentators believe they can say it better than the candidate; they give themselves a good twenty seconds, and the candidate ten. Their primary fear is that the public, with its short attention span, will click the channel changer once the candidate starts going on and on.

The big-budget campaign managers know the territory. For example, they may have crafted an excellent strategy for getting their candidate on TV without the candidate having to answer tough questions. Suppose a TV station has a well-informed reporter who knows just what hard-ball questions to ask, given the chance. When the campaign manager learns that particular reporter is out in the field covering some event, the campaign manager calls the station manager to say that the candidate is nearby and can be at the station in 15 minutes. The station manager cannot resist the opportunity. He calls over to his news staff and says, "Andy, get ready; you're on in 15 minutes in a one-on-one with the senator." This reporter in the station will be more apt to treat the senator as a visiting dignitary and will throw more softball questions and fewer of the hardball questions than the well-informed reporter would have. In the next news broadcast an hour or so later, the senator probably will look great during those crucial ten seconds. Another victory for the campaign manager and another loss for the viewing public.

TV news is dangerous for the public in other ways. After having watched nightly news stories about a candidate, too many viewers falsely believe they know enough to make a decent choice.

TV occasionally does provide high-quality reporting; but watch out for the ordinary TV news.

OK, if you can't rely on the ordinary TV news you are most apt to watch, how about the newspaper? There you go. But what part of the newspaper? How about the list of recommendations in the newspaper's editorial page? This list usually appears in the days before the election. To be safe in adopting your paper's recommendations, you need to know the political ideology of the publisher that drives the recommendation process. Is your ideology the same as his or hers? Can you read a newspaper and figure out its ideology? That takes a great deal of skill. Better to ask someone who knows more about this than you do.

Like computer blogs, the newspaper columns written with a columnist's byline are another source of information. The writer of a newspaper column is like an editorial writer—opinions can be mixed in with the facts. Libel laws are looser for columnists; often they can get away with saying what a regular news story cannot. Columns can be helpful sources of information if the columnist is careful to give reasons for his or her opinions and is careful to distinguish the reasons from the opinions. The problem with editorials and columns that offer advice is that even if they give you reasons for the advice, you always have to worry that they are covering up other reasons that weigh against their advice.

New stories, on the other hand, are supposed to be more sanitized, cleansed of opinions, full of facts, and more reliable. Very often they are. The best news stories are usually the ones that appear early in the campaign. In these, the writers interview the candidates and probe for positions on the important campaign issues. Writers of these early stories are usually the best informed of all the reporters on a newspaper's staff. Early on, the candidate isn't slinging so much mud and is trying to show the highly politicized voters, especially those who give campaign contributions or volunteer in campaigns, that he or she has significant positions on key issues and is a credible candidate. Later in the campaign, the atmosphere changes. The least politicized voters, those who are undecided as the election nears and those whose decision to vote for a candidate or ballot measure could be easily changed, are the primary target of the bulk of the campaign's media blitz. For these voters, the campaign will create short, memorable slogans plus blasts at the opposition. The newspapers (and web pages) then react and give primary attention to these slogans, to the mudslinging, and to the rise and fall of the polls. The issues take a back-burner.

When Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton was campaigning for the U.S. presidency, much of the early coverage of his campaign was about whether he had slept with a woman who had been paid for her story to appear on the front page of a supermarket tabloid. The average voter kept thinking, "I want to hear about the issues," but the news reporters kept covering the sex angle. "This is all inane, stupid and insulting, and I hope the American people jam it down you-all's throat," said Bob Slagle, the chairman of the Democratic Party in Texas, when speaking to the press. "The national press corps is acting like a common street gossip in a small town." Meanwhile, the nation's top newspapers were trying to set things straight. On the same day, The Boston Globe's frontpage headline said, "Poll Shows Clinton's Lead Undiminished," while across town The Boston Herald's main headline said, "Clinton on the Run." Each paper frames the issues according to its publisher's politics. We get inconsistent headlines. So, we voters have a tough time, don't we?

The searching reader will have to look back on page fourteen in the newspaper for any in-depth reporting of the issues, and, even then, we readers need to be aware that story placement can be affected by the paper's editorial policy. Busy readers usually read only the headlines, and a story's favorable treatment of a candidate can be torpedoed by an editor's unfavorable headline, regardless of what the reporter put into the story.

Other significant barriers block the sincere, interested reader who tries to use news stories as a source of information. Reporters too often fail to write stories that take the trouble to explain the issues, and it's not just that those stories aren't viewed by readers and editors as sufficiently entertaining. Explaining the news is harder work than simply stating what is new—the news. Also, there is little reward for writing in-depth reports. The reporter rarely gets a pat on the back from fellow reporters with the accompanying remark, "Beautiful piece of writing." There is no glamour in this part of the business.

In addition, a different factor obscures the public's vision of what is going on. The reporter's notion of objectivity gets in the way. When there are two candidates in an election, reporters often believe they must give equal weight and equal column space to both sides. The idea is to present the facts, then back off and let the voters decide for themselves. Unfortunately, this notion of fairness gets in the way when a campaign gets dirty and one candidate starts making false accusations about the opponent. The reporter sees what is going on but rarely will tell the public directly. Instead, when the attacked candidate tries to respond and say that the accusations are not true, the reporter will treat this reaction on a par with the smears themselves and will run the story with a headline "Mud flies," falsely suggesting to the public that both sides are engaging in negative campaigning. Paul Krugman once joked that "if one party declared that the earth was flat, the headlines would read Views Differ on Shape of Planet." The reporters are reluctant to tell what is really going on because they believe doing so would be putting their own judgment into a story, which it would be. However, the reporters often really are the only experts in touch with the readers, so if the experts won't

tell the readers what is really going on, who will? Perhaps that is where the columnists and editors come in. Hmmm.

All in all, though, more good information is available than we are likely to take the trouble to use. The five best sources of information, not ranked in order of importance, are (1) the newspaper stories and magazine articles that profile the candidates and discuss the issues long before election day; (2) government voter pamphlets; (3) extended TV news programs; (4) public debates (but not the thirty-second TV summaries of the debates); and (5) the arguments of editors, columnists, and well-informed friends. All these are better than TV ads, campaign leaflets, blog entries, and sound bites on the ordinary TV news.

¹ From “The Lie Factory” How Politics Became a Business” by Jill Lepore, The New Yorker, September 24, 2012, p. 59.

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15.1.8: Fake News and Misinformation

Too often what looks like news is not news. It has been faked, and we have been misinformed. Someone wants us to believe it even though they know it is not true. We critical thinkers, need to keep up our defenses and not be naïve.

This was published as a news photo,
but the original photo did not contain a flag.

In Chicago back in 2017, four black teenagers kidnapped and tortured a white teenager. Although the teenagers who committed this terrible act had no connection to the organization Black Lives Matter, an opponent of that organization quickly created a social network posting with the hashtag #BLMKidnapping about how the organization kidnapped and tortured a white person in Chicago. This led to a very large conversation about the topic, and the size of the conversation led other news organizations to repeat the claim that Black Lives Matter was thought to be involved. Repeating misinformation in new places made the misinformation more believable to many persons. The high interest in the story became news itself. Comments that BLM might not have been involved were little noticed among the noise in the tweetstorm. In fact, BLM was not involved.

Misinformation goes beyond the occasional hoax. It is a systematic attack on our brains. We critical thinkers seek the news, not the fake news. It is not always easy for us to tell the difference, but the more we know about fake news and how it is created, and the more pro-active we are, the easier it will be for us.

Exercise 15.1.8.1

Here is a critical thinking question about the following newspaper report.

In May 2016, a Facebook page called Heart of Texas urged its nearly 254,000 followers to rise up against what it considered to be an urgent cultural menace. A mosque in Houston (Texas) had opened up a new library, and Heart of Texas planned to protest. "Stop Islamization of Texas," it warned.

Word of the protest spread quickly, but supporters of the mosque were also ready to mobilize. "Bigots are planning to intimidate through weaponized fear this Saturday at noon," one of them wrote on Reddit. The post linked to a Facebook page for United Muslims of America, a group that said it was planning a counter-protest for the same time and place.

...Heart of Texas wasn't a real group, as Business Insider later reported. United Muslims of America is a real organization, but the Facebook page promoting the counter-protest was not run by the actual group, as The Daily Beast found. Instead, according to documents made public last week by the Senate Intelligence Committee, both the pro- and anti-mosque protests had been planned and promoted by Russian trolls.

...A few dozen real Americans did protest that Saturday in Houston. videos of the protest show real emotion—people on opposite sides of the street screaming, swearing and truly angry to have to share the country with the bozos on the other side.

...In response to Heart of Texas' "Stop Islamization" post, a Facebook user upset with the Houston mosque posted a comment suggesting that it be blown up.

—By Farhad Manjoo, "The Drama of Reality TV, Brought to You by Russia," The New York Times, November 9, 2017, pp. B1 and B9. Photo by Jon Shapley, Houston Chronicle.

Trolls are people paid to spread comments on social media platforms such as Facebook. Now for the question about all this: Were news reports of the feelings of the Houston demonstrators an example of fake news?

a. yes b. no

Answer available at the end of this section.

We learned today that the Jefferson County sheriff is part owner of a brothel in nearby South Chesterton, and he seems to be behind the training of high school girls to be prostitutes. Now he's running for Congress. No surprise that the Democratic Party is funding his campaign. Oh, I forgot to mention that a manager of Burger Queen in Florida admitted that her company has been using 20% Vietnam dog meat and 5% Kenya zebra meat in all its burgers. Not just this year, but for the last twenty years! Yuk!

Interesting? Yes. True? No. Tweets with false news spread faster and spread to more people than real news, according to researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab who did a large study of Twitter stories spanning 2006 to 2017. "It's sort of disheartening at first to realize how much we humans are responsible," said Sinan Aral, a professor at the M.I.T. Sloan School of Management and an author of the study. His point: we humans are inclined to prefer false news to real news. To quote from this study by the M.I.T. researchers,

The data comprise ~126,000 stories tweeted by ~3 million people more than 4.5 million times. We classified news as true or false using information from six independent fact-checking organizations that exhibited 95 to 98% agreement on the classifications. Falsehood diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information, and the effects were more pronounced for false political news.

-"The Spread of True and False News Online," by Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral, Science, 09 Mar 2018, page 1146.

Real news tends to be less interesting than fake news. It's exciting to read that a famous sports star burned the American flag in the locker room and the Secretary of State had a pedophilia group hidden in a room in a pizza restaurant. Interesting but fake.

If you cannot quickly sort the real from the fake because it is not about your area of expertise, then you are apt to look for help. Most persons do not know an expert who can tell the difference between genuine and fake, so they usually look to the groups they already identify with for what to believe about a story. They ask, "What are my people saying about this?" or "What do the places I trust say about it?" Most persons will not check for themselves. Who has the time? The powers behind the fake news know this, and they exploit it. They design fake news that is especially interesting to special groups of social media users, news that the users would wish were true. Who doesn't want their enemy to look bad?

The most effective creator of fake news is someone who successfully slips fake news in among the genuine news at news sites. News sites sometimes find the news for themselves, but because doing original journalistic research is expensive, very often a news site will pick up news from another news site and publish it on their own site. In this way a fake news story that was embedded into one of those news sites will more likely to spread across the news media, and occasionally to news sites we, or "our people," use and trust.

Luckily for us critical thinkers, the very best sources of news have their own defenses up and do not re-broadcast fake news. At the very least they will precede the news item with the phrase, "According to so and so," or "As reported in...." Also, they will be clear about when they are offering news and when they are offering advertising and when they are offering more disguised advertising that is usually called "sponsored content." Ads do not come to us with a tag that says, "Hey, I am an ad," do they? So, it takes some critical thinking to separate them from the news.

Think about that last Twitter message you read. How do you know whether it came from a real human user or from a re-tweeting bot [that is, a software robot, an automated account] that automatically generates spam to make an issue seem to be more popular than it really is? A bot can turn a minor hashtag into a trending hashtag that catches the eye of journalists who re-mention the issue on more mainstream news sites. A trending item is one that gets the clicks, and the trending items spread more easily to a bigger audience. The bot-maker thinks, "Create a trend, and you create believers."

Here are some very unreliable sources of information in the United States: the newspaper National Enquirer, the newspaper Weekly World News, and the website World News Daily Report. Here are some very reliable sources of information: peer-reviewed scientific journals, the magazine The Economist, and these four daily newspapers: The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, and The Washington Post. There are, of course, many reliable sources of information that are not American. "Peer reviewed" means that other experts in the relevant field act as referees who must approve in advance the publication of the article. The best peer reviewing is via blind refereeing, which means that, during the referee process or decision process about whether to publish, the author is never told the names of the referees, and the referees are never told the name of the author. This promotes objectivity. Unfortunately, no method will absolutely guarantee objectivity.

Why should Americans believe that their traditional news organizations are trustworthy? The reporter Steve Inskeep at National Public Radio answered this question:

Many news organizations produce stories that are checked before publication. Others don't. It's a big deal. Hiring an editorial staff

shows the publication's respect for you.... The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, for example, have different owners, audiences, stories, perspectives and obsessions. Both have made mistakes and omissions; but both send reporters out into the world and back them up with an editorial process that catches and corrects many errors. This means both can be informative, regardless of your politics or theirs.

When we say a traditional news source backs up its reporters with an editorial process that catches errors, what does this mean? It means that the editors press their reporters to double check the reports, and it means the editors recommend the reporter get at least a second, independent source for any unusual claims about situations that the reporter is not a direct witness to. Unlike so many blogs, the mainstream news organizations employ professionals who are devoted to separating fact from fiction. And for them, making up sources is a great sin.

We critical thinkers need to be alert to the difference between claims that are backed up by reasons and claims that are not. If we are given reasons, we should ask ourselves whether those reasons are good enough. Also, we should ask ourselves, "Am I forwarding this twitter feed to my friends because it is interesting and because I know it to be true, or only because it is interesting?" Think before pressing the "share" button. Does that tweet you received about "breaking news," even contain a link to a credible news source, or is it just an interesting claim?

Some news stories that we suspect could be fake can be checked by us for accuracy by our visiting the websites Snopes.com or FactCheck.org or Politifact.com. They specialize in verifying which interesting news stories are true and which are misleading or totally false. Be alert that some fake news stories might say, "as verified by Snopes.com," even though Snopes.com actually has done no such thing, and the faker is saying this just to discourage any attempt by us to do more checking.

Nobody can check regularly on hundreds of news sources, nor even read or view them. Most people will find one or two news sources they trust, and then put their investigative skills on cruise control and just absorb whatever those news sources say. This procedure can be very efficient time-wise, but it occasionally can be dangerous. We need to do our own checking once in a while, even with the news sites we usually trust, especially for the really important news that might cause us to say, "That news means my congressperson is a criminal," or "If that's true, then it was their country who provoked our country, not the other way around, so we need to retaliate now," or "That means that what he did is the reason why people like me don't have a better job."

Unfortunately, there are news organizations who have decided that profit is their main goal and that it is more profitable to get their audience to feel informed than to be informed. As noted above, acquiring information is expensive. Having their own professional, investigative reporters rather than just writers or "news anchors" is a large, extra expense. It is much cheaper simply to re-broadcast some other organization's news, and to re-shape it so that one's own audience is told what to believe. The audience leaves feeling informed without being informed. We critical thinkers cannot usually spot this behavior with just a few interactions with the news organization. It takes many interactions and a great deal of sophisticated critical thinking on our part in order to tell which specific news organizations emphasize cost-effective re-shaping of news and which organizations gather news themselves or are very careful about which news sources they themselves use.

If we are checking on a political news item for ourselves, it can be helpful to see whether the item is considered to be news by sources that do not have our own politics. Regarding American TV news organizations, MSNBC is left-wing, CNN is middle of the road, and Fox News is right-wing. If all three report it, then it is probably true, but if it appears on MSNBC News, let's say, and not Fox News, that isn't a good reason to believe it is not true. It might be true but not be reported on by Fox simply because it is less interesting to them or goes against their politics.

It can be an eye-opening experience to see how the very same story is treated so differently by the above three news organizations. No news source is value-free. Their politics intrude in the phrasing, in what headline is chosen, and in what information is not mentioned—in how they "frame" the news.

The spread of fake news from fraudulent sources has been a problem ever since civilization began, but it is only a symptom: The larger problem is that too many people will doubt a claim simply because it does come from establishment sources—governments, scientists, daily newspapers, TV news programs—when in fact these are reliable authorities. These skeptical people are being naïve when they dismiss real news from traditional sources that are trustworthy. Their alienation from "the establishment" makes them easy receptacles for accepting fake news and rejecting real news.

On the other hand, in many countries the government is too often involved in promoting propaganda and misinformation. The government in turn pressures the newspapers and TV stations they control. If you are living in this situation, then there is good reason to be alienated from the establishment and to be less trustful of its news. Here is a BuzzFeed [link](#) to a video showing the Egyptian Minister of Culture telling a crowd that the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton admitted to creating the terrorist organization ISIS (Islamic State). Lebanese media were spreading the same story. How do you know she didn't create ISIS?

Were you there to see for yourself?

Well, you can go to [FactCheck.org](https://factcheck.org) | Search | Clinton ISIS, and read what FactCheck has to say about whether she did.

Over the years, the U.S. has had its share of corruption within its news establishment, but a smaller share than in the average country.

Critical thinkers should be on the alert for reports containing denunciations of "the right" or "the left" or "Washington" or "the media" or "their supporters." These denunciations should be viewed with suspicion and greatly discounted. Good reporters do not appeal to these vague terms and are more specific about who is making a claim about what.

To repeat the point made earlier about double checking, we critical thinkers have a responsibility to occasionally do some checking ourselves on the reporters and their sources. If we check the occasional claim by viewing the reporter's own sources for ourselves and by trying to find an independent source who covered the same issue, then we can assign more trust to this reporter in the future.

Critical thinkers should follow President Ronald Reagan's advice: "trust but verify." That is, do not always mistrust what someone says, but do demand verification of their claim before we buy it hook, line, and sinker—especially if the claim is surprising and, if we were to trust it, then we would have to reject many of our other beliefs.

A single fact seems puny compared to our ideology—the large set of our beliefs that helps define our worldview. Unfortunately, too many of us, when confronted with a fact that runs counter to our ideology, will immediately discount that fact as our opponent's partisan opinion. We will not take the trouble to do any of our own fact checking. It is always easier to hunker down secure with our ideology than to take a challenging comment seriously and check on it for ourselves.

What about confronting the person you believe is responsible for promoting fake news? This can be a dangerous thing to do depending on the political situation in which you live. In some countries you could get arrested just for confronting that person. But let's suppose you are in the United States. In the U.S., the powers behind the fake news, the people who employ bloggers and newscasters to push false news at you, never will be able to have you arrested even if they would like to, but they never will confess to what they are doing when confronted. Most likely they will ignore you. However, sometimes they will attack you. They will yell back; or, in a more public setting, instead of yelling back, they will respond in flowery, formal language such as, "It is clear that absurdity is no prohibition on the actions of you and your sources." The counter from the faker is very often to say that your facts are just partisan opinions. The faker will try to turn the tables. If that happens, you two are not having a reasoned interchange, and you probably should follow the advice of the American Revolutionary and colonist Thomas Paine:

To argue with a man who has renounced the use and authority of reason, and whose philosophy consists in holding humanity in contempt, is like administering medicine to the dead.

But if you have no effect on the faker, at least your discoveries will have a positive effect on you, yourself. You will learn better how to separate the genuine news from the fake. You will better understand that facts are something more solid than mere opinions of the people who hold microphones.

You can learn a bit about fake news by looking at the publishing situation from the perspective of the originator of the fake news. Put yourself in the shoes of the faker. Why do you produce fake news? Because you believe the end justifies the means. You believe that achieving your goal justifies using unethical methods to achieve it.

Once you have created your fake news, which is, let's say, an article smearing a political candidate who is opposed by the people who hired you, the best way to get it out there circulating among the news outlets is to send it to a news organization that has low investigative standards and that will see your story as good news, or as the sort of story that entertains their intended audience. They will accept your story without checking on it very much, so long as it seems plausible to them. Then, hopefully, other news organizations will pick up your story from that first news organization and use it for their sites. Now your story has momentum. Another successful day for you. If it goes viral, you might get a raise.

However, suppose later that some self-styled critical thinker or some other media people come back at you and demand to know your evidence. You don't have any. So, what do you do? The only rational response is to stop talking to those people, isn't it? Or you call your doctor—your spin doctor whose primary skill is deflection of criticism and counterattack against the critic.

OK, step back out of the shoes of the faker, and now ask yourself, "Would I take a high-paying job as the creator of fake news?"

Answers

Exercise 15.1.8.1

No, the protesters' actions and emotions were genuine. What was fake news were the postings by the Russian trolls who were engaged in an online disinformation campaign. It is a cost-effective strategy for Russia, says U.S. Senator Angus Stanley King, Jr. of Maine: "For the price of one F-35 airplane, the Russians can hire 5,000 hackers."

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15.1.9: Review of Major Points

Most of what we can legitimately claim to know is based on what other people tell us because we have not verified the information for ourselves. Legitimacy is a matter of degree, as is the continuum from mere opinion to solid knowledge. This chapter explored these points. It clarified the principles of charity and fidelity, and it considered the intricacies of assessing unusual claims. Our judgments of improbability depend on our background knowledge and the evidence available to us. When a claim is inconsistent with our background knowledge, we judge the claim to be improbable. Our most reliable source of information is our own observations, but when these are not available, then we turn to other sources of information, preferably the reliable, popular science magazines and the traditional news sources. Usually we accept a claim based on the credibility of the sources who tell us to accept the claim. The reliability and credibility of magazines, newspapers, TV programs, and websites differ radically; with the less credible ones, we should get independent verification, a second opinion from a reliable source, before accepting any of their unusual claims. We always need to be alert for fake news. The more credible media aim to support their controversial information by getting it from two or more independent sources. The more knowledge we have, and thus the closer our body of background knowledge approaches that of the experts, the better will be our own judgments. Anecdotes of people's experiences are not as good evidence as statistical reports. When we don't have good evidence for a claim, we should suspend belief, or we should continue with our disbelief if we already have some reason to disbelieve it. Getting useful information about whom to vote for is very difficult, but we've seen a few examples that tell us what to be on the lookout for, and we've learned that news about candidates early in an election race is usually more useful than news late in the race. The facts—the objective truths—are our goal, and we critical thinkers need to be on the alert against those people who reject objectivity and see it all as a game of pushing opinions on others in an effort to be influential. This alertness demands quite a bit from us critical thinkers because we human beings are not born to be objective creatures. We need self-discipline to overcome our natural instincts to overestimate what's wrong, to attack anyone who criticizes us, and to over-rely on our gut feelings.

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anecdote A report of an individual's own experience, a firsthand report.

credibility A person's credibility on some issue is their ability to offer solid grounds for deciding the issue. Credibility is a matter of degree, and it involves both the honesty of the person and how much of an expert they are.

fallacy of misplaced burden of proof Committing the error of trying to get someone else to prove you are wrong, when it is your responsibility to prove you are correct.

fake news: Non-news, especially disinformation presented as if it were news. It is either a lie or a misrepresentation of a situation.

principle of fidelity The principle requiring you to preserve the intended meaning of the speaker's original statements when you are analyzing them.

principle of charity The principle that says to interpret a claim in its best light. If it seems obviously false, try to find a re-interpretation that makes it reasonable without violating the principle of fidelity by putting words into the claimant's mouth that the claimant would not accept.

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15.1.11: Exercises

1. Do one, but only one, of the following two parts, as directed by your instructor: (a) Find an example of propaganda; say where you found it; and explain why it is propaganda. (b) Find a new example of propaganda that is not discoverable by searching the Internet for the phrase "example of propaganda;" say where you found it; and explain why it is propaganda.

■ 2. Create a single sentence that is a rewrite of the following peculiar sentence; your sentence should simultaneously apply both the principles of charity and fidelity:

The criminal trial of Amy Boycott began yesterday in Illinois and Indiana, making headlines in both states.

■ 3. Consider the following sentence: "I'm not alive today." The sentence is strange. Which of the following sentences would count as being an interpretation that applies both fidelity and charity?

I'm not alive tomorrow.

I'm alive today but not alive today.

I'm not very animated today.

I'm not under arrest today.

■ 4. If Darryl tells me his father carries a cane, and I tell Samantha that Darryl's father carries a walking stick, have I violated the principle of fidelity?

5. The statement below is apparently contradictory because it suggests that a cheetah is faster than a dog but not faster than a dog. If you wished to remove the greyhound comment while rephrasing the statement, which one of the following is the best way to do it while being charitable and using the principle of fidelity?

The cheetah is the fastest land animal even faster than a greyhound, but the cheetah in our zoo is sick and cannot run as fast as a dog.

- a. All cheetahs run fast, but the cheetah in our zoo is sick and cannot run fast.
- b. The average cheetah runs faster than the average of any other kind of land animal, but the cheetah in our zoo is sick and cannot run as fast as most dogs.
- c. The cheetah is the fastest land animal, but not the fastest water animal or flying animal. The cheetah in our zoo is sick.
- d. The cheetah is not the fastest land animal, although some are very fast, and the cheetah in our zoo is sick and cannot run as fast as a dog.
- e. Some cheetahs are fast, and some are not; for example, the cheetah in our zoo is sick and cannot run as fast as a dog.

6. Create a dialogue in which the speaker clearly fails to properly apply the principle of charity. Don't mention the principle during the dialogue, but at the end identify where the failure occurs and why you are justified in saying it occurs there.

7. Visit the Internet or a local supermarket's magazine rack, or some other place, and find what you take to be the most preposterous claim you've read or heard this week (outside of this class). State the claim; and identify the source.

8. The more shocking or bizarre the claim, the more apt you should be to demand more and better evidence for it.

- a. true
- b. false

9. Which is more improbable, a claim that Martians are attacking Earth, or a claim that Martians are attacking Earth and that the next U.S. president will be a woman? Say why.

10. Suppose the following paragraph had appeared in a news story on the web pages of the Washington Post, the major daily newspaper of Washington, D.C. Do you have any comments? What reasons do you have for your comments? (No, you don't get any more precise directions than this. You will be graded on your depth of insight in regard to the course material as it applies here.)

A man who had been in a coma for six weeks was saved yesterday by exorcism from a demon trying to kill him. A doctor and two psychics drove the demon out of the man and into a rat, which began shrieking until it was burned to death, at which point the man stood up and began to talk normally.

■ 11. As he was standing in the grocery store checkout line, your neighbor read in a magazine (he doesn't remember which one) that farmers in West Virginia reported encountering visitors from outer space. Your neighbor asks you where he can go to find out if anybody has ever really seen extraterrestrials. Which of the following would be the most reliable source of information to recommend to your neighbor?

- a. A bestseller called *Space Creatures Terrorized My Baby!*
- b. Your uncle who has many friends in West Virginia who are farmers.
- c. A U.S. army radar screen operator.
- d. A catholic priest who recently wrote an article in *Scientific American* magazine titled "Is There Life beyond Earth?"
- e. A scriptwriter for the movie *E. T.*

12. Rank the following three headlines in order from most to least bizarre. Defend your ranking.

■ 13. Explain the point of this famous quotation by the philosopher George Santayana: "Skepticism is the chastity of the intellect."

14. Rank the following sources of information in terms of their believability or credibility in regard to whether the U.S. banking system is becoming less stable. You may need to go to outside sources to learn more about them.

- a. *Weekly World News* (weekly supermarket tabloid)
- b. Radio Baghdad (radio station in Iraq run by the Iraqi government)
- c. *The San Francisco Chronicle* (daily newspaper)
- d. *The Nation* (magazine of political analysis)
- e. *Huffington Post* (political news website)

Put the letter of the most credible source first or highest on your list.

15. Scientists generally believe that (i) there are no fire-breathing dragons or abominable snowmen and that (ii) there are no ghosts.

a drawing of a ghost

Scientists believe this despite many reports by people claiming to have seen these unusual beings. Scientists believe one of the two much more strongly. Which one, i or ii? Why? Write a short essay explaining and defending your answer. The terms can use some clarification. Make the following assumptions. The abominable snowman is called "Bigfoot" or "Yeti" in other parts of the world. A dragon is an exotic flesh-and-blood animal that looks somewhat like a dinosaur but has special physical abilities such as the ability to fly and the ability to direct a stream of flame outward from its mouth. By the word ghost we mean the soul of a dead person that appears to the rest of us in bodily form except that it cannot be photographed and can be semitransparent.

16. Which is more improbable? (1) a claim that France will attack Canada someday next year, or (2) a claim that France will attack Canada someday next year, and that the next U.S. president will be a man.

17. You receive a telephone call on your answering machine. The speaker says he is from the online fraud department of your bank's credit card division and that there has been some trouble with your account. You are instructed to call the bank toll-free at 888-278-6424. When you phone that number, you are told that someone has charged your card for \$18,550 for a new motorcycle, and you are asked if you accept this charge. When you say you do not, you are told that because of this suspicious activity you will need to be assigned a new credit card number and will be given new cards free of charge. In order to verify your identity, you are asked to supply your home address, your social security number, your card number, and your online password. But for an extra \$6 per month you can purchase insurance against identity fraud. At this point, what should a critical thinker do?

18. You are trying to decide which computer would be best for your church to buy for keeping all its records. Rank all of the following that you might go to for advice in terms of their credibility, and include a few sentences defending your ranking.

- a. A computer column that appears in an online computer magazine.
- b. Your sister who has been a bookkeeper for her local church in Miami for four years.

- c. Your next-door neighbor who has built two computers so far as a hobby.
- d. A salesperson at a computer store.

19. On which issues below is James Shoch more or less credible as a source for you in your decisions on these issues? That is, if he were to give you his advice, how trustworthy and knowledgeable do you guess it would be? Give a 200 word or less defense of your ranking of Shoch's advice on these issues.

James Shoch is a professor in the Government Department at a state university in Northern California. His specialty is contemporary American political parties. He has a Ph.D. degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and taught previously at Dartmouth College. He is the author of the books *Trading Blows: Party Competition and U.S. Trade Policy in a Globalizing Era* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000) and is a co-editor of *What's Left of the Left: Democrats and Social Democrats in Challenging Times* (Duke University Press, 2011). He has published eleven articles in academic journals on American economic, trade, and industrial policy. Over twenty-five years ago he was a political director of the activist organization Democratic Socialists of America. He has spent parts of summers in France, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Turkey, China, and Thailand. His food column in the online culinary page *Eating without Guilt* has over a thousand readers per month. Last year he was awarded the Distinguished Teaching Award at his university, an award given to only one person per year.

- a. Whether Americans prefer Swedish-style food to Greek-style food.
- b. The extent to which the Walmart Corporation influences the balance of trade in the U. S.
- c. Whether the twenty-first century's global climate change will have more effect on the climate of North America or South America.
- d. Has the Democratic Party moved to the left since the election of Barack Obama?
- e. What is a good, cheap Italian restaurant to eat at near M.I.T. next week?
- f. Whether a syllabus in a French History course should require weekly testing of the previously assigned readings.
- g. Which candidate should you vote for in your congressional district in Los Angeles?

20. After moving into a new apartment, you notice that on weekends occasionally your electric lights flicker or slowly dim and then get brighter. You check very carefully for wiring problems and find no problems. Why wouldn't it be OK then to conclude that your apartment is haunted?

■ 21. Discuss the quality of this argument:

The prostitute said she enjoyed having sex with Mayor Smith, so Mayor Smith did have sex with the prostitute.

22. Which of these is least likely to be fake news?

- a. Non-news.
- b. A mistake made accidentally by the New York Times newspaper.
- c. Disinformation presented in the blog "Challenge to the Right" as if it were news.
- d. An intentional misrepresentation of a situation.
- e. A known falsehood about a situation that is presented by a blog in order to seem to be an objective truth.

23. Your instructor has selected five posts on Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp or YouTube. (a) Rank them in order from most trustworthy to least trustworthy. (b) For which would you choose "Like"? (c) You can distinguish junk information from real information, so indicate why you ranked the posts as you did. (d) Indicate what additional information you would get before accepting various claims that were made in the posts.

24. (a) Create your own false news story that is likely to be convincing to others. (b) Your teacher might insert it among other news stories, then ask other class members to find the one that you created.

2 The criminal trial of Amy Boycott began yesterday on the border of Illinois and Indiana, making headlines in both states. This interpretation applies charity by removing the inconsistency, and it applies fidelity by not interpreting the sentence in a way that could not have been intended (as far as you can tell from the evidence available).

3 I'm not very animated today. This gives the sentence a charitable reading without saying something that wasn't meant.

4 No, because a cane is a walking stick.

8 Answer (a). The better evidence is required to overcome the initial obstacle of the claim's being so improbable

11 Answer (d). The article by the priest promises to provide solid information, unlike the sensational book about terrorizing someone's baby. There is no reason to believe that being a priest would unduly influence the author's opinions on this topic. The source of the priest's article, a reputable scientific journal, adds credibility to the priest's comments on this topic. Regarding (b), West Virginia is a big state, so your uncle is not likely to be able to put your neighbor in contact with the right farmers. Even if your uncle could, the information would be valuable only if the farmers said the whole story was false; but if the farmers said the story was true, your neighbor shouldn't accept the story so easily. Such extraordinary claims require extraordinarily good evidence—better evidence than a few stories from the farmers. If their story were backed up by independent investigators from the military and the universities, the story would be much more likely to be true. Regarding (c), the U.S. Army radar operator is likely to have heard stories about other radar operators encountering unidentified objects on their radar screens, but nobody can look at a blip on a radar screen and tell whether it is coming from E.T. So, the best bet is the priest.

13 You can keep your body of beliefs from getting penetrated by a lot of false ideas if you are skeptical and demand decent evidence before accepting the belief.

21 It would be a mistake to say that on the basis of the information in the premises the Mayor did have sex with the prostitute. It would also be a mistake to say that on the basis of the information in the premises the Mayor did not have sex with the prostitute. A better answer would be that the premises give some evidence that the Mayor had sex with the prostitute, but it's not strong evidence because the prostitute might be lying. Better evidence would be some independent evidence such as a witness having seen the Mayor coming out of the prostitute's home at 3:00 pm when he claimed to be elsewhere. Other useful evidence would be that the prostitute has been caught lying about some of her other statements.

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15.2: WRITING TO CONVINCE OTHERS

Writing clearly in a straightforward style is the usual goal when composing a written product, but not always. Sometimes you may want to stand your language on its head to shock or amuse your readers. Or you may want to tell an interesting story; and then you'll need effective narrative devices such as plot, character development, and setting. However, you will have a different focus when you write a business report, a newspaper editorial, or a position paper. Let's focus upon that kind of writing.

It is especially important that your writing be clear and well-structured. It doesn't mean that it should be boring. Writing logically does require paying attention to the style as well as to the structure of the written piece. This chapter offers suggestions about how to improve this kind of writing, but these suggestions are rules of thumb, not rules to be obeyed to the letter.

OK, first things first, but not necessarily in that order. Here is the list of rules that all good writers invariably follow:

1. Be more or less specific.
2. Use not bad grammars.
3. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.
4. Don't use no double negatives.
5. Avoid tumbling off the cliff of triteness into the dark abyss of overused metaphors.
6. Take care that your verb and your subject is in agreement.
7. No sentence fragments.
8. Placing a comma between subject and predicate, is not correct.
9. Who needs rhetorical questions?
10. Use the apostrophe in it's proper place.
11. Avoid colloquial stuff, like totally.
12. Avoid those run-on sentences you know the ones they stop and then start again they should be separated with semicolons.
13. The passive voice should be used infrequently.
14. And don't start sentences with a conjunction.
15. Excessive use of exclamation points can be disastrous!!!!
16. Exaggeration is a million times worse than understatement.
17. Stamp out and eliminate redundancy because, if you reread your work, you will find on rereading that a great deal of repetition can be avoided by rereading and editing, so reread your work and improve it by editing out the repetition you noticed during the rereading.
18. Tis incumbent upon one to employ the vernacular and eschew archaisms.
19. It's not O.K. to use ampersands & abbreviations.
20. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are usually (but not always) an obstacle for readers (and make it harder on readers even if you're being careful) who have the task of understanding your work (article, passage, document, and so forth).

This chapter emphasizes how to create a successful argumentative essay. An argumentative essay is a work of nonfiction prose stating and defending a position on some issue. It is a certain kind of persuasive writing. But persuasive writing is, well, not always persuasive to a critical thinker. As writers and as critical readers, we need to remind ourselves that it is unnatural for people to reach the truth by finding good reasons. What is natural is making up our mind using our gut instincts, then going out to find reasons with which we can bombard our opponents while covering up any reasons that appear to threaten our own beliefs.

15.2.1: Writing with Precision and to Your Audience

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15.2.1: Writing with Precision and to Your Audience

One suggestion for promoting effective writing is to be precise. But how do you follow a suggestion like that? When should you be precise? Where? How? Unfortunately, there is no recipe to follow. About all that can be said is that you should be precise "where appropriate," but you should not be pseudoprecise. Nevertheless, after seeing an example or two below of how to be precise and comparing it with examples of failing to be precise, you will get the point.

Here is a question that is answered precisely and then imprecisely: "How do you get to Bill's house from here?"

RELATIVELY PRECISE Answer: Go six blocks up this street to the first traffic light. Turn right, and it will be the red house with white trim—about in the middle of the next block. It's on your left. Or maybe it's on your right; I can't remember.

RELATIVELY IMPRECISE Answer: You can't miss it. He lives in the house next to my friend Ted. Ted lives on Braithwaite Street. Ted's is the most beautiful house on the block; Bill and Ted practice their electric guitars there in the garage every night. Keep an eye on their phone booth when you're there.

Even though it contains the imprecise terms about and maybe, the first answer is more precise.

Another suggestion is to write to your audience. How do you do so? Well, first you have to decide who your audience is. Don't write as if you might be read by any human being either now or in the future. That's too big an audience. For example, if you are writing a description of Theodore Roosevelt and your audience is all professional historians, you wouldn't bother to mention that he was president before that other Roosevelt, Franklin. However, if your audience is junior high school students, you would make a mistake if you failed to mention this fact about Franklin Roosevelt. When you write a college term paper, assume that your audience is your instructor. With that in mind, you do not need to make elementary points that you might need to make if your audience were your fellow students. You can assume that the instructor is aware of the topic you are writing about but may not have had the specific new ideas you have had. Only by writing for a specific audience can you answer the question "Should I argue [explain, describe] this point, or can I presume it and leave it unsaid?" In answering that question, ask yourself this: "If my audience were right here in front of me and I were talking to them, should I say this now in order to get my idea across?" There is no formula for tailoring your writing product to your audience. Good tailoring is affected by the subject matter, by the characteristics of the audience, and by the purpose of the writing. It's hard to be more precise than this.

Part of what makes writing precise is helpful structure. The structure provides a framework. In the example of directions to Bill's house, the structure in the precise answer is a sequence of steps the reader can follow to get there. The only helpful direction offered in the imprecise answer is to go to somewhere on Braithwaite Street.

Writing should have a specific structure, an overall plan of development, a method of organization. Although there are many acceptable structures, not everything is acceptable. Good readers can readily distinguish an ice sculpture from a puddle. Bad writing leaves these readers with a sense that the writing is all wet and messy.

One usually effective rule of thumb is to mentally divide your own piece of writing into three parts—an introduction, a middle, and an ending. In the introduction you announce your intentions or briefly describe what you are going to say and maybe the motivation for saying it. There you usually present a sketch of your main argument to help guide the reader in what follows. In the middle you provide the details; and in the ending you summarize what you've said and perhaps speculate about its implications or what might follow next. This common structure can be thought of this way: you tell them what you're going to say; then you say it; then you tell them what you've said. This rule gets to be more important the longer the document.

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15.2.1.1: The Introduction

The title or headline is often the first element of an introduction. It gives the audience some idea of what the writing is about and perhaps suggests the main point. The book title *The Chocolate Bible* immediately tells the reader that what is inside will probably have nothing to do with religion but a lot to do with eating and preparing chocolate.

If the same book had been given an overly cute but less precise title such as *Your Face or Mine?* the reader wouldn't have gotten as much information. That information would have to come later, such as in this first sentence of the book:

Almost all of us love chocolate, but how much do you really know about this elixir of the gods?

Such a simple introductory sentence sets the stage by outlining the rough boundaries of the discussion to follow.

Usually a title alone or a single introductory sentence is not sufficient to introduce the reader to the material that will follow. For example, if we want to make clear that *The Chocolate Bible* is a book for manufacturers and marketers of chocolate, not consumers, then the following additional sentences can go a long way toward introducing the book:

You know the subtleties of its taste, and how to manufacture and market it in your area, but what about southern Japan? Northern Japan? What manufacturing techniques and marketing strategies would you change if you wanted to reach the Egyptian market with a similar chocolate product? There is considerable room around the world to create or expand the chocolate market. Will you profit in these new markets, or will your competitor? This book will show you how to successfully produce medium-quality and high-quality cost-effective chocolate for the mass market in a variety of countries on several continents.

Thanks to this introduction we readers now know this is a book about the chocolate business, with emphasis on international marketing and manufacturing. It is not a book intended for consumers.

The introduction limits the scope of the discussion to follow. That is, it provides a context for the writing. It should also give some hint of why it's worth reading. Unless the writer has a captive audience, it is the writer's duty to capture the reader's interest and indicate why the writing should not be ignored. The chocolate book's introduction captures the reader's attention by suggesting that there is money to be made by reading on.

The type of introduction appropriate for one kind of writing might not be appropriate for another. If you are writing a newspaper article, you need to provide a summary of the whole article at the beginning so that editors can cut from the end and not have to cut out material in the middle or beginning. So your intro should contain the who, what, where, when, and how. That way, if the ending of the piece is snipped off, the article won't be hurt substantially; it will still make sense and communicate a lot of information. This same structure is appropriate for many business reports, in which the summary of the costs and the recommendations for changes in the business are made up front for the busy manager who wants to know the bottom line first and the details later.

So, one helpful rule in informative writing is to give the reader the overall picture of the article by clearly announcing your intentions. But don't write this way if you are creating a novel. Here is an introduction to informative writing in the computer business:

This report argues that it is time to divest our interests in peripherals for large computers and concentrate instead on developing peripherals for desktop, laptop, and tablet computers.

This sentence sets up the reader's expectations for what is to follow. When facts and figures are presented later, the reader will have a context to fit them into. Imagine yourself as the reader of a similar report with the same content but without this introduction; the facts and figures are just thrown at you without any explanation of why you should know them. Such an illogical structure would destroy the effectiveness of the report.

In scholarly writing, the introduction also should mention what other scholars have said on the issue you are writing about. Give credit where credit is due, so that the reader can more readily evaluate how your own work fits in or how it challenges other work in the field.

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15.2.1.2: The Middle

The body of the text is where you provide the details and do what you said you would be doing. If you were planning to describe, this is where you place the details of the description. If you were planning to argue, this is where you provide convincing reasons for your claim and perhaps clarify just what the claim is that you are trying to establish. However, when arguing logically, you should concentrate on what ought to convince, not what will convince. Even if you know your audience's prejudices and how to exploit them to get them to do what you want, don't follow this path if you want to be a logical reasoner rather than a propagandist or con artist.

The most common error in creating an argumentative essay is to leave out, or not to adequately develop, the assessment of objections. You'll look narrow-minded to the knowledgeable reader if you plunge ahead with your reasons and show no appreciation for what reasons your opponent might offer.

When you write your essay and argue for some conclusion, be sure you use assumptions that your audience will agree with, or else you ought to do one of two things: (1) defend those assumptions, or (2) mention that they won't be defended even though you realize that in a fuller work they should be.

Suppose your goal is to create an essay that establishes a specific point. How should you structure the essay? The first thing to keep in mind is that you need a fairly clear idea of the content before you can bother with the structure. Once you have that clear idea, then focus on structure. One helpful rule of thumb is that the middle can be structured so the reader is moved by understandable steps from the more obvious to the less obvious. You can establish your essay's important reasons by carefully taking the reader from points of ready agreement to points that are more controversial. At the same time, the flow of argument should usually be from the simple points to the complex points. Without this structure, many of your readers will fall by the side of your road. Your structure is your road, and if readers cannot see where they are going, they will become confused and lose interest in what you have to say. In long or complex pieces it doesn't hurt to occasionally remind readers of what the road is, how far you've gone, and what lies ahead.

Although it is important for your writing to have a clear structure, remember to do first things first: Write first, organize later. Brainstorm first; get your ideas onto paper or into your computer. Later you can go back and tie them together effectively by adding the proper organization.

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15.2.1.3: The Ending

By beginning a paragraph with a phrase such as "To summarize," you signal that all the main points you intended to make have now been made. At this point in your writing you should review and summarize those main ideas, especially if the piece is longer than two pages. Now the reader is ready to stop looking at the trees and refocus on the forest—that is, on whether you've succeeded with the grand program you promised in your introduction. But there is no formula for good writing. An argumentative essay isn't always imperfect if it lacks a summary.

Actually, the phrase "to summarize" is trite; so, you might try to think of an alternative phrase for the transition to the ending.

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15.2.1.4: Digressions

Regarding digression, suppose you are writing a business letter to a supplier explaining how the five generators their company sent you were not the quality you had agreed to purchase. In the middle of this letter, you shouldn't take a weird turn to tell a story about how you were fascinated with generators when you were fourteen years old and how you took one apart and got your first electrical shock. That would be an unreasonable digression because it would be irrelevant. It doesn't speak to the issue even if your digression is interesting.

Digressions take you down some side road and away from the main road. Normally, a digression is a fault in any writing. The reader's mental response to a digression that doesn't give strong hints of its relevance is usually something like "Enough already; now let's get back on track and make some progress."

Exercise 15.2.1.4.1

If you were going to remove the digression in the following business letter, what would you take out?

Dear Mr. Harris:

You recently wrote our company regarding a problem with the transistors we supplied to you for your FC-7D circuit boards. I am sure we can solve your problem.

Our quality control engineers do try to fill orders correctly. Not only do we use the familiar testing via the Z-bar procedure, but we also have added the Z-bar supplement procedure which is recommended by the American Association of Quality Control Engineers. Our quality control engineers are not new employees, and they have a great deal of experience in filling order such as yours. If you would like to learn more about our quality control procedures, please contact our Quality Control Engineer Office and ask for Jeremy Bohm at (919) 278-7384.

We were quite surprised to learn that your own checking of our FC-7D boards indicates there is a ten percent failure rate. We will be happy to refill your order at no expense to you. Today we have begun the procedure of sending you another 77,000 meeting the specifications as indicated in your purchase order #33-Dcl. Meanwhile, it would be helpful for us if you would return the remaining boards that we sent to you. We will pay shipping costs. Please feel free to call me at (919) 278-6424 if you have any further questions.

Very truly yours,

Dwayne W. Edwards

Assistant Manager

Answer available at the end of this section.

Let's summarize this section's points about structure. A piece of writing without structure is chaotic. Every piece of writing needs some sort of method of organization, even though different kinds of writing can use different methods. Write the piece first—get your meaning out onto the paper. Then go back and organize. When doing so, mentally consider how you are going to introduce the topic. What way will you organize the main body? How do you intend to end your piece? Can the reader always see the road you are on? Will making a particular point just cause a detour from the main road?

Answers

Exercise 15.2.1.4.1

Jettison the second paragraph of the letter.

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15.2.2: Improving Your Writing Style

The manner of presentation of a piece of writing is its style. You'll need an effective style. How do you get it? Here are some suggestions.

Be brief One mark of good writing style is brevity but with sufficient detail. There are exceptions, however. Brevity is not a virtue when writing letters appealing for contributions to your organization. Fund raisers have learned that a simple, clear, and concise request does not bring in the money. What works is a long letter that provides more information about the organization and that goes into great detail about how the money will be spent. The letter makes the recipient feel like he or she is part of the inner workings of the organization. Another exception to the rule of brevity is that a complicated point sometimes requires repeating. Just don't repeat it with the same words, and don't do it more than once.

Be straightforward. Another mark of good style is "saying it straight," as Emily Dickinson would say. You should say that Mary had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow. Only a lawyer could get away with "Mary was the legal owner of a diminutive, potential sheep, whose fleece was as innocent of coloring as congealed atmospheric vapor." Avoid jargon or technical-ese. Also, remember that it is easier to follow a group of sentences, each expressing one idea, than a single sentence that strings several ideas together. Break up those long, rambling strings.

Let's elaborate on these two suggestions. William Faulkner could have made his point briefly and simply by saying:

Five miles farther down the river from Major de Spain's camp there is an Indian mound, which we children fear. A small Chickasaw Indian reservation is nearby.

But saying it that way is less interesting and less memorable than the way Faulkner wrote it:

Five miles farther down the river from Major de Spain's camp, and in an even wilder part of the river's jungle of cane and gum and pin oak, there is an Indian mound. Aboriginal, it rises profoundly and darkly enigmatic, the only elevation of any kind in the wild, flat jungle of river bottom. Even to some of us—children though we were, yet we were descended of literate, town-bred people—it possessed inferences of secret and violent blood, of savage and sudden destruction, as though the yells and hatchets which we associated with Indians through the hidden and secret dime novels which we passed among ourselves were but trivial and momentary manifestations of what dark power still dwelled or lurked there, sinister, a little sardonic, like a dark and nameless beast lightly and lazily slumbering with bloody jaws—this, perhaps, due to the fact that a remnant of a once powerful clan of the Chickasaw tribe still lived beside it under Government protection.¹

Yes, you usually want to rid your writing of excess vegetation, but a tree can be pruned so much that it dies. There are five-page plot summaries of Faulkner novels, but the only people who buy them are students in English courses who hope the test will not cover anything subtle. The people who read for their own pleasure and interest prefer less brevity and more complexity.

The suggestion above that you adopt a style that is straightforward means, among other things, avoiding the abstract when you can just as well be specific and concrete. For example, a student who misunderstands Heidegger may say too abstractly, "IBM faces Microsoft, not with the nothingness of Being, but with the nothingness of dread." You should say, more concretely, "IBM executives fear their stock will be less valuable if they merge with the Microsoft Corporation."

Give examples; get to the point. That advice is good, but it is a little superficial. If the audience will immediately catch on to your general claim, skip the examples. Some of your textbooks have no doubt moved too quickly through the subject matter and have not given enough examples, while other textbooks have plodded along wasting your time by giving example after example of a simple idea that you caught on to right away.

Exercise 15.2.2.1

Which response below is the most straightforward answer to the request "Give a specific description of the Indian mound in Faulkner's short story above"?

- a. The mound rises significantly above the plain of the surrounding river bottom.
- b. Even to some of us—children though we were, yet we were descended of literate, town-bred people—the mound possessed inferences of secret and violent blood, of savage and sudden destruction, as though the yells and hatchets which we associated with Indians through the hidden and secret dime novels which we passed among ourselves were but trivial and momentary manifestations of what dark power still dwelled or lurked there, sinister, a little sardonic, like a dark and nameless beast lightly and lazily slumbering with bloody jaws—this, perhaps, due to the fact that a remnant of a once powerful clan of the Chickasaw tribe still lived beside it under Government protection.
- c. The mound is an earthen cone with a base of about 100 feet and an altitude of 30 feet. The mound sits on a plain that contains a river bottom.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Here is a final suggestion that is perhaps the most important of all in producing logical writing: Reread what you've written. After you have written what you set out to write, let it cool. Forget about it for a while; the longer the better. Then go back and reread it with an open mind, as if you were a member of your intended audience seeing it for the first time. Or ask a helpful friend to read it and give you a reaction. You are likely to gain valuable information about what you may need to clarify.

The rest of this chapter explores the process of creating arguments.

¹ From William Faulkner, "A Bear Hunt," *Collected Stories of William Faulkner*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), p. 65.

Answers

Exercise 15.2.2.1

Answer (a). Answer (b) is not correct because it is not a description of the mound but instead is a description of the children's reaction to the mound. Answer (c) is not correct because there is no basis for claiming that the mound had those specific measurements. Answer (c) would be a better answer than (a), however, if (c) were true.

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15.2.3: Proving Your Conclusion

When the reasons do establish the conclusion, the argument is called a **proof**. Because the line between when the reasons establish the conclusion and when they don't can be a fuzzy one, the term proof is vague, except in the case of mathematical proofs. Mathematical proofs are not a matter of degree; they are either correct or incorrect, but the kind of proofs we have in ordinary life and in science are a matter of degree; they make their case more or less strongly.

Some things are harder to prove than others, as we all know. You may have heard someone say, "It's impossible to prove a negative." This statement is an exaggeration, but it contains a valuable kernel of truth. It is an exaggeration, because it is easy to prove this negative: my car keys are not in my pocket. But it is much more difficult to prove the following negative: There is no telepathy.

Unlike a search of my pocket, the place to be searched for telepathy is not well defined because a psychic could say that just because you haven't found any telepathy so far doesn't mean you won't find telepathy in other situations you haven't yet investigated. Also, there is so much uncertainty about what counts as being an actual case of telepathy; for example, a psychic says that some event is a sign of telepathy, but a skeptic disagrees and says the psychic is jumping to conclusions.

Even though it is difficult to prove that there is no telepathy, it has been proved. First, given what else we know about nature, especially what else we know about brain physiology, telepathy is highly improbable, so not only is the burden of proof on anyone who says telepathy does exist, but the burden is a heavy one in the sense that it will have to be an extraordinarily good proof. Systematic searches for telepathy by qualified scientists have turned up no solid evidence. These two reasons prove there is no telepathy. They do not make it 100% certain there is no telepathy, but still it is enough to feel confident.

The above reasoning applies a special method of reasoning: hold off believing that something exists until you get the evidence in favor of it. Science is both a body of knowledge and a way of getting knowledge. Science involves a skeptical attitude that says, "I won't believe you until you show me the solid evidence."

When is evidence solid evidence? For most of us, the most solid form of evidence we have are the reports of experts we trust plus our knowledge that the experts agree with each other. But among the experts themselves, it often does take an expert to decide what counts as solid evidence. Usually, though, solid evidence must be reproducible. For example, if one researcher says, "I tested the subject and found her to be a psychic," other researchers will need to be satisfied that she can actually perform as well when the testing is repeated by themselves or by some other researcher they trust. The truth will be able to stand up to repeated tests, but falsehood will eventually be exposed.

People sometimes ask, "Why can't scientists give poorly supported suggestions the benefit of the doubt and simply accept them? Why the obsessional preoccupation with matters of validation?" The answer is that this liberal attitude leads to a contradiction. Suppose you have poor support for some suggestion S, and you also have poor support for its negation, Not-S. The liberal attitude above would have us accept both S and Not-S, which is absurd. Besides, the track record of accepting unsupported hypotheses is quite poor; they turn out to be unhelpful for creating good explanations and making accurate predictions, which are the two main goals of science.

When you argue that some conclusion should be drawn from the evidence you present, be careful not to defend a stronger conclusion than what the evidence justifies. Here is an example that illustrates the point. Two Italian-speaking men suffered strokes that damaged their brains, but not in the usual ways. According to a report in the well-respected British science journal *Nature*, examination of the first man two weeks after his stroke revealed that he omitted all vowels when writing about himself, his town, or common objects. He would leave blank spaces for the vowels. For example, he spelled the name of his town, Bologna, as "B lgn." He was aware of the fact that he had misspelled the words, but he could not correct his errors. The second man also had a vowel-specific disturbance. He could write vowels, but he misspelled many words, and most of the misspellings involved errors with vowels and not consonants. Both men had no such difficulties before their strokes. The experimental psychologist who reported these two astonishing cases said that they may indicate the brain contains two different mechanisms, one for identifying and generating vowels and one for identifying and generating consonants. But notice that the evidence of these two cases is not a proof of this; it does no more than "indicate" this, as the researcher was careful to note. If, instead, the researcher had said that the evidence of these two cases "proves" there is a cerebral vowel organizer, then the researcher would have drawn too strong a conclusion and likely would have been told by the journal editor to tone down the conclusion before the article would be published.

Exercise 15.2.3.1

What is the error in the following sentence?

In good scientific reasoning, the scientific reasoner should be cautious and never claim that something is known or proved unless it can be shown that from the evidence acquired that it would be absolutely impossible for the claim to be false.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Answers

Exercise 15.2.3.1

This statement is making it too difficult for scientific reasoning to establish its claims. A proof of a claim is simply a strong, convincing argument; it need not be an argument so strong that "it would be absolutely impossible for the claim to be false."

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15.2.4: Creating Counterarguments

A counterargument to argument S is always an argument for why the conclusion of S is not true.

a. true b. false

_____ [171]

When it comes to issues that cannot be settled by scientific investigation, the proofs or arguments take on a different character from the sort we've been examining. The reasons for you to favor a social policy, for example, will more often appeal to the values you hold than to the facts about the world. Values cannot be detected with voltmeters, nor measured with meter sticks. The rest of this chapter will consider arguments that appeal to the values held by the participants in the argument.

Sometimes when we respond to an argument that attacks our own position we try to expose weaknesses; for example, we might point out that the reasons given are not true, or that the reasons don't make the case even if they are true, and so forth. At other times we don't directly attack the argument but rather create a new argument for the opposite conclusion. This indirect response is called "creating a counterargument." By successfully using the techniques of argument criticism or of creating a counterargument, our position lives on to bury our enemy, the undertaker. In courts of law, these techniques are called rebuttal. The point of rebuttal is to turn our vaguely felt objections into convincing arguments.

What follows in the next few pages is an example of the give-and-take in argumentation. The exchange contains arguments, counterarguments, criticisms of arguments, criticisms of criticisms, and revisions of criticisms. The issue is whether utilitarianism is the proper way to decide right from wrong. Utilitarianism is the ethical viewpoint based on the following claim:

UTILITARIAN CLAIM: Among the possible actions a person can take in a situation, the right action is that which produces the most overall happiness for everyone.

John Stuart Mill, a nineteenth-century English philosopher, argued for utilitarianism. He wanted an antidote to the practice of English judges and legislators making social and ethical decisions on the basis of how the decision "felt" to them. Mill wanted the decision method to be more scientific. He hoped that in principle the decision could be the result of a process of calculation of the positive and negative consequences for each possible choice. The alternative that produced the maximum number would be the one to choose. His utilitarianism is a kind of cost-benefit analysis that focuses not on the benefits to a company or special group but to society as a whole, to all people.

ARGUMENT FOR UTILITARIANISM: We all have or should have feelings of generalized benevolence, of caring in general for our fellow human beings. Utilitarianism expresses these feelings. In addition, most all of the actions that utilitarianism says are immoral are in fact believed to be immoral by most people; and most of the actions that utilitarianism says are moral are generally believed to be moral, so utilitarianism coincides with most of what we already believe. In fact, utilitarianism agrees so well that it provides the most coherence to our chaotic ethical beliefs. Because we want this coherence, we should adopt utilitarianism and accept the consequences of adopting it—namely, that if utilitarian reasoning declares some action to be immoral, then even though we intuitively believe the action to be moral, we must revise our intuitions to be in agreement with what utilitarianism says.

The American philosopher William James did not accept this line of reasoning. He argued against utilitarianism. James's objection arose from his belief that it would be immoral to demand that a single individual suffer even if that suffering were to promote the overall happiness of everyone else. He based his reason on the immediate moral feeling of revulsion we'd have if we thought about the special situation he had in mind. He said:

COUNTERARGUMENT: Utilitarianism implies that trading off someone's pain to achieve the greater good of everyone else is acceptable. Yet it is really unacceptable, because of our moral feelings of revulsion at running roughshod over the dignity of that one individual.

Here is a simpler version of James's counterargument. Imagine yourself on a wagon train of settlers moving westward in the U.S. in 1850. You are attacked by a gang of outlaws. Circling your wagons, you prepare to defend yourself against an overwhelming force. You count your few guns and bullets and realize you are in a desperate situation. Just then the outlaw leader makes an offer. He promises to let the wagon train pass through to Oregon provided you will hand over the daughter of your wagon master.

Otherwise, he says, his gang will attack and kill you all. You happen to know that this gang of outlaws has a tradition of keeping its promises. So if they get the daughter, the rest of you will likely make it through unharmed. You also know that the daughter will likely face unspeakable horrors. What do you do? The utilitarian will say to give her up. She has just one life, but the rest of the wagon train has many more lives to be saved; it's a matter of cost-benefit analysis. In this imaginary scenario, William James would argue that trading the girl for the greater good of the wagon train would be morally abhorrent. It wouldn't be right to do this to her, regardless of the consequences to the wagon train. Therefore, utilitarianism leads to immorality, and it cannot be the proper basis of moral reasoning. End of counterargument.

When faced with an argument against one's own position, a person often strikes back, getting defensive. The utilitarian John Stuart Mill might have responded with, "Well, it's easy for you to criticize; you don't have to face the consequences of these important decisions on a day-to-day basis." This remark is the kind of thing we say when we want to discount the force of someone else's argument. Empress Catherine the Great used the same tactic against eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers who were criticizing her social policies toward the Russian peasants; she said, "It's easy for you to talk. You write on paper, but I write on human flesh."

In the following passage, the defender doesn't get defensive; instead the utilitarian offers a more substantial criticism that tries to undermine the main points made in James's counterargument. This new argument is based on two reasons: (1) there is no need for us to pay much attention to James's feelings of revulsion, and (2) we do make trade-offs of people's lives all the time without calling it immoral.

CRITICISM OF THE COUNTERARGUMENT: Moral feelings are very strong, but this does not prevent them from appearing as irrational taboos to those who do not share our conventions. This should warn us against the tendency to make ethical philosophy an apology or justification of the conventional customs that happen to be established. Suppose that someone were to offer our country a wonderfully convenient mechanism, but demand in return the privilege of killing thousands of our people every year. How many of those who would indignantly refuse such a request will condemn the use of the automobile now that it is already with us? ^[172]

The point of the criticism is to say that if you accept the trade-off for the automobile, then you should accept the trade-off of a lonely soul's pain for the greater good of everyone else. If so, then utilitarianism has not been shown to lead to absurdity, as James mistakenly supposed. Therefore, the counterargument fails, and the argument for utilitarianism stands.

Let's review the flow of the discussion so far. The issue is the truth or falsity of utilitarianism. James's position is that utilitarianism is incorrect. His counterargument depends on his evaluation of the example of the lost soul on the far-off edge of things. The criticism of James's counterargument goes like this. James's situation with the lost soul is analogous to the situation of people being killed by the automobile, and just as it would have been OK to proceed with automobile construction, so it would be okay to send that lost soul to the far-off edge of things. So, utilitarianism is correct.

At this point, James could counterattack by criticizing the analogy between torturing individuals and killing them in car accidents. He might say this:

CRITICISM OF THE CRITICISM OF THE COUNTERARGUMENT: The analogy between the torture and the automobile situation isn't any good. The two situations differ in a crucial respect. My situation with the far-off lost soul requires intentional harm. The lost soul did not voluntarily give up his right not to be tortured; if he did, that would have been praiseworthy on his part, but he didn't. Instead he was seized against his will. But automobiles were introduced into our society voluntarily with no intention to harm anybody. The car manufacturers didn't build cars with the goal of "killing thousands of our people every year." They set out to make money and provide society with efficient transportation. In my situation, one person is singled out for harm. In the automobile situation, each person runs an approximately equal risk of accidental harm. The lost soul is not free to refuse, and his pain is foreseen. But any particular automobile driver is free not to drive, and his pain is unpredictable. So the analogy breaks down. My point stands.

The person who originally criticized the counterargument now makes a change in light of the criticism of his criticism.

REVISION OF THE CRITICISM OF THE COUNTERARGUMENT: Maybe the analogy with automobiles does break down, but the motivation behind it is still correct and can show what is wrong with James's counterargument against utilitarianism. We often consider it moral to trade off some people's pain against the greater good of everyone else even when the pain is intentionally inflicted and even when those who receive it are not free to refuse it. U.S. Immigration and Naturalization requires people coming into this country to suffer the pain of certain vaccinations for the good of the rest of us who don't want to catch foreign diseases. There is no universal sense of revulsion about such situations. Most people think it is the right thing to do, being the lesser of two evils. It is understandable why individuals look out for themselves and don't choose to do what is in the interest of all society, but

that doesn't make what they do morally right, does it? So, utilitarianism is the proper viewpoint on ethics after all.

Well, we won't crown a victor in this dispute about utilitarianism. There are many more moves and countermoves that might occur before the issue is settled. The issue is still an open one in the field of philosophy. However, the discussion does demonstrate the give-and-take that occurs in a serious dispute.

Briefly state a counterargument to the following argument:

Communism is better than capitalism because communism is designed to promote cooperation among equals whereas capitalism is designed to promote competition, greed, and the domination of one person by another.

_____ [173]

Let's now try to handle all at once many of the points made about argumentation.

Consider the following debate, which contains a series of arguments, criticisms of arguments, counterarguments, revisions, clarifications, arguments in defense of previous assumptions, and so forth. The main issue is whether robots could someday think, (a) Where does the first clarification occur? (b) Where does the first criticism occur? (c) Where is the first counterargument? (d) Which side should win this debate? (e) What is the most convincing point made for the winning side?

A.

First Person: A robot could never think. You can tell that right away, just by thinking about what the words mean.

Second Person: Are you suggesting that a robot cannot think because thinking and robot are conflicting terms the way round and triangular are?

B.

First Person: No, I mean even if some future robot appeared to think, the real thinking would belong to its programmer. A robot couldn't think on its own.

Second Person: When the robot walks, you don't say it's really the programmer who is doing the walking, do you?

C.

First Person: No, of course not.

Second Person: Robots can think because they do all sorts of things that we used to say required thinking. They play chess, for example, though not the way we do.

D.

First Person: They play chess, but they don't think when they play it. Robots cannot think on their own because robots can only do what they are programmed to do.

Second Person: OK, program it to think.

E.

First Person: But you can't do that.

Second Person: Why not? I hope you don't answer by saying, "because robots can only do what they are programmed to do." That would be circular reasoning.

F.

First Person: Thinking requires flexibility in the sense that one can change one's thoughts. But since robots can't change the thoughts that are programmed into them, they cannot really think either.

Second Person: A robot could change its thought without changing its programming, just as a chess-playing computer changes its moves without changing its programming.

G.

First Person: My point about change is that a thinking being must be capable of original thought, but a robot can do only what it is programmed to do.

Second Person: Couldn't a chess-playing computer come up with a chess move that had never been played before and that would surprise even its programmer? That move would be as original for it as our thoughts are for us. Besides, isn't an original human thought just a surprising thought that is actually only the product of the person's genetic code plus his or her life's conditioning?

H.

First Person: No, an original thought is uncaused.

Second Person: If it's uncaused, then it is just random. Surely, good thinking isn't just random mumbling, is it? If you tell me it is uncaused physically but instead caused by our intent, I don't understand that.

I.

First Person: I wouldn't be so quick to write off intentions, but look, a thinking being must be able to handle itself in new situations. There are too many new situations for them to be explicitly handled in advance by the programmer; the task is just too large. So a robot couldn't ever really think.

Second Person: There are an endless number of new addition and multiplication problems, yet a small machine can handle them, can't it?

J.

First Person: Because of individual growth as well as the growth of our species itself, we're all the end products of our entire history, but human history cannot be written down and programmed into a computer. We all know a lot that we can't say, or can't write down in notation. We know it implicitly in our flesh and blood, so to speak. A computer knows only what can be written down.

Second Person: I disagree. Ok, so you know something you can't write down. You know how to ride a bicycle but can't write down the details. It doesn't follow that the details can't be written down just because you can't write them down. Someone else can write them down and use them to permit a robot to ride a bicycle, too. Besides, why are you making such a big point about being made of flesh and blood? You can add, and you are made of hydrocarbon; a calculator can add, and it's made of copper and silicon. The stuff can't be that important.⁹

K.

First Person: We carbon-based beings really know what we are doing when we add; the calculator doesn't.

Second Person: I agree, but you're overestimating "stuff." If living organisms are composed of molecules that are intrinsically inanimate and unintelligent, why is it that living, conscious matter differs so radically from unconscious nonliving matter? They both are made of molecules. The answer must be the ways those molecules are put together, because the essence of life and thinking is not substance but instead complex patterns of information. Life and thinking are properties of the way stuff is organized. If you organized the stuff correctly, then life and thought might exist in most any substance, whether it be flesh or silicon chips.

L.

First Person: It isn't really a question of "stuff" nor of programming. It is more a question of essence. We are essentially of a different nature. Thinking beings have souls, but robot computers do not.

Second Person: If a machine were built with sufficient ingenuity, couldn't God give it a soul?

M.

First Person: Yes, God could, but God wouldn't.

Second Person: How do you know what God would do?

_____ [174]

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15.2.5: Review of Major Points

We learned about how to improve writing, especially argumentative writing. Be sure your writing is clearly organized, or else you can lose your reader in the details. Here is the best way to structure argumentative writing: a) add your main point, the thesis statement, into the introductory paragraph; b) give an argument for your thesis; c) give counter-arguments and respond to them; (d) end with a conclusion paragraph that summarizes what you've done and perhaps suggests additional issues that need investigation. Whether writing to describe, argue, or explain, by providing a clear and precise structure you can dramatically improve the writing's effectiveness. Longer pieces are more effective when they are divided into three parts in this order:

- Introduction (This is your opening, and it usually includes a statement of your thesis or conclusion.)
- Middle (Your support for the thesis plus an assessment of objections to it.)
- Conclusion (Summarize what you've done and what still needs doing.)

This isn't the only order that might be successful in persuading your audience to accept your conclusion. Essays can be effective even though they leave their conclusion until the end and deal early on with discounting possible objections. The most common error in creating an argumentative essay is not to adequately develop, the assessment of objections.

Getting the main points down on paper or in a word processor file should come before worrying about the organizational details. Write first; then worry about how to structure the ideas effectively. Sometimes when we respond to an argument we try to expose weaknesses in it. We might show that the reasons given are not true, or the reasons don't make the case even if they are true, and so forth. At other times we don't directly attack the argument but rather create a new argument for the opposite conclusion, and doing this is called creating a counterargument.

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argumentative essay A work of nonfiction prose stating and defending a position on some issue. It's a certain kind of persuasive writing.

counterargument An argument for the conclusion opposite to that taken by another arguer.

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15.2.7: Exercises

1. Create a four-page argumentative essay, typed double-spaced, that analyzes the following argument and that attacks the main points of the argument below and then creates a counterargument.

Animals may appear to have minds, but in fact they don't. Do you seriously believe that a one-celled animal has a mind? Besides, to have a mind it has to have a soul. Yet if every gnat had a soul, there would be a population explosion in the domains of the spirit, that is, in heaven. Heaven surely has no such room. So, gnats and other beasts are mindless.

There are several other reasons I can offer in defense of my point. I have recently been reading the works of Louis Racine, who wrote in 1700 in France. Here is Louis's argument. He is commenting on Rene Descartes's claim that animals are automata. "If beasts had souls and were capable of feelings, would they show themselves insensible to the affront and injustice done them by Descartes? Would they not rather have risen up in wrath against [Descartes who] so degraded them?" That sounds right to me.

God is good, and we can see "how much more humane is the doctrine that animals suffer no pain." What Cardinal Melchior de Polignac meant by saying this is that it takes a mind to feel pain, but animals feel no pain—they just flinch when pricked—and this attitude that animals feel no pain is correct because the attitude is the most humane approach to animals.

Everyone knows animals are just creatures of instinct. Essentially all animal behavior is unsophisticated by our standards. A lion sees an antelope and lunges for it. The antelope sees the lion, and lurches away.

You will be graded on the clarity and organization of your essay, on the lack of incorrect and silly comments, and on the depth of your insight into the topic.

2. Write a letter in which you weigh the pros and cons involved in hiring either Roth or Toomey as a legislative advocate (that is, lobbyist) for the City of Newark, New Jersey. In this fictitious case, you are an independent consultant, making a recommendation to the city council, and you have interviewed and eliminated all other candidates except these two. The council is voting on this personnel matter at its next meeting in three days. Your report should be written as a confidential letter to the council. Begin with your recommendation, then give an argument justifying your recommendation by weighing the pros and cons. Here is the description of the job that the two candidates are applying for.

The Legislative Advocate will represent the interests of the City of Newark before the state government of New Jersey, including but not limited to the legislature, the office of the governor, and the state's various departments, staff, offices, and committees. This position requires writing legislation, recommending legislation, providing information to the City and its staff about the activities of the State Government, representing the city before the State Government in the capitol, providing testimony at hearings, lobbying for passage or defeat of bills before the Legislature, encouraging the Governor to sign or veto bills that have passed the legislature, and other related activities.

The Legislative Advocate reports directly to the president of the city council and supplies monthly reports to the entire council. Salary \$162,000 per year plus medical, dental, and optical benefits. The city will supply one full-time secretary, office space, two telephone land lines, one cell phone with unlimited calling, a desktop computer or laptop computer, a fax machine, copy machine, and at least 400 square feet office space in a City building.

Background on the City Council: 3 Republicans, 6 Democrats; president is a Republican; 6 men, 3 women; 5 white, 3 black; 1 Hispanic.

Background on New Jersey: Democratic governor. Republicans hold a two-thirds majority in the two houses of the Legislature.

Confidential analysis of personnel matters:

ROTH: Has previously been a legislative advocate for an Illinois public employee labor union and also for Planned Parenthood in Illinois. Eighteen years ago she and another black female were fired from their positions as county social workers for continuing to picket the county during a strike in violation of a court injunction declaring the strike illegal. The case reached the Illinois Supreme Court and was overturned, winning public employees in Illinois the right to strike. She is currently one of two lobbyists for the City of Chicago, representing the city before the Illinois state government. Her specialties are lobbying for issues concerning

health care, labor relations, and urban planning. Holds a master's degree in public health from the University of Pennsylvania. Has letters of support from two Democratic and two Republican city council members in Chicago. Has never lived in New Jersey. No convictions. Age 43. Registered Democrat. Main new idea offered during interview: Lobby for a state bill enabling Newark to legally offer free hypodermic needles to drug addicts in exchange for their used needles.

TOOMEY: Lawyer. Served for two years as a researcher on a taxation committee in the New York legislature. Toomey was an administrative aide for the current lieutenant governor of New Jersey, a Republican, but was fired from that position after serving four months. Ran for city council of Princeton eight years ago, receiving thirty-one percent of the vote. Presently is a legislative advocate representing the U.S. Steel Corporation and the Association of Airports of New Jersey before the State. Toomey has worked actively on the election campaign of the speaker of the state senate of New Jersey, who is a personal friend of two Republican members of the Newark city council. Drivers license suspended for six months for drunk driving two years ago. White. Age 63. Registered Republican. Main new idea offered during interview: Newark should make the homeless and the panhandlers less visible to other citizens.

3. This is a three-week assignment. Your instructor will give you a description of a controversial issue. Pick one side of the issue and write an essay defending your opinion. Make it about four pages long, typed double-spaced. It is due one week after it is assigned. The class's essays will then be randomly redistributed to the class. Make sure you don't get your own essay back. For the essay you receive, write a three-page analysis of the quality of the essay. Can you think of better points the writer could have made? Can you think of counterarguments the writer failed to notice? This analysis is due in one week. Put your name on it, and staple it to the back of the first essay. The essay-analysis pairs will then be randomly redistributed to the class. Make sure you don't get any of your own work back. For the pair that you receive, write a three-page critique of both the original essay and the analysis given of it. Put your name on your critique, and staple it to the back of the pair. Turn in the trio within one week.

4. Describe to a sixth-grade science class the similarities and differences between a shadow and a reflection.

5. Common Sense was published anonymously on January 10, 1776. The American radical, Thomas Paine, wrote this fifty-page argumentative essay for a variety of reasons, the main one being to convince readers that the colonies should pursue revolution rather than reconciliation. In 400 to 700 words, summarize the argument against reconciliation. To get some flavor of the arguing, consider Paine's reaction below to the assertion that Great Britain is America's parent, the implication being that after some bad times the child should reconcile with the parent rather than revolt and drive away the parent:

Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families; wherefore, the assertion, if true, turns to her reproach; but it happens not to be true, or only partly so, and the phrase parent or mother country hath been jesuitically adopted by the king and his parasites, with a low papistical design of gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds. Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America.

6. Research the history of California in the 1930s, then create an argumentative essay making a police officer's case for Okies not settling there.

7. View the film *The Grapes of Wrath* in your college library or elsewhere, then write an essay speculating on the explanation of why the film treated its Chapter 3 the way it did.

8. Write an argumentative essay about utilitarianism in which you conclude either for or against it. Predict the criticisms that might be offered by your opponent and deal with them in your essay.

9. Create an argumentative essay on one of the following topics.

- a. Should Columbus Day celebrations be promoted or downplayed?
- b. Is a fetus a person with rights?
- c. Should our country's defense budget be increased, decreased, or kept the same?
- d. If you drop your new toothbrush in the toilet, should you throw it away, should you wash it in hot water and continue using it, or should you do something else?
- e. How sure can you be that you are not now dreaming?
- f. What is wrong with the following reasoning?

It is impossible for the instructor to leave this room through the door. In order to get out, he (or she) must move from where he is now and walk across the room to the door. But before that, he must reach the halfway point from where he is to the door. But before that, he must reach the one-quarter point from where he is to the door. But before that, he must reach the one-eighth point, and so forth. He has an infinite number of places to go before leaving the room, and nobody has enough time to visit an infinite number of places.

- g. Is the punishment for using crack cocaine too lenient?
- h. Are numbers real objects, or are they just in our heads?
- i. In what ways is the system of taxes unfair—that is, who or what is not taxed the proper amount?
- j. Should a judge ever be able to require a reporter to reveal the identity of her sources (informants)?
- k. When is it ever proper to steal?
- l. Should there be a death penalty for any crimes?
- m. Should flag burning ever be illegal?
- n. Property owned by organized religions or by insurance companies does not and should not pay property taxes, right?
- o. Should the border between the U.S. and Mexico be made more open like that between the U.S. and Canada, or should it be made more difficult to cross?
- p. Discuss this position: Environmentalists do not work from facts. They use tainted theory to scare Americans into believing their lies. Trust me. The Earth will be here for our great-grandchildren to enjoy, even if you do use disposable diapers.
- q. Is it OK to pay a worker below the minimum wage if the worker voluntarily agrees to work for less?
- r. Should the federal and state governments create more regulations and red tape for companies involved in producing or selling the food we all eat?
- s. Who was the best U.S. president?
- t. What country has the worst foreign policy?
- u. Are any college sports programs overfunded or underfunded?
- v. Should county health departments have the right to give out free, clean needles to drug addicts as a means of curbing the spread of AIDS?
- w. Should employers be able to refuse to hire people who have AIDS, and should insurers be able to refuse to sell them insurance for this reason?
- x. If (you believe) the amount spent on public welfare is too high, where should the money be spent instead? If (you believe) the amount spent on public welfare is too low, where should the government get the money for the increase?
- y. Is it OK for the federal government to use our tax monies to bail out failed businesses such as savings and loans?
- z. Who will probably do more to improve the United States in the future, the Republicans or the Democrats?

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