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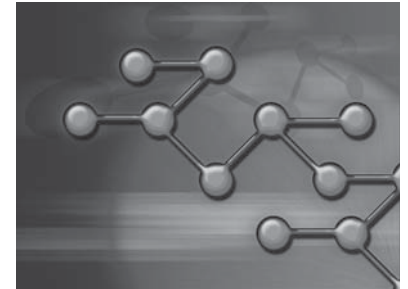
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Persuasion and Attitude Change

With reasonable men I will reason; with humane men I will plea; but to tyrants I will give no quarter, nor waste arguments where they will certainly be lost.

—William Lloyd Garrison

Chicago, 1924: Jacob Franks, a wealthy businessman, answered the telephone and listened as a young but cultivated voice told him that his 14-year-old son, Bobby, had been kidnapped and could be ransomed for $10,000. The next morning, while Mr. Franks arranged for the ransom, he was notified that the nude and bloody body of his son had been found in a culvert on Chicago's South Side. Franks was sure that the boy in the morgue was not Bobby, because the kidnappers had assured him that this was simply a business proposition. He sent his brother to the morgue to clear up the misidentification. Unfortunately, the body was that of his son; his head had been split open by a blow from a blunt instrument.

The case was solved quickly. The police found a pair of eyeglasses near the body and traced them to Nathan Leopold, Jr., the 20-year-old son of a prominent local entrepreneur. Leopold denied any connection to the murder, claiming he had spent the day with his friend, Richard Loeb, the son of a vice president of Sears, Roebuck, and Company. However, both men soon confessed. Loeb, it seemed, had always dreamed of committing the "perfect crime." He had enlisted Leopold, and together they had gone to their old school playground and followed several different boys around. They finally settled on Bobby Franks and pushed him into their car. Loeb hit Bobby over the head with a chisel, and then he and Leopold drove in a leisurely fashion to the culvert, stopping along the way for a bite to eat. The trial was a media circus. The Leopold and Loeb families hired the most famous trial lawyer of that time, Clarence Darrow, to plead for their sons. The men had already confessed, so the issue was not whether they were guilty. It was whether they would spend the rest of their lives in prison—or hang. The prosecution argued for hanging the murderers. Darrow pleaded for mercy.

Key Questions

As you read this chapter, find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is persuasion?
2. What is the Yale communication model?
3. What factors about the communicator affect persuasion?
4. What message factors mediate persuasion?
5. What is the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion?
6. What is the impact of vividness on persuasion?
7. What is the need for cognition?
8. What is the heuristic and systematic information model of persuasion?
9. What is cognitive dissonance theory, and what are its main ideas?

Darrow had a tough fight: He needed all his persuasive skills to convince Judge Caverly of his point of view (a jury was not required). He spoke for 12 hours, trying to provide the judge with a rationale for sentencing the men to life imprisonment. He argued that life sentences would serve a better, more humane purpose than bowing to public opinion and hanging those two "mentally diseased boys." Darrow also claimed disinterest in the fates of his clients, an interesting ploy for a lawyer who spoke from morning to night on their behalf. In fact, he suggested that life in prison would be a worse fate than death. At the end of Darrow's oration, the judge was in tears, as were many spectators.

Darrow's arguments hit the mark. Judge Caverly sentenced Leopold and Loeb to life imprisonment for murder and 99 years for kidnapping. Darrow's impassioned, eloquent arguments persuaded the judge to spare his clients' lives (Weinberg, 1957). Clarence Darrow's task was to convince the judge that his clients' lives should be spared. He knew that the judge favored the death penalty, as did almost all the American public. If Darrow couldn't change the judge's attitude, he had to convince him that his attitude should not be applied in this case—that is, that he should behave contrary to his beliefs.

The Persuasion Process

persuasion A form of social influence that involves changing others' thoughts, attitudes, or behaviors by applying rational and emotional arguments to convince them to adopt your position.

Darrow used all his powers of **persuasion** to influence the judge. Persuasion is the application of rational and/or emotional arguments to convince others to change their attitudes or behavior. It is a form of social influence used not only in the courtroom but also in every part of daily social life. The persuasion process goes on in the classroom, church, political arena, and the media. Persuasive messages are so much a part of our lives that we often are oblivious to the bombardment from billboards, TV, radio, newspapers, parents, peers, and public figures.

Persuasion, then, is a pervasive form of social influence. We are all agents of social influence when we try to convince others to change their attitudes or behavior. We are also targets of social influence when others try to persuade or coerce us to do what they want us to do.

In this chapter, we explore the process of persuasion, looking at the strategies communicators use to change people's attitudes or behavior. We consider the techniques of persuasion used by a brilliant trial lawyer such as Clarence Darrow. How was Darrow able to be so effective? He was a famous trial lawyer, highly regarded and highly credible. Was his persuasiveness a function of something about him? Or was it something about the argument he made? What role did his audience—Judge Caverly—play in the persuasiveness of the argument? In what ways might the judge have taken an active role in persuading himself of the validity of Darrow's case? And how does persuasion, both interpersonal and mass persuasion, affect us all every day as we go about our lives? These are some of the questions addressed in this chapter.

The Yale Communication Model

What is the best way to communicate your ideas to others and persuade them to accept your point of view? An early view suggested that the most effective approach to persuasion was to present logical arguments that showed people how they would benefit from changing their attitudes. This view was formulated by Carl Hovland, who

worked for the U.S. government in its propaganda efforts during World War II. After the war, he returned to Yale University, where he gathered a team of 30 coworkers and began to systematically study the process of persuasion. Out of their efforts came the **Yale communication model** (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953).

According to the Yale communication model, the most important factors comprising the communication process are expressed by the question, Who says what to whom by what means? This question suggests that there are four factors involved in persuasion. The "who" refers to the communicator, the person making the persuasive argument. The "what" refers to the organization and content of the persuasive message. The "whom" is the target of the persuasive message, the audience. Finally, the "means" points to the importance of the channel or medium through which the message is conveyed, such as television, radio, or interpersonal face-to-face communication. For each factor, there are several variables that can potentially influence the persuasion process.

A key assumption of the Yale model is that these four factors (which can be manipulated in an experiment) provide input into three internal mediators: the attention, comprehension, and acceptance mediators. Persuasion, according to the Yale model, will occur if the target of a persuasive message first attends to the message, then comprehends (understands) the content of the message, and finally accepts the content of the message. What this means is that the Yale model proposes that persuasion is a function of controlled processing of the message. That is, a person who is persuaded actively attends to the message, makes an effort to understand the content of the message, and finally decides to accept the message.

Finally, the four factors contributing to persuasion are not independent of one another; they interact to create a persuasive effect. In practice, the content and presentation of the message depend on the communicator, the audience, and the channel. Darrow carefully chose his messages according to what arguments best suited the judge, the public, the trial setting, and his own preferences. We turn now to a discussion of the four factors, considering selected variables within each component. We also look at how the factors interact with one another.

Yale communication model A model of the persuasion process that stresses the role of the communicator (source of a message), the nature of the message, the audience, and the channel of communication.

The Communicator

Have you ever seen a late-night infomercial on TV? These half-hour commercials usually push a "miracle" product, such as the car wax that supposedly can withstand a direct hit from a hydrogen bomb. The car is vaporized but the wax survives. There is an "expert" (usually the inventor) who touts the product's virtues. Do you believe what this person tells you? Many people must, given the large amounts of money made from infomercials. However, many people clearly are not convinced. If you are not persuaded, one thing you may focus on is the communicator. You may find yourself questioning this fellow's integrity (because he will profit by persuading you to buy the atomic car wax) and, consequently, disbelieving his claims. In other words, you question his credibility.

Credibility: Expertise and Trustworthiness

Clarence Darrow knew the importance of **credibility**, the power to inspire belief. During his final arguments in the Leopold and Loeb case, Darrow continually tried to undermine the prosecution's credibility and increase his own in the eyes of the judge. For example, Darrow said of his opponent:

credibility The believability (expertise and trustworthiness) of the communicator of a persuasive message.

> I have heard in the last six weeks nothing but the cry for blood. I have heard from the office of the state's attorney only ugly hate. I have seen a court urged . . . to hang two boys, in the face of science, in the face of philosophy, in the face of the better and more humane thought. (Weinberg, 1957, p. 134)

expertise A component of communicator credibility that refers to the communicator's credentials and stems from the individual's training and knowledge.

trustworthiness A component of communicator credibility that involves our assessment of the communicator's motives for delivering the message.

Although other variables are important, including a communicator's perceived attractiveness and power, credibility is the most critical variable affecting the ability to persuade. Credibility has two components: expertise and trustworthiness. **Expertise** refers to a communicator's credentials and stems from the person's training and knowledge. For example, your doctor has the ability to persuade you on health matters because she has the education and experience that give her words power. **Trustworthiness** refers to the audience's assessment of the communicator's character as well as his or her motives for delivering the message. We ask, "Why is this person trying to convince us?" Trustworthiness may be diminished when we perceive that the communicator has something to gain from persuading us. For example, you might trust a review of a product published in *Consumer Reports* (which accepts no advertising and runs independent tests) more than a similar review based on research conducted by the manufacturer of the product.

Expertise and trustworthiness do not always go together. A communicator may be high in one but low in the other. A research physician speaking about a new drug to treat AIDS may have expertise and derive credibility from that expert knowledge. But if we discover that the physician stands to gain something from the sale of this drug, we probably will question her trustworthiness. We wonder about her character and motives and may no longer consider her a credible source.

A political figure with the unfortunate mix of high expertise and low trustworthiness was former President Bill Clinton. He was highly knowledgeable on matters of state but was not perceived as very trustworthy. During the "Monica Lewinsky" scandal, there is the enduring image of President Clinton waving his finger at the TV cameras, saying he never had sexual relations with "that woman." In contrast, a source can be highly trustworthy but low in expertise. This was the case with late President Ronald Reagan. During speeches he often used unsubstantiated statistics, sending his aides scrambling for sources. However, the public generally saw him as trustworthy. People wanted to believe him. Public opinion surveys showed again and again that a majority of the public viewed President Reagan as personally attractive and likable, and these qualities prime us to accept a persuader's message (Roskos-Ewoldsen & Fazio, 1992).

Trustworthiness is, in part, a judgment about the motives of the communicator. If someone is trying very hard to persuade us, we are likely to question his or her motives (Eagly, Wood, & Chaiken, 1978). We may be more convinced by the communicator's arguments if we don't think he or she is trying to persuade us (Walster [Hatfield] & Festinger, 1962). This is the theory behind the hidden-camera technique used by television advertisers. Presumably, a person touting the virtues of a fabric softener on hidden camera must be telling the truth. The communicator is not trying to convince us; he or she is giving an unbiased testimonial.

Interestingly, messages coming from a trustworthy or untrustworthy source are processed differently (Preister & Petty, 2003). A target of a persuasive appeal from a trustworthy source is less likely to process the content of the message carefully and elaborate in memory, compared to the same message coming from an untrustworthy source. That is, the arguments made by a trustworthy source are more likely to be accepted on face value than those presented by an untrustworthy source. Further, the difference between an untrustworthy and trustworthy source is greatest when the arguments being presented are weak. When strong arguments are presented, the trustworthy and untrustworthy sources are equally likely to produce attitude change (Priester & Petty, 2003).

A communicator who appears to argue against his or her own best interest is more persuasive than a communicator who takes an expected stance (Eagly et al., 1978). This was the case when then newly appointed U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno took responsibility for the 1993 attack by federal agents on David Koresh's Branch Davidian headquarters in Waco, Texas. The attack, subsequently acknowledged by the government as ill planned, led to a fiery holocaust in which most of the cult members, including many children, died. At a time when everyone connected with the attack was denying responsibility for it, Reno publicly assumed the responsibility for ordering the assault. Although her statement was not in her own best interest, it enhanced the public's sense of her character and credibility. Clarence Darrow also seemed to be arguing against his own best interest when he suggested to the judge that he did not care about the fate of his clients. Instead, he maintained, he was strongly interested in what the verdict meant for the future of humanity: "I am pleading for the future; I am pleading for a time when hatred and cruelty will not control the hearts of men, when . . . all life is worth saving, and that mercy is the highest attribute of man" (Weinberg, 1957, p. 134).

Darrow tried to increase his credibility by saying he was not acting out of self-interest or concern for the fate of Leopold and Loeb; he was fighting for a moral cause. Of course, Darrow did not mention that his fee was one of the highest ever paid to an attorney.

Limits on Credibility: The Sleeper Effect Does a credible communicator have an advantage over a noncredible one in the long run? Apparently not. Research has shown that there are limits to a credible communicator's influence. The Yale group found that although the credibility of the communicator has a strong effect on attitude change, over time people forget who said what, so the effects of credibility wear off. Initially, people believe the credible source. But 6 weeks later, they are about as likely to show attitude change from a noncredible source as from a credible source. So, if you read an article in the *National Enquirer*, it probably would have little effect on you right away. But after a few weeks, you might show some change despite the source's low credibility. The phenomenon of a message having more impact on attitude change after a long delay than when it is first heard is known as the **sleeper effect**.

The sleeper effect has been shown in a wide variety of persuasion situations, including political attack advertisements (Lariscy & Tinkham, 1999). In their experiment Lariscy and Tinkham exposed participants to a televised political attack advertisement. Some participants also saw a second political advertisement that called the credibility of the attack ad into question. This defensive advertisement was presented either before or after the attack advertisement. Lariscy and Tinkham measured perceived credibility of the source of the attack advertisement and how certain participants were that they would vote for the candidate who sponsored the attack advertisement. The results showed that the negative advertisement was effective, even though participants indicated they disliked the negativity. Evidence was also found for a sleeper effect. When the defensive advertisement was presented after the attack advertisement, perceptions of the candidate who sponsored the attack ad were negative. However, after a delay, the defensive advertisement lost its power to attenuate the effect of the attack advertisement.

Why does the sleeper effect occur? One possible cause of the sleeper effect may be that the communicator's credibility does not increase the listener's understanding of the message (Kelman & Hovland, 1953). In other words, people understand messages from credible and noncredible communicators equally well. As the effects of credibility wear off over time, listeners are left with two equally understood (or misunderstood) messages (Gruder et al., 1979).

sleeper effect
A phenomenon of persuasion that occurs when a communication has more impact on attitude change after a long delay than when it is first heard.

Three factors make it more likely that the sleeper effect will occur (Rajecki, 1990):

1. There is a strong persuasive argument.

2. There is a discounting cue, something that makes the receiver doubt the accuracy of the message, such as lack of communicator credibility or new information that contradicts the original message.

3. Enough time passes that the discounting cue and the message become disassociated, and people forget which source said what.

A meta-analysis of the sleeper effect literature (Kumkale & Albarracin, 2004) found that two other factors were also relevant to the occurrence of the sleeper effect. First, the sleeper effect is most likely to occur if both the message and the credibility information are strong. Second, the sleeper effect is stronger for individuals who are motivated to carefully process and think about the message and credibility information. This latter finding suggests that the sleeper effect requires active, controlled processing of the message content and credibility information.

Studies also show that the sleeper effect occurs most reliably when the receivers get the discounting cue after they hear the message rather than before (Kumkale & Albarracin, 2004; Pratkanis, Greenwald, Leippe, & Baumgardner, 1988). If the discounting cue comes before the message, the receiver doubts the message before it is even conveyed. But if the discounting cue comes after the message, and if the argument is strong, the receiver probably has already been persuaded. Over time, the memory of the discounting cue "decays" faster than the memory of the persuasive message (Pratkanis et al., 1988). Because the message is stored before the discounting cue is received, the message is less likely to be weakened. After a long period has elapsed, all the receiver remembers is the original persuasive message (Figure 6.1).
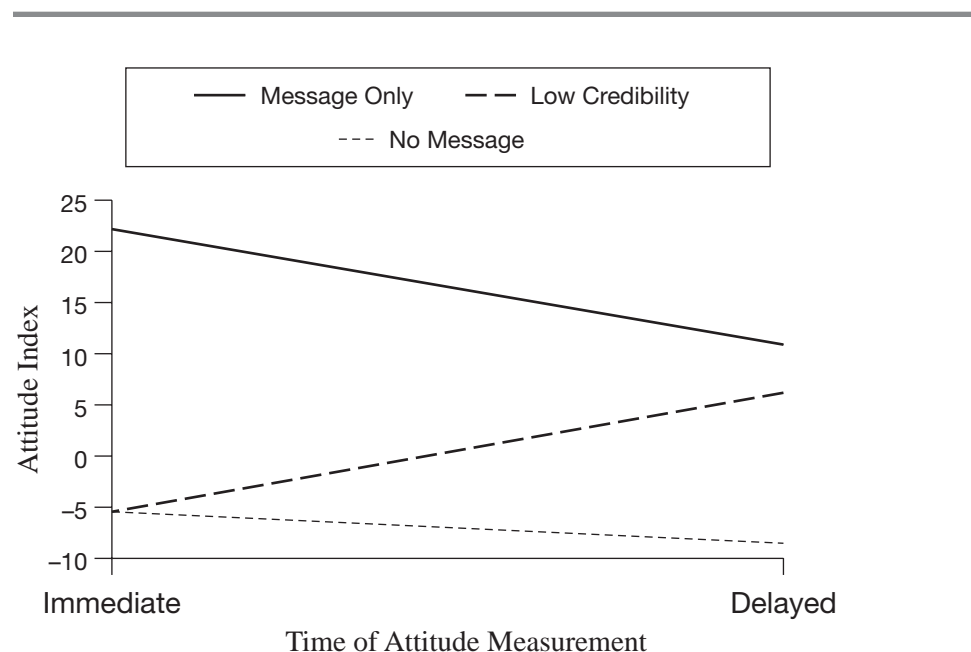

Figure 6.1 The sleeper effect in persuasion. When attitudes are measured immediately, a message from a low-credibility communicator is not persuasive. However, after a delay, the low-credibility communicator becomes more persuasive.

From data provided by Gruder and colleages et al. (1979).

What can we say happens to a persuasive message after several weeks? When the discounting cue occurs before the message, the effect of the message diminishes. When the discounting cue occurs after the message, the power of the message is reinforced. The lesson for persuaders, then, is that they should attack their adversary before he or she makes a case or conveys a rebuttal.

Gender of the Communicator and Persuasion

Does it matter whether the communicator of a persuasive message is male or female? Unfortunately, there is not a great deal of research on this. Early research produced inconsistent results (Flanagin & Metzger, 2003). Sometimes, males were more persuasive, and sometimes, females were more persuasive. In fact, the relationship between gender of the communicator and persuasion is not simple, as we shall see next.

In one experiment male and female participants evaluated information on a personal Web site attributed to either a male or female author (Flanagin & Metzger, 2003). Participants visited a Web site that was specially designed for the experiment. On the Web site participants read a passage on the harmful effects to pregnant women of radiation exposure during pregnancy. Participants rated the credibility of the source of the message. The results showed that male participants rated the female author as more credible than the male author. Conversely, female participants rated the male source as more credible than the female source.

In another study (Schuller, Terry, & McKimmie, 2005) male and female participants evaluated expert testimony (simple or complex) that was presented by either a male or female expert witness. The results, shown in Figure 6.2, showed that the male expert witness was more persuasive (resulting in higher dollar awards) than the female expert witness when the evidence was complex. However, the female expert witness was more persuasive when the evidence was less complex. The male expert has an advantage when the content of the message requires more cognitive effort to process,
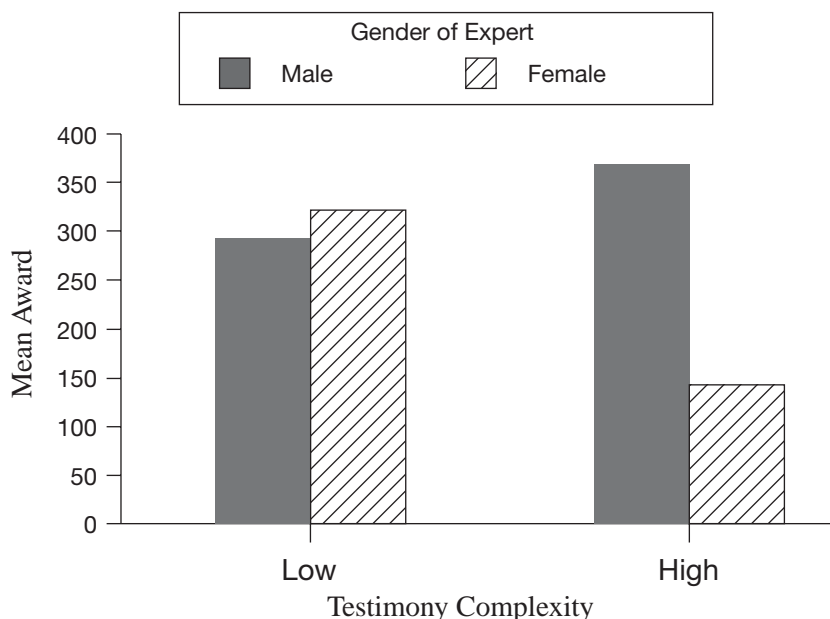

Figure 6.2 The relationship between the gender of an expert witness and the complexity of trial testimony.

Based on data from Schuller, Terry, and McKimmie (2005).

and the female expert has an advantage when the message does not require such effort. Gender, then, is used differently depending on the nature of the cognitive processing required (Schuler et al., 2005).

There is also some evidence for a *gender-domain effect*, meaning that a male communicator may be more persuasive for male-oriented issues, and a female communicator may be more persuasive for female-oriented issues (McKimmie, Newton, Terry, & Schuller, 2004; Schuller, Terry, & McKimmie, 2001). McKimmie et al. (2004) found that a male expert was more persuasive than a female expert when the case was male-oriented (a case involving an automotive service company). When the case was female-oriented (a case involving a cosmetics company), the female expert was more persuasive. They also found that jurors evaluated the expert witness more favorably when he or she testified about a gender-congruent case.

The Message and the Audience

Thus far, we have seen that the characteristics of the communicator can influence the degree to which we modify our attitudes in response to a persuasive message. But what about the message itself? What characteristics of messages make them more or less persuasive, and how do these elements interact with the characteristics of the audience? We address these questions next.

What Kind of Message Is Most Effective? The Power of Fear

An important quality of the message is whether it is based on rational or emotional appeals. Early research showed that appeal to one emotion in particular—fear—can make a message more effective than can appeal to reason or logic. Psychologists found at first that an appeal containing a mild threat and evoking a low level of fear was more effective than an appeal eliciting very high levels of fear (Hovland et al., 1953). Then research suggested that moderate levels of fear may be most effective (Leventhal, 1970). That is, you need enough fear to grab people's attention but not so much you send them running for their lives. If the message is boring, people do not pay attention. If it is too ferocious, they are repelled.

However, persuaders need to do more than make the audience fearful; they also need to provide a possible solution. If the message is that smoking cigarettes results in major health risks, and if the communicator does not offer a method for smokers to quit, then little attitude or behavior change will occur. The smoker will be motivated to change behavior if effective ways of dealing with the threat are offered. This principle is in keeping with the Yale group's notion that people will accept arguments that benefit them.

Of course, individuals often avoid messages that make them uncomfortable. This simple fact must be taken into account when determining a persuasion strategy. For example, a strong fear appeal on television is not very effective. The message is there only by our consent; we can always change the channel. This is why the American Cancer Society's most effective antismoking commercial involved a cartoon character named "Johnny Smoke," a long, tall cowboy cigarette. He was repeatedly asked, as he blew smoke away from his gun: "Johnny Smoke, how many men did you shoot today?" That was it: no direct threat, no explicit conclusion about the harm of smoking. It was low-key, and the audience was allowed to draw their own conclusions.

Despite evidence that high-fear messages tend to repulse people, fear appeals are widely used in health education, politics, and advertising. The assumption is that making people afraid persuades them to stop smoking or to vote for a certain candidate or to buy a particular product (Gleicher & Petty, 1992). Does fear work? Sometimes it does.

In one study of the effect of low versus high fear, Gleicher and Petty (1992) had students at Ohio State University listen to one of four different simulated radio news stories about crime on campus. The broadcasts were either moderate in fear (crime was presented as a serious problem) or only mildly fearful (crime was not presented as a serious problem). Besides manipulating fear, the researchers varied whether the appeals had a clear assurance that something could be done about crime (a crime-watch program) or that little could be done (i.e., the crime-watch programs do not work). The researchers also varied the strength of the arguments; some participants heard strong arguments, and others heard weak ones. In other words, some participants heard powerful arguments in favor of the crime-watch program whereas others heard powerful arguments that showed that crime-watch programs did not work. In the weak argument condition, some participants heard not very good arguments in favor of crime-watch programs whereas others heard equally weak arguments against the effectiveness of crime-watch programs. In all these variations of the persuasive message, the speaker was the same person with the same highly credible background.

The researchers found that under low fear conditions, strong persuasive arguments produced more attitude change than weak arguments, regardless of whether the programs were expected to be effective. In other words, if crime did not appear to be a crisis situation, students were not overly upset about the message or the possible outcome (effectiveness of the crime-watch program) and were simply persuaded by the strength of the arguments.

However, people who heard moderately fearful broadcasts focused on solutions to the crime problem. When there was a clear expectation that something could be done about crime on campus, weak and strong arguments were equally persuasive. If students were confident of a favorable outcome, they worried no further and did not thoroughly analyze the messages. But when the effectiveness of crime-fighting programs was in question, students did discriminate between strong and weak arguments. In other words, when there was no clear assurance that something effective could be done, fear motivated the participants to carefully examine the messages, so they tended to be persuaded by strong arguments. Again, concern for the outcome made them evaluate the messages carefully.

What we know from the Petty and Gleicher (1992) study is that fear initially motivates us to find some easily available, reassuring remedy. We will accept an answer uncritically if it promises us that everything will be okay. But if no such promise is there, then we have to start to think for ourselves. So, fear in combination with the lack of a clear and effective solution (a program to fight crime, in this case) leads us to analyze possible solutions carefully. Note that Petty and Gleicher were not dealing with really high fear. Ethical considerations prevent researchers from creating such a situation in the laboratory. It may be that very high fear shuts off all critical thinking for most of us.

What do we know, then, about the effectiveness of using fear to persuade? The first point is that if we do scare people, it is a good idea to give them some reassurance that they can protect themselves from the threat we have presented. The *protection–motivation* explanation of how fear appeals work argues that intimidation motivates us to think about ways to protect ourselves (Rogers, 1983). We are willing to make the effort to evaluate arguments carefully. But, in keeping with the cognitive miser strategy, if we don't need to analyze the arguments, we won't.

What is the bottom line on the effectiveness of fear appeals? Based on the available research we can conclude that fear appeals are most effective when four conditions are met (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1992):

1. The appeal generates relatively high levels of fear.

2. The appeal offers a specific recommendation about how to avoid any dire consequences depicted in the appeal.

3. The target of the appeal is provided with an effective way of avoiding the dire consequences depicted in the appeal.

4. The target of the appeal believes that he or she can perform the recommended action to avoid the dire consequences.

The Importance of Timing: Primacy Versus Recency

law of primacy The law of persuasion stating that the first persuasive argument received is more persuasive than later persuasive arguments.

The effectiveness of any persuasive attempt hinges on the use of an effective strategy, including the timing of the message's delivery. When is it best to deliver your message? If you were given the option of presenting your message before or after your opponent in a debate, which should you choose? Generally, persuasive situations like these are governed by a law of primacy (Lawson, 1969). That is, the message presented first has more impact than the message presented second. However, the **law of primacy** does not always hold true. It depends on the structure of the situation. A primacy effect occurs when the two messages follow one another closely, and there is a delay between the second message and the audience response or assessment. In this situation, the first message has the greater impact. But when there is a delay between the two messages, and a response or assessment is made soon after the second message, we see a recency effect—the second message has a greater impact (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 Conditions that favor either a primacy effect (top) of recency effect (bottom). Primacy or recency depends on when a delay is introduced.

The primacy and recency effects apply most clearly under certain conditions—when both sides have equally strong arguments and when listeners are reasonably motivated to understand them. If one side has a much stronger argument than the other side, listeners are likely to be persuaded by the strong argument, regardless of whether it is presented first or last (Haugtvedt & Wegener, 1993). When listeners are very motivated, very interested in the issue, they are more likely to be influenced by the first argument (the primacy effect) than by those they hear later on (Haugtvedt & Wegener, 1993).
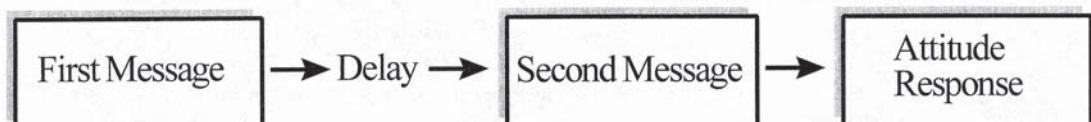

Law of Primacy: First message is more persuasive under these conditions

First Message → Second Message → Delay → Attitude Response
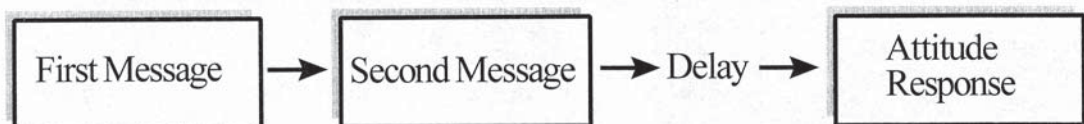
Law of Recency: Second message is more persuasive under these conditions

First Message → Delay → Second Message → Attitude Response

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Fitting the Message to the Audience

The Yale group also was interested in the construction and presentation of persuasive messages. One of their findings was that messages have to be presented differently to different audiences. For example, an educated or highly involved audience requires a different type of persuasive message than an uneducated or uninvolved audience. Rational arguments are effective with educated or analytical audiences (Cacioppo, Petty, & Morris, 1983). Emotional appeals work better with less educated or less analytical groups.

One-Sided Versus Two-Sided Messages

The nature of the audience also influences how a message is structured. For less educated, uninformed audiences, a one-sided message works best. In a one-sided message you present only your side of the issue and draw conclusions for the audience. For a well-educated, well-informed audience, a two-sided message works best. The more educated audience probably is already aware of the other side of the argument. If you attempt to persuade them with a one-sided argument, they may question your motives. Also, well-educated audience members can draw their own conclusions. They probably would resent your drawing conclusions for them. Thus, a more educated audience will be more persuaded by a two-sided argument (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953).

One-sided and two-sided appeals also have different effects depending on the initial attitudes of the audience. Generally, a one-sided message is effective when the audience already agrees with your position. If the audience is against your position, a two-sided message works best. You need to consider both the initial position of audience members and their education level when deciding on an approach. A two-sided appeal is best when your audience is educated, regardless of their initial position. A one-sided appeal works best on an uneducated audience that already agrees with you.

Inoculating the Audience

When presenting a two-sided message, you don't want to accidentally persuade the audience of the other side. Therefore, the best approach is to present that side in a weakened form to "inoculate" the audience against it (McGuire, 1985). When you present a weakened message, listeners will devise their own counterarguments: "Well, that's obviously not true! Any fool can see through that argument! Who do they think they're kidding?" The listeners convince themselves that the argument is wrong. **Inoculation theory** is based on the medical model of inoculation. People are given a weakened version of a bacterium or a virus so that they can develop the antibodies to fight the disease on their own. Similarly, in attempting to persuade people of your side, you give them a weakened version of the opposing argument and let them develop their own defenses against it.

In a study of the inoculation effect, McGuire and Papageorgis (1961) exposed participants to an attack on their belief that brushing their teeth prevented tooth decay. Obviously, everybody believes that brushing your teeth is beneficial. This is a cultural truism, something we all accept without thinking or questioning. Therefore, we may not have any defenses in place if someone challenges those truisms.

Participants in one group heard an attack on the tooth-brushing truism. A second group received a supportive defense that reinforced the concept that brushing your teeth is good for you. A third group was inoculated, first hearing a mild attack on the truism and then hearing a defense of tooth brushing. A fourth group, the control group, received no messages. Of the three groups who heard a message, the "inoculated" group was most likely to believe tooth brushing was beneficial (Figure 6.4). In fact, people

inoculation theory The theory that if a communicator exposes an audience to a weakened version of an opposing argument, the audience will devise counterarguments to that weakened version and avoid persuasion by stronger arguments later.

Figure 6.4 The inoculation effect. A persuasive attack on a truism caused a decrease in the belief of the validity of the truism unless participants were first "inoculated" with a weakened form of the persuasive message before receiving the attack message.

Based on data from McGuire and Papageorgis (1961).
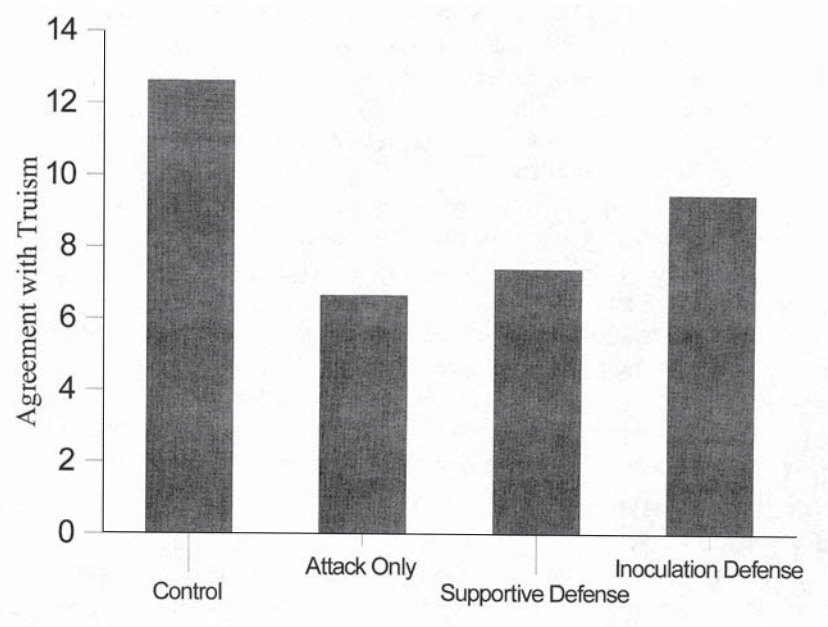
in the inoculated group, who were given a mild rebuttal of the truism, were *more likely* to believe in the benefits of tooth brushing than were the people who heard only a supportive defense of the truism.

Why does inoculation work? The study just reviewed suggests that inoculation motivates people to generate their own counterarguments and makes them more likely to believe the persuader's side of the issue. In this case, forewarned is truly forearmed. Inoculation also appears to operate by increasing attitude accessibility, or the ease with which a person can call an attitude to mind (Pfau et al, 2003). According to Pfau et al., inoculation works by making an attitude more accessible, which increases the strength of that attitude and its resistance to change.

The Role of Discrepancy

Another aspect of the audience a persuader has to consider is their preexisting attitudes in relation to the message the persuader wants to convey. For instance, imagine you are going to deliver a pro-choice message to a roomful of people with strong attitudes against abortion. Obviously, your message will be very different from the preexisting attitudes of your audience. This is a high-discrepancy situation. On the other hand, if you are trying to convince a roomful of pro-choice individuals, your message will not be very different from preexisting attitudes. This is an example of low discrepancy. In either of these cases, you would not expect much persuasion. In the first case, your message is too discrepant from the one your audience already holds; they will reject your message without giving it much thought. In the second case, you are basically saying what your audience already believes, so there won't be much persuasive effect or attitude change. Generally, a moderate amount of discrepancy produces the greatest amount of change.

Discrepancy interacts with the characteristics of the communicator. A highly credible communicator can induce change even when a highly discrepant message—one we ordinarily would reject or that contradicts a stereotype—is delivered. In one study, researchers found that Scottish participants had definite stereotypes of male hairdressers and of "skinheads" (Macrae, Shepherd, & Milne, 1992). Male hairdressers were

perceived as meek, and skinheads were perceived as aggressive. However, a report from a psychiatrist that stated the contrary—that a particular hairdresser was aggressive or a skinhead was meek—altered the participants' opinions of those two groups. Of course, a credible communicator cannot say just anything and expect people to believe it. An effective communicator must be aware of the audience's likely perception of the message. Clarence Darrow carefully staked out a position he knew the judge would not reject. He didn't argue that the death penalty should be abolished, because he knew that the judge would not accept that position. Rather, he argued that the penalty was not appropriate in this specific case because of the defendants' ages and their mental state:

> And, I submit, Your Honor, that by every law of humanity, by every law of justice. . . . Your Honor should say that because of the condition of these boys' minds, it would be monstrous to visit upon them the vengeance that is asked by the State. (Weinberg, 1957, p. 163)

In other words, even highly credible communicators have to keep in mind how discrepant their message is from the audience's views. For communicators with lower credibility, a moderate amount of discrepancy works best.

Social Judgment Theory How does discrepancy work? Sherif suggested that audience members make social judgments about the difference between the communicator's position and their own attitude on an issue (Sherif & Hovland, 1961; Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1965). This **social judgment theory** argues that the degree of personal involvement in an issue determines how the target will evaluate an attempt at persuasion.

Sherif suggested that an individual's perception of a message falls into one of three judgment categories, or latitudes. The **latitude of acceptance** is the set of positions the audience would find acceptable. The **latitude of rejection** is the set of arguments the audience would not accept. The **latitude of noncommitment** is a neutral zone falling between the other two and including positions audience members do not accept or reject but will consider.

The breadth of the latitudes is affected by how strongly the person feels about the issue, how ego-involved he or she is. As Figure 6.5 shows, as involvement increases, the latitudes of acceptance and noncommitment narrow, but the latitude of rejection increases (Eagly & Telaak, 1972). In other words, the more important an issue is, the less likely you are to accept a persuasive message unless it is similar to your position. Only messages that fall within your latitude of acceptance, or perhaps within your latitude of noncommitment, will have a chance of persuading you. As importance of an issue increases, the number of acceptable arguments decreases. Sherif measured the attitudes of Republicans and Democrats in a presidential election and found that very committed Republicans and very committed Democrats rejected almost all of the other side's arguments (Sherif et al., 1965). However, voters who were less extreme in their commitment were open to persuasion. Moderates of both parties usually accepted as many arguments from the opposition as they rejected. Therefore, as Darrow knew, a persuasive message must fall at least within the audience's latitude of noncommitment to be accepted.

social judgment theory
An attitude theory suggesting that the degree of personal involvement with an issue determines how a target of persuasion will judge an attempt at persuasion.

latitude of acceptance
In social judgment theory, the region of an attitude into which messages that one will accept fall.

latitude of rejection In social judgment theory, the region of an attitude into which messages that one will reject fall.

latitude of noncommitment In social judgment theory, the region of an attitude into which messages that one will neither accept nor reject fall.

The Problem of Multiple Audiences

On January 23, 1968, the USS *Pueblo* was stationed in international waters off the cost of North Korea. The *Pueblo* was a "spy ship" and was gathering intelligence about North Korea. On the morning of January 23, a North Korean subchaser S0-1 approached
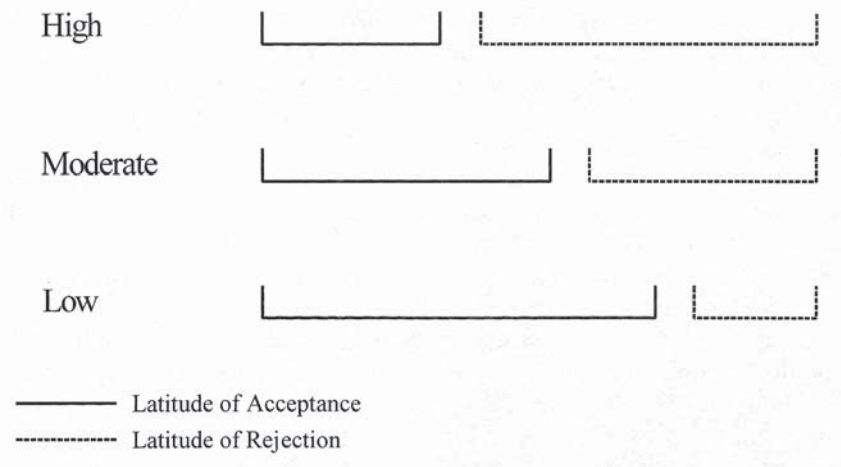
Degree of Involvement

Figure 6.5 The effect of involvement with an issue on the size of the latitudes of rejection and acceptance in social judgment theory. High involvement leads to an increased latitude of rejection and a related decreased latitude of acceptance.

the *Pueblo* at high speed. At the same time three North Korean torpedo boats were approaching. Eventually, the North Korean ships fired upon the *Pueblo* and eventually boarded her. One member of the *Pueblo* crew was killed and 82 were taken prisoner and held in North Korea. While in captivity, the crew members were beaten, tortured, and starved. The North Koreans wanted them to confess that they were actually in North Korean waters running the spy operation. Propaganda photographs were taken of the crew and were widely distributed. Movies were taken of the crew in staged situations that made crew members appear as though they were cooperating. Some members of the crew decided to send a message home indicating that they were being forced to say and do things. In one example of this, some crew members clearly displayed the "Hawaiian good luck sign" (a.k.a., the finger) against their faces or against their legs. Captain Bucher read statements using a monotone voice so that he sounded drugged.

The dilemma facing the crew of the *Pueblo* was to send two messages to two different audiences. On the one hand, they had to placate their captors by appearing to cooperate. On the other hand, they wanted to communicate to the American public and their families and friends that they did not subscribe to what they were being forced to do and say. This is the **multiple audience problem**—how to send different meanings in the same message to diverse audiences (Fleming, Darley, Hilton, & Kojetin, 1990; Van Boven, Kruger, Savitsky, & Gilovich, 2000).

multiple audience problem In persuasion, the problem that arises when a communicator directs the same message at two different audiences, wishing to communicate different meanings to each.

How do people manage these difficult situations? Researchers interested in this question had communicators send messages to audiences composed of friends and strangers (Fleming et al., 1990). The communicators were motivated to send a message that would convey the truth to their friends but deceive the strangers. Participants in this experiment were quite accurate at figuring out when their friends were lying. Strangers were not so accurate. Recall the fundamental attribution error and the correspondence bias from Chapter 3: We tend to believe that people mean what they say. In general, we are not very good at detecting lies (Ekman, 1985).

Friends also were able to pick up on the communicator's hidden message, because they shared some common knowledge. For example, one communicator said she was going to go to Wales, a country her friends knew she loved, and was going to do her shopping for the trip in a department store her friends knew she hated. The message was clear to those in the know: She is lying. The department store reference was *a private key* that close friends understood. This is the way communicators can convey different meanings in the same message. They use special, private keys that only one audience understands. We often see private keys used in political ads, especially those ads aimed at evoking stereotypes and emotional responses.

Another instance of the multiple-audience problem is when you have to maintain different personas to different people at the same time. For example, if your boss and a potential dating partner are attending a party you are attending, you probably want to project a "professional" persona to your boss and a more "fun-loving" persona to your dating interest. Can we pull this off? Can we, in fact, maintain vastly different personas at the same time and be successful in communicating them to the appropriate target, while concealing the other persona from the person we don't want to see it? The answer appears to be that we can.

In one experiment, Van Boven, Kruger, Savitsky, and Gilovich (2000) had participants project a "party animal" persona to one observer during an interaction session. The same participant then projected a "serious studious" persona to a second observer. In a third interaction session, the participant interacted with both observers simultaneously. The task facing the participant was to maintain the correct persona with the correct observer at the same time. The results showed that the participants were quite successful at the task. In fact, the participants tended to be overconfident in their ability to successfully project the two personas to the appropriate observers.

The Cognitive Approach to Persuasion

You may have noted that in the Yale model of persuasion the audience seems to be nothing more than a target for messages. People just sit there and take it, either accepting the message or not. Cognitive response approaches, on the other hand, emphasize the active participation of the audience (Greenwald, 1968). The cognitive approach looks at *why* people react to a message the way they do, why they say that a message is interesting or that a communicator is biased.

Cognitively oriented social psychologists emphasize that a persuasive communication may trigger a number of related experiences, memories, feelings, and thoughts that individuals use to process the message. Therefore, both what a person thinks about when she hears the persuasive message and how the person applies those thoughts, feelings, and memories to analyzing the message are critical. We now turn to the individual's cognitive response to the persuasive message.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model

One well-known cognitive response model is the **elaboration likelihood model (ELM).** This model, first proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), makes clear that audiences are not just passive receptacles but are actively involved in the persuasion process. Their attention, involvement, distraction, motivation, self-esteem, education, and intelligence determine the success of persuasive appeals. The elaboration likelihood model owes a lot to the Yale model, incorporating much of the Yale research on the important roles

elaboration likelihood model (ELM) A cognitive model of persuasion suggesting that a target's attention, involvement, distraction, motivation, self-esteem, education, and intelligence all influence central and/or peripheral processing of a persuasive message.

of communicator and message. But its primary emphasis is on the role of the audience, especially their emotions and motivations. According to ELM, two routes to persuasion exist: a central processing route and a peripheral processing route. Persuasion may be achieved via either of these routes.

Central Route Processing

central route processing
In the ELM, information may be processed by effortful, controlled mechanisms involving attention to and understanding and careful processing of the content of a persuasive message.

Central route processing involves elaboration of the message by the listener. This type of processing usually occurs when the person finds the message personally relevant and has preexisting ideas and beliefs about the topic. The individual uses these ideas and beliefs to create a context for the message, expanding and elaborating on the new information. Because the message is relevant, the person is motivated to listen to it carefully and process it in an effortful manner.

A juror listening to evidence that she understands and finds interesting, for example, will generate a number of ideas and responses. As she assimilates the message, she will compare it to what she already knows and believes. In the Leopold and Loeb trial, Judge Caverly may have elaborated on Darrow's argument for life imprisonment by recalling that in the Chicago courts, no one had been sentenced to death after voluntarily entering a guilty plea, and no one as young as the defendants had ever been hanged.

Elaboration of a message does not always lead to acceptance, however. If the message does not make sense or does not fit the person's knowledge and beliefs, elaboration may lead to rejection. For example, Judge Caverly might have focused on the brutal and indifferent attitude that Leopold and Loeb displayed toward Bobby Franks. If Darrow had not put together a coherent argument that fit the evidence, the judge probably would have rejected his argument. But the story Darrow told was coherent. By emphasizing the "diseased minds" of his clients, enhanced by the suggestion that they probably were born "twisted," he explained the unexplainable: why they killed Bobby Franks. At the same time, he made Leopold and Loeb seem less responsible. Thus, Darrow presented the judge with credible explanations on which he could expand to reach a verdict.

Central route processors elaborate on the message by filling in the gaps with their own knowledge and beliefs. Messages processed this way are more firmly tied to other attitudes and are therefore more resistant to change. Attitude change that results from central route processing is stable, long-lasting, and difficult to reverse.

Peripheral Route Processing

peripheral route processing In the ELM, information may be processed using cues peripheral or marginal to the content message.

What if the listener is not motivated, is not able to understand the message, or simply does not like to deal with new or complex information? In these incidences, the listener takes another route to persuasion, a peripheral route. In **peripheral route processing**, listeners rely on something other than the message to make their decisions; they are persuaded by cues peripheral or marginal to the message. A juror may be favorably influenced by the appearance of the defendant, for example. Or perhaps he or she remembers when his or her uncle was in a similar predicament and thinks, "He wasn't guilty either."

Emotional cues are very effective in persuading peripheral route processors (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Recall the experiment on the effects of fear appeals in campus crime newscasts: A strong emotional appeal offering a reassuring solution was accepted regardless of whether the argument itself was strong or weak. Participants were not processing centrally; they paid no attention to the quality of the argument. They simply wanted reassurance, and the existence of a possible solution acted as a peripheral cue, convincing them that the argument must be valid. High or moderate fear makes us accept whatever reassuring solution is presented to us.

Familiar phrases or clichés included in persuasive messages can serve as peripheral cues to persuasion (Howard, 1997). Howard compared familiar (don't put all of your eggs in one basket) and literal (don't risk everything on a single venture) phrases for their ability to persuade via the peripheral route. Howard found that familiar phrases produced more persuasion under conditions of low attitude involvement (peripheral route) than under high involvement (central route). The familiar phrases were also more effective than the literal phrases when the individual was distracted from the message and when the target of the persuasive communication was low in the need for cognition.

Peripheral route processing often leads to attitude change, but because the listener has not elaborated on the message, the change is not very stable and is vulnerable to counter-pressures (Kassin, Reddy, & Tulloch, 1990). A juror who processes centrally will be firm in his or her conclusions about the evidence, but a peripheral route juror will be an easy target for the next persuader in the courtroom (ForsterLee, Horowitz, & Bourgeois, 1993).

Although we have distinguished between the central and peripheral routes, message processing is not an either/or proposition. In fact, you may process some parts of a message centrally, others peripherally. For example, a juror may be interested in and understand the scientific evidence presented at trial and process that information centrally. However, when an economist takes the stand, the juror may be bored or may think that people in bow ties are untrustworthy, and then process that testimony peripherally.

The Effect of Mood on Processing

Many speakers try to put their audience in a good mood before making their case. They tell a joke or an amusing story, or they say something designed to make listeners feel positive. Is this a good strategy? Does it make an argument more persuasive? It depends. When people are in a good mood, they tend to be distracted. Good moods bring out many related pleasant feelings and memories. Everything seems rosy. People in good moods cannot concentrate very well on messages; they cannot process information centrally. In one study on the influence of mood, people were put in either a good or a neutral mood and were given either an unlimited or very limited amount of time to listen to a message (Mackie & Worth, 1989). The strength of the persuasive messages also varied: One message contained strong arguments; the other, only weak arguments. The researchers reasoned that for the participants in good moods, strong and weak arguments would be equally effective. As shown in Figure 6.6, this was found to be the case, but only when there was a limited amount of time to study the messages. People in good moods did not distinguish between strong and weak arguments because they were not processing centrally.

Good feelings do not, however, always prevent central processing. If people in good moods are motivated to carefully evaluate and elaborate on a message, and if they have enough time, they will process centrally. A good mood will not have a direct effect on their attitudes, but it may make them think more positive thoughts about the message, if it is a strong one and they have time to consider it (Petty, Schumann, Richman, & Strathman, 1993). The good thoughts then lead to positive attitude change. For those using peripheral route processing, good moods don't lead to more positive thoughts and then to positive attitude change. These people aren't thinking about the message at all and are not elaborating on it. Instead, for them, good mood leads directly to attitude change.

Mood can act as a resource, helping us fend off the effects of negative information, increasing the likelihood that personally relevant negative information will be processed centrally (Raghunathan & Trope, 2002). According to the *mood-as-a-resource hypothesis*, a good mood acts as a buffer against the emotional effects of

Figure 6.6 The effect
of mood and processing
time on the impact of a
persuasive message. When
people are in a good mood
and have limited time to
process the message, there
is no effect of argument
strength. Given unlimited
time, participants are more
persuaded by the strong
argument. In a neutral
mood, participants are
more persuaded by strong
arguments than weak
arguments, regardless of
time limitation.

Adapted from Mackie and Worth (1989).
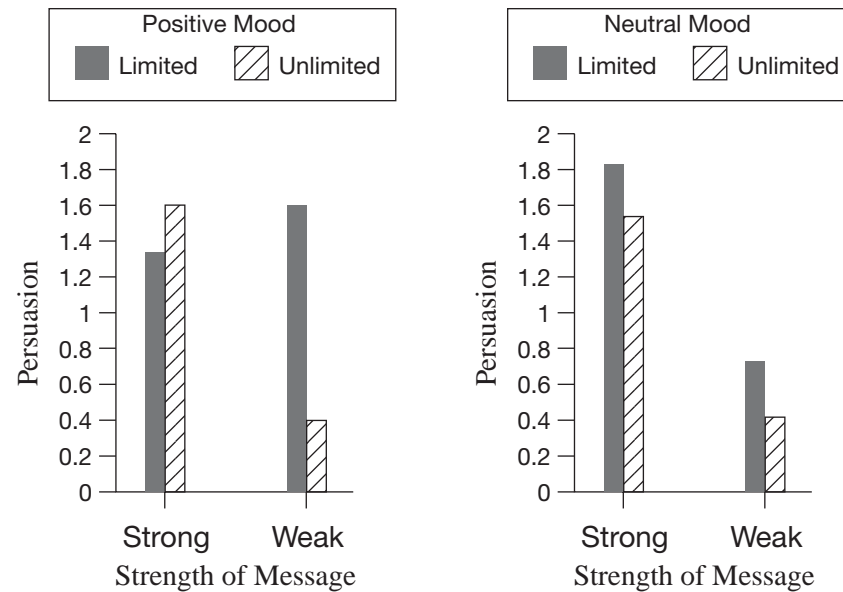
negative information, allowing us to focus on what we can learn from the information (Raghunathan & Trope, 2002). Raghunathan and Trope conducted a series of experiments demonstrating this effect. In one experiment, for example, participants (high- or low-caffeine consumers) were induced into either a good or bad mood. They were then exposed to personally relevant negative information about caffeine consumption. The results showed that participants who consumed larger amounts of caffeine recalled more of the negative information about caffeine when in a good mood than when in a bad mood (there was no such effect for participants who consumed low amounts of caffeine). In a second experiment, the researchers found that the negative information about caffeine led to more persuasion among high-caffeine consumers when they were in a good mood.

Figure 6.7 shows how good mood affects central and peripheral processors differently. Thus, the relationship between potentially biasing factors in persuasion, such as mood or likability of the communicator, is a complex one. Variables that bias the persuasion process still operate when an individual is motivated to process a message centrally (Petty, Wegener, & White, 1998). Petty and Wegener (1993) proposed the **flexible correction model (FCM)** to help us understand how biasing variables influence the persuasion process. According to the FCM, individuals using central route processing (highly motivated) are influenced by biasing variables because they are not aware of the potential impact of the biasing variable (e.g., mood) during a persuasion situation (Petty et al., 1998). Furthermore, correction for biasing conditions, according to the FCM, should take place under the following impact of the biasing conditions (p. 95):

**flexible correction model
(FCM)** A model stating that
individuals using central route
processing are influenced by
biasing variables, because they
are not aware of the potential
biasing conditions.

1. When an individual is motivated to search for biasing variables.

2. When an individual finds sources of potential bias after a search.

3. When an individual generates ideas or theories about the nature of the bias.

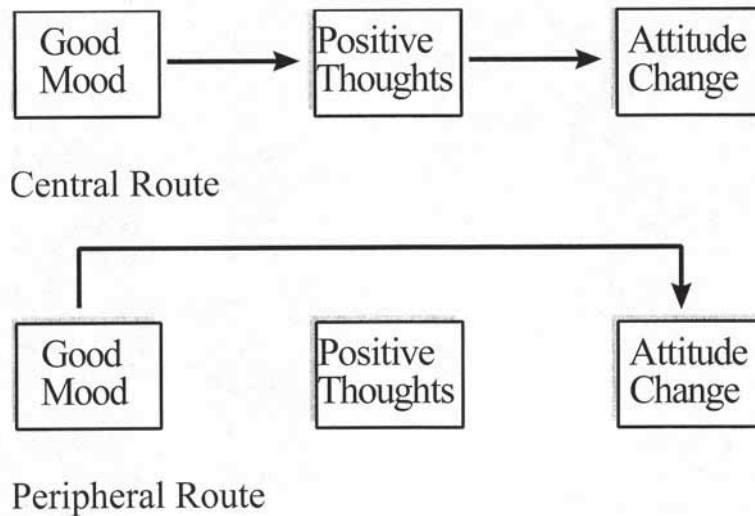4. When an individual is motivated and has the ability to make a correction for the biasing variable.

Figure 6.7 The effect of mood on central or peripheral route processing. When using central route processing, a good mood leads to the generation of positive thoughts, which affects attitudes. When using peripheral route processing, a good mood directly affects attitudes, bypassing the generation of positive thoughts.

Adapted from Petty, Schumann, Richman, and Strathman (1993).

In two experiments, Petty et al. (1998) tested the assumptions made by the FCM. In their first experiment, Petty and colleagues varied the likability of the source of a message (likable and unlikable) along with whether participants received an instruction to correct for the likability information. Petty and colleagues found that when no correction instruction was given, the likable source led to attitude change in the direction of the position advocated in a persuasive message (positive attitude change), whereas the unlikable source led to attitude change in the opposite direction (negative attitude change). This is the usual finding when such variables are manipulated. However, when participants were given an instruction to correct for the likability of the source, the results were just the opposite. The unlikable source produced positive attitude change, whereas the likable source produced negative attitude change. Additionally, there was greater correction for the unlikable source than the likable source.

In their second experiment, Petty and colleagues added a third variable: whether participants used high- or low-elaboration strategies. When participants used low-elaboration strategies and no correction instruction was given, the likable source yielded more persuasion than the unlikable source. However, when a correction instruction was given, the likable and unlikable sources were equally persuasive. The opposite occurred under high-elaboration strategies. Here, in the no-correction condition, the likable and unlikable sources produced the same levels of persuasion, whereas when the correction instruction was given, the unlikable source produced more attitude change than the likable source.

The results of both studies suggest that when individuals become aware of a biasing factor (likability or mood), they will be motivated to correct for the biasing factor under high- or low-elaboration conditions. Thus, when individuals become aware of such biasing factors, they may not influence persuasion more when peripheral route processing is used. Additionally, such factors may not bias the processing of information relevant to the issue contained in a persuasive message when central route processing is used (Petty et al., 1998). It appears as though the mechanisms for correction for biasing factors operate independently from the mechanisms for processing the content of the message (Petty et al., 1998).

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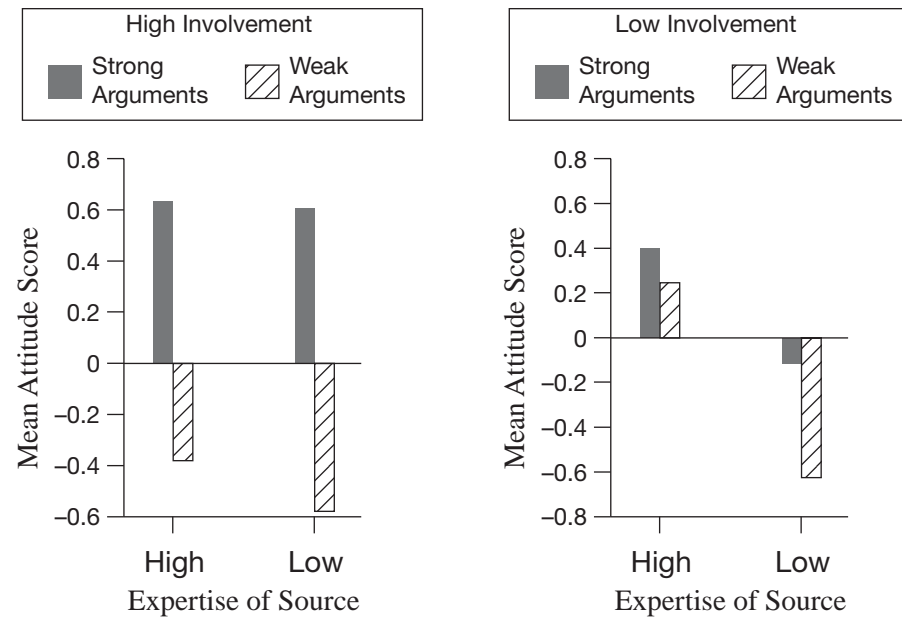
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Figure 6.8 The effects of audience involvement, expertise of source, and strength of arguments.

From Cacioppo and Goldman (1981).

The Effect of Personal Relevance on Processing

Another factor affecting central versus peripheral route processing is personal relevance. If an issue is important to us and affects our well-being, we are more likely to pay attention to the quality of the message. In one study, college students were told that the university chancellor wanted to have all seniors pass a comprehensive examination before they could graduate (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). Participants hearing the *high-relevance version* of this message were told the policy would go into effect the following year and, consequently, would affect them. Participants hearing the *low-relevance version* were informed that the policy wouldn't be implemented for several years and therefore would not affect them.

The researchers also varied the quality of the arguments and the expertise of the communicator. Half the participants heard persuasive arguments, and the other half heard weaker arguments. Half were told that the plan was based on a report by a local high school class (low communicator expertise), and the other half were told the source was the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (high expertise).

Results indicated that relevance did influence the type of processing participants used (Figure 6.8). Students who thought the change would affect them were persuaded by the strong argument and not by the weak one. In other words, they carefully examined the arguments, using central processing. Students who thought the change wouldn't affect them simply relied on the expertise of the communicator. They were persuaded when they thought the plan was based on the Carnegie Commission report, regardless of whether the arguments were strong or weak. Low relevance, in other words, enhances the influence of communicator credibility and increases the likelihood that listeners will use peripheral processing.

Does high relevance mean that you always will be persuaded by strong and rational arguments? Not at all. An issue may be highly relevant to you because it involves an important personal value. In this case, even a very persuasive argument probably won't change your opinion. In the current abortion debate, for example, an extreme position on

either side is based on fundamental values relating to privacy, coercion, and the nature of life. The issue is certainly relevant to individuals with extreme views, but they are unlikely to be persuaded to change their opinions by any argument.

If, however, an issue is highly relevant because of a particular outcome, rather than a value, then a strong, persuasive argument might work (Johnson & Eagly, 1989). If you are strongly opposed to taking a senior comprehensive exam, a persuasive message about the outcome, such as the possibility that passing the exam would increase your chances of getting into graduate school, might well convince you to take it.

Finally, the impact of a personally relevant message on central route processing also relates to a process called self-affirmation (which we shall discuss in more detail later in this chapter). In short, self-affirmation means confirming and maintaining one's self-image (Steele, 1988). Self-affirmation may be especially important when personally relevant information is threatening (Harris & Napper, 2005). According to Harris and Napper, self-affirmation promotes processing of threatening information along the central route. Harris and Napper demonstrated this in an experiment in which college-age women were exposed to a "health promotion leaflet" in which a link was made between alcohol consumption and the risk of breast cancer. Some of the participants wrote an essay describing the values that were most important to them and how they affected their daily lives (self-affirmation condition), whereas other participants wrote about their least important values. Based on their answers on a pre-experimental questionnaire concerning alcohol consumption, the participants were divided into two groups: high-risk women and low-risk women. The results showed that high-risk women who self-affirmed were more likely to accept the content of the message contained in the health leaflet compared to those who did not self-affirm. Further, women in this group reported a perception of higher risk of developing breast cancer, experienced more negative affect while reading the leaflet, and indicated a greater intention to reduce their alcohol consumption. Interestingly, these effects endured over a period of weeks. Thus, self-affirmation can enhance central processing of a threatening, personally relevant message (Harris & Napper, 2005) and better judge the merits of the threatening message (Correll, Spencer, & Zanna, 2004).

The Impact of Attitude Accessibility on Elaboration

In addition to the relevance of a persuasive message to an individual, processing of a persuasive message is also influenced by *attitude accessibility.* Attitude accessibility refers to the ease with which an attitude can be automatically activated when the correspondent attitude object is encountered (Fabrigar, Priester, Petty, & Wegener, 1998). Attitude accessibility is one dimension along which the strength of an attitude can be measured. Highly accessible attitudes tend to be stronger than less accessible attitudes. Fabrigar and colleagues reasoned that highly accessible attitudes may enhance message elaboration because attitude-relevant information is more readily available than with less accessible attitudes.

Fabrigar and colleagues (1998) conducted two experiments to investigate the role of attitude accessibility in persuasion. In the first experiment, attitude accessibility was measured, and participants' attitudes were classified as low, moderate, or high in accessibility. The researchers manipulated the quality of the arguments made within a persuasive message on nuclear power (high or low quality). The results of experiment 1 confirmed that individuals with high-accessibility attitudes were more likely to elaborate the persuasive message than those with low accessibility attitudes. Specifically, argument quality enhanced attitudes among moderately and highly

accessible attitudes but not for low-accessibility attitudes. This effect was strongest for the individuals with highly accessible attitudes. Data from the second experiment confirmed the first.

The bottom line is that attitude accessibility mediates the amount of elaboration that an individual will display when exposed to a persuasive message. High accessibility (high attitude strength) is associated with increased examination of the content of the message (central route processing). When attitude accessibility is low (a weak attitude), an individual is less likely to scrutinize the content of the persuasive message carefully.

Do Vivid Messages Persuade Better Than Nonvivid Messages?

What about the effect of vividness on persuasion? Does it make a difference in our attitudes or behavior? Advertisers and other persuaders certainly believe that vivid messages, presented in eye- or ear-catching terms, are persuasive. Social psychologists interested in this issue stated, "Everybody knows that vividly presented information is impactful and persuasive" (Taylor & Thompson, 1982, p. 155). However, when these researchers surveyed the literature on vividness, they found very weak support for the persuasive power of vivid materials.

In one study of the *vividness effect,* people were given vivid and nonvivid versions of crime stories in the news (Collins, Taylor, Wood, & Thompson, 1988). The vivid versions used colorful language and provided bizarre details. People listened to a vivid or nonvivid story and then rated its quality in terms of emotion, imagery, interest, and so forth as well as its persuasiveness. In a second study, people also had to predict how others would respond to the stories.

The studies found no evidence of a vividness effect; vivid messages had about the same persuasive effect as nonvivid messages. However, people believed that vivid messages affected other people. What influenced the participants if vividness did not? Interest: If the message involved a topic that interested them, people felt the message was more effective. Remember the effects of personal relevance in the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion.

On the other hand, some messages, such as political ads, appear to benefit from vividness—perhaps they work because they interest people and force them to pay more attention than they normally might. One study examined the effects of vivid language in a trial concerning a dispute between a contractor and a subcontractor on a building project (Wilson, Northcraft, & Neale, 1989). People playing the role of jurors watched different videotapes of the trial. One version had vivid phrasing; the other, nonvivid language (p. 135):

1. There was a *spiderweb* of cracks through the slab. (vivid)

    There was a *network* of cracks through the slab. (nonvivid)

2. The slab was *jagged* and had to be sanded. (vivid)

    The slab was *rough* and had to be sanded. (nonvivid)

The jurors tended to award the plaintiff more money when they heard vivid phrases. So, is there a vividness effect or not? Based on the evidence, it seems that vivid messages have an initial effect, especially if there is little else to compete with them. In the trial situation, vivid information had a strong impact when the jurors were presented with a lot of evidence that was not directly important for their decision, such as

a history of the building project and pictures of the construction site. Then the jurors heard the vivid language ("a spiderweb of cracks through the slab"). Given the background of irrelevant information, they were influenced by the one or two vivid messages they heard.

How can we reconcile the seemingly conflicting results concerning the impact of vividness? One approach suggests that the impact of vividness depends on the number of cognitive resources that are devoted to processing a persuasive message (Meyers-Levy & Peracchio, 1995). According to Meyers-Levy and Peracchio, the impact of vivid information depends on the degree of correspondence between the resources a person has available to process a message and the resources required to adequately process information. Vivid language or illustrations, according to Myers-Levy and Peracchio, should have the greatest impact when a persuasive message requires relatively few resources, and a person is highly motivated to process the message. Conversely, for a highly motivated individual and a persuasive message that requires high levels of resources, vivid content should not have a strong impact. If an individual is not highly motivated to process a message, then vividness will serve as a peripheral cue and have a significant impact on persuasion.

Myers-Levy and Peracchio (1995) conducted two experiments to confirm these predicted relationships. In their first experiment, they found that for highly motivated individuals, a demanding persuasive message (an advertisement of a bicycle) was most effective when vividness was low (a black-and-white photo of the bicycle and model was used). For a less demanding message, a vivid message (a color advertisement) was more effective. In the second experiment, low-motivation and highly motivated individuals were included. They found that for low-motivation individuals, a vivid message was more effective than a less vivid message. For highly motivated individuals, the impact of vividness (color) depended on the level of resources needed to process the message (as described earlier). These results were supported by three experiments by Keller Punam and Block (1997).

Thus, in a situation in which much information already has been made available (low demand), or when the audience is particularly interested in the issue, one vivid message may not have a significant impact. However, when people are not particularly interested, a vivid message may have significant impact. In other words, vividness is a peripheral cue. When individuals find the message interesting and personally relevant, they process centrally, and vividness has little effect. But when the cognitive miser is at work, a vivid message may have a definite influence on attitudes.

Need for Cognition: Some Like to Do It the Hard Way

Some people prefer central route processing no matter what the situation or how complex the evidence. These people have a high **need for cognition (NC).** According to Cacioppo, Petty, and Morris (1983), high-NC people like to deal with difficult and effortful problems. On a scale assessing this cognitive characteristic, they agree with such statements as, "I really enjoy a task that invokes coming up with new solutions to problems," and they disagree with such statements as, "I only think as hard as I have to."

High-NC people are concerned with the validity of the messages they receive, which suggests that they rely mainly on central route processing (Cacioppo et al., 1983). High-NC individuals also organize information in a way that allows them to remember messages and use them later (Lassiter, Briggs, & Bowman, 1991). Those low in need for cognition tend to pay more attention to the physical characteristics of the speaker, indicating peripheral processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

need for cognition (NC)
An individual difference dimension in persuasion concerning the degree to which individuals prefer effortful processing of information.

High-NC individuals are also better able to distinguish the authenticity on persuasive information than low-NC individuals (Engleberg & Sjöberg, 2005). Engleberg and Sjöberg showed high- and low-NC individuals films about the risks of nuclear energy. One of the films was the fictional movie *The China Syndrome,* whereas the other was the film *Chernobyl: The Final Warning* based on a book written by a bone marrow specialist. Engleberg and Sjöberg found that high-NC individuals were more likely to identify Chernobyl as an event that actually happened than low-NC individuals. Interestingly, however, both high- and low-NC individuals assessed the risks of nuclear energy at the same levels, regardless of the film they had seen.

Research also shows that high-NC individuals are less likely to switch away from a course of action that has a disappointing outcome than are low-NC individuals (Ratner & Herbst, 2005). Ratner and Herbst report that people tend to shift away from a disappointing strategy because of emotional reactions, rather than focusing on more cognitively based beliefs. Those high in the need for cognition can apparently stay better focused on the cognitive aspects and not be ruled by emotional reactions.

Elaboration likelihood model research shows that people who have a need to process information centrally—high-NC people—accept and resist persuasive arguments in a different way than those low in need for cognition. Because they are processing centrally, they elaborate on the messages they hear. They are influenced by the qualities of the argument or the product advertised rather than by peripheral cues (Haugtvedt, Petty, & Cacioppo, 1992). Conversely, low-NC people are more likely to focus on the peripheral aspects of information or an advertisement (Sicilia, Ruiz, & Munuera, 2005). Finally, high-NC individuals hold newly formed attitudes longer and are more resistant to counterpersuasion (Haugtvedt & Petty, 1992).

The Heuristic Model of Persuasion

heuristic and systematic information-processing model (HSM) A cognitive model of persuasion suggesting that of the two routes to persuasion, systematic and heuristic, people choose to use heuristics or peripheral cues more often.

A second cognitive model of persuasion is the **heuristic and systematic information-processing model (HSM).** Proposed by Chaiken (1987), the HSM has much in common with the ELM. As in the ELM, there are two routes for information processing: the systematic and the heuristic. Systematic processing in the HSM is essentially the same as central processing in the ELM, and heuristic processing is the same as peripheral processing. Heuristics, as you recall from Chapter 3, are simple guides or shortcuts that people use to make decisions when something gets too complicated or when they are just too lazy to process systematically.

The main difference between the two theories lies in the claim of the HSM that reliance on heuristics is more common than is usually thought (Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989). If motivation and ability to comprehend are not high, individuals rely on heuristics most of the time. Some of these heuristics might be: "Experts can be trusted." "The majority must be right." "She's from the Midwest; she must be trustworthy." "If it was on the evening news, it must be true."

Heuristic processing can be compared to scanning newspaper headlines. The information you receive is minimal, and the truth or relevance of the headline will be determined by those simple rules. "Congress Cannot Agree on a Budget," reads the headline. Your response would be to quickly check the available heuristics that might explain the headline. Here it is: "Politicians are incompetent." Next headline, please. The HSM suggests that people are more likely to agree with communicators who are expert and with messages with which most people agree. Again we see the cognitive miser at work.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory: A Model of Self-Persuasion

Direct persuasion by a communicator is not the only route to attitude or behavior change. Attitude change may also occur if we find our existing attitudes in conflict with new information, or if our behavior is inconsistent with our beliefs. Festinger (1957) observed that people try to appear consistent. When we act counter to what we believe or think, we must justify the inconsistency. In other words, if we say one thing and do something else, we need a good reason. Usually, we persuade ourselves that we have a good reason, even if it means changing our previous attitudes. Inconsistency is thus one of the principal motivations for attitude change.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory proposed that if inconsistency exists among our attitudes, or between our attitudes and our behavior, we experience an unpleasant state of arousal called *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1957). The arousal of dissonance motivates us to change something, our attitudes or our behavior, to reduce or eliminate the unpleasant arousal. Reducing the tension helps us achieve *consonance,* a state of psychological balance.

Cognitive dissonance theory is like *homeostatic theory* in biology. Consider what happens when you are hungry: Your brain detects an imbalance in your blood sugar levels, causing a physiological state of hunger. You are motivated to reduce this unpleasant state of arousal by finding and consuming food. Similarly, when cognitive consonance is disrupted, you feel tension and are motivated to reduce it.

The five key assumptions of **cognitive dissonance theory** can be summarized as follows:

cognitive dissonance theory A theory of attitude change proposing that if inconsistency exists among our attitudes, or between our attitudes and our behavior, we experience an unpleasant state of arousal called cognitive dissonance, which we will be motivated to reduce or eliminate.

1. Attitudes and behavior can stand in a consonant (consistent) or a dissonant (inconsistent) relationship with one another.

2. Inconsistency between attitudes and behavior gives rise to a negative motivational state known as cognitive dissonance.

3. Because cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable state, people are motivated to reduce the dissonance.

4. The greater the amount of dissonance, the stronger the motivation to reduce it.

5. Dissonance may be reduced by rationalizing away the inconsistency or by changing an attitude or a behavior.

How Does Cognitive Dissonance Lead to Attitude Change?

Exactly how does cognitive dissonance change attitudes? To find out, imagine that you have volunteered to be a participant in a social psychological experiment. You are instructed to sit in front of a tray of objects and repeatedly empty and refill the tray for the next hour. Then, to add more excitement to your day, you are asked to turn pegs in holes a little at a time. When your tasks are over, you are asked to tell the next participant how interesting and delightful your tasks were. For doing this, you are paid the grand sum of $1. Unbeknownst to you, other participants go through the same experience and also are asked to tell an incoming participant how interesting the tasks are, but each is paid $20.

When this classic experiment was done in 1959, almost all the participants agreed to misrepresent how much fun the experiment was (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). Several weeks later, the participants were contacted by a third party and asked whether they had enjoyed the study. Their responses turned out to depend on how much money they had been paid. You might predict that the participants who got $20 said that they enjoyed their experience more than those who got only $1. Well, that's not what happened. Participants paid $20 said the tasks were boring, and those paid $1 said they had enjoyed the tasks. A third group, the control participants, were given no reward and were not told that anyone else had received one. Like the $20 group, they said the tasks were boring.

Cognitive dissonance theory argues that change occurs when people experience dissonance. Where is the dissonance in this experiment? Being paid $1, a trifling sum even in 1959, was surely insufficient justification for lying. If a $1 participant analyzed the situation logically, it would look like this: "I lied to someone because the experimenter asked me to, and I got paid only a buck." Conclusion: "Either I am a liar or I am stupid." Neither conclusion fits with what we generally think of ourselves. The dissonance is between what we want to think of ourselves and how we have behaved. So, how does the participant resolve the dissonance? The behavior can't be undone, so the participant engages in self-persuasion: "I'm not a liar or stupid, so I must have meant what I said. I enjoyed the experiment." The $20-participant has an easily available, if not very flattering, justification for the lie: "I needed the money."

The Reverse Incentive Effect

The implications of this study and many more that have replicated the effect over the years are intriguing. One concept that came from the original study is the reverse-incentive effect: When people are given a large payment for doing something, they infer that the activity must be difficult, tedious, or risky (Freedman, Cunningham, & Krismer, 1992). Thus, professional athletes who once played the game just for fun may now moan about playing the game for $5 million a year. People seem to get suspicious when they are paid large sums for doing something they enjoyed doing in the first place. They feel a little apprehensive and develop a less positive view of the activity (Crano & Sivacek, 1984).

Dissonance theory argues, then, that the less the reward or the less the threatened punishment used to make people behave counter to their attitudes, the more people have to provide their own justifications for their behavior. The more they have to persuade themselves of the rightness of the behavior, the more their attitude is likely to change.

The Importance of Free Choice

An important condition in the arousal of dissonance is whether behavior is freely chosen or coerced. In another study of cognitive dissonance, participants were asked to write an essay arguing a position that ran counter to their real beliefs (Elkin & Leippe, 1986). Furthermore, they did this attitude-inconsistent act when they felt they had freely chosen it. Dissonance theorists call this situation *induced compliance*. The researchers found that when participants wrote an essay counter to their beliefs, they showed greater physiological arousal than if they had written an essay consistent with their beliefs. This finding is compatible with predictions from cognitive dissonance theory, specifically that dissonance increases feelings of tension (physiological arousal).

This study reinforced the finding that people do not experience dissonance if they do not choose the inconsistent behavior (Brehm & Cohen, 1962). If they are forced to do something, the coercion is a sufficient external justification for the attitude-

discrepant actions. If they don't have to justify their behavior to themselves, there is no self-persuasion. This suggests that attribution processes may play a role in mediating dissonance arousal and reduction. We explore this possibility later in this chapter.

Postdecision Dissonance

Free choice relates to dissonance in another way when you have to choose between two mutually exclusive, equally attractive, but different alternatives (e.g., between two cars or two jobs). After a choice is made, dissonance is experienced. It is important to note that postdecision dissonance is not the same as predecision conflict, where you vacillate between the two alternatives. *Postdecision dissonance* comes after your decision.

Here is how it works: Let's say you have enough money to buy a car. There are two cars you are considering that are equally attractive to you. For each car, there is a set of positive cognitions. Once you have made your choice (let's say you picked car 1), all the positive cognitions associated with your chosen alternative are consistent with your choice. However, all the positive cognitions associated with the unchosen alternative are now inconsistent with your choice. Dissonance theory predicts that you will take steps to reduce the dissonance associated with the unchosen alternative. One way to reduce dissonance would be to change your decision (that is, choose car 2). Of course, this won't work, because now all of the cognitions associated with car 1 are inconsistent with your new decision, and the dissonance remains. More likely, you will begin to think of negative things about the unchosen car to reduce dissonance. For example, you may reason that the insurance costs would be higher, the color isn't exactly what you wanted, and the warranty is not as good. At the same time, you may also think of more positive things about the chosen car. For example, you may point out how comfortable the seats are, how good the stereo sounds, and how the color fits you perfectly.

The arousal of postdecision dissonance and its subsequent reduction was demonstrated in a classic experiment by Brehm (1956). In this experiment, female participants first rated the desirability of several household products (e.g., a toaster). Brehm then offered the women one of the two products they had rated very closely or they had rated very differently. After the women made their choices, they again rated the products. Brehm found that when the two choice alternatives were close in desirability (a difficult decision), ratings of the chosen alternative became more positive, compared to the original ratings. At the same time, the ratings of the unchosen product became more negative. This effect was less pronounced when the choice was between two products that varied more widely in desirability (easy decision).

Generally, the greater the separation between alternatives, the less dissonance will be produced after a decision. After all, a choice between a highly desirable product and an undesirable product is an easy one. On the other hand, the closer the alternatives are to one another (assuming they are not identical), the more difficult the decision and the more postdecision dissonance will be aroused. Thus, the greatest postdecision dissonance will be realized when you have to choose between two mutually exclusive (you can only have one), equally attractive, but different alternatives.

How do we explain these free-choice dissonance situations? Shultz and Lepper (1999) suggested that an analogy can be made between dissonance phenomena and the operation of artificial intelligence neural networks. Networks of cognitions underlie states of consonance and dissonance and are activated by a set of constraints imposed by a problem. For example, in a choice between two cars, you may be constrained by finances, model preference, and color desirability. According to Shultz and Lepper, the decision we make attempts to satisfy as many of the constraints as possible. In short,

"the motivation to increase cognitive consonance, and thus to reduce dissonance, results from the various constraints on the beliefs and attitudes that a person holds at a given point in time" (p. 238). Consonance results when similar cognitions are activated and inconsistent cognitions are inhibited. Thus, in the free-choice situation, linkages among positive cognitions associated with an alternative produce consonance. However, for the unchosen alternative, the linkages between inconsistent elements (the unchosen alternative and the positive cognitions associated with it) produce dissonance.

Shultz and Lepper (1996) performed computer simulations of Brehm's (1956) original experiment and produced results that matched quite well with Brehm's results. That is, ratings of the unchosen alternative became more negative, and ratings of the chosen alternative became only slightly more positive. However, Shultz and Lepper pointed out that in Brehm's experiment, participants always made a decision that was both difficult (two products that were rated very similarly) and between two highly desirable products. Schultz and Lepper found that when participants had to choose between two similarly rated but undesirable products, the ratings of the chosen product became much more positive, but the ratings of the unchosen product became only slightly more negative.

An experiment by Shultz, Leveille, and Lepper (1999) sought to test the results from computer simulations of free-choice experiments against actual behavior of individuals. Participants in this experiment were given the choice between two posters after indicating on a rating scale how much they liked each poster. The choice parameters varied in difficulty. An easy choice was one between two posters—one with a high initial rating and one with a low initial rating. In the "high-difficult" condition, a choice was to be made between two posters that had been rated very positively by participants. Finally, in the "low-difficult" condition, participants had to choose between two posters that had been poorly rated. Following the choice procedure, participants again rated the posters. The results paralleled the computer simulations. In the high-difficult condition, ratings of the unchosen alternative became substantially more negative, whereas ratings of the chosen alternative became only slightly more positive. In the low-difficult condition, the opposite was true; ratings of the chosen alternative became much more positive. However, ratings of the unchosen alternative became only slightly more negative. These results are consistent with Shultz and Lepper's (1996) *consonance constraint satisfaction model.*

Finally, the way that postdecision dissonance operates may depend partly on one's culture (Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005; Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus, & Suzuki, 2004). In Western culture *personal dissonance* reduction dominates. This means that when we are selecting between two alternatives for ourselves, we are likely to experience dissonance and resolve it in the manner predicted by dissonance theory. However, in Eastern cultures (e.g., Japan) personal choices do not arouse as much dissonance as they do in Western cultures. Instead, *interpersonal dissonance* tends to be more important. Interpersonal dissonance arises when an individual is required to make a choice for someone else. In the Hoshino-Browne et al. (2005) study, for example, European Canadians (i.e., Canadians born in Canada) and Asian Canadians (Canadians born in an Asian country) were asked to rank 10 Chinese cuisine entrees that would be served at an on-campus restaurant. The rankings were done under two conditions. In one condition, participants were instructed to rank the entrees based on their own personal preferences (self-preferences). In the other condition, participants were instructed to rank the entrees according to the preferences of their best friend (other preferences). After completing some other measures, participants were offered two gift certificates for entrees they had ranked (their fifth and sixth choices were offered). Participants had to choose one of the gift certificates for themselves (in the self-preference condition)
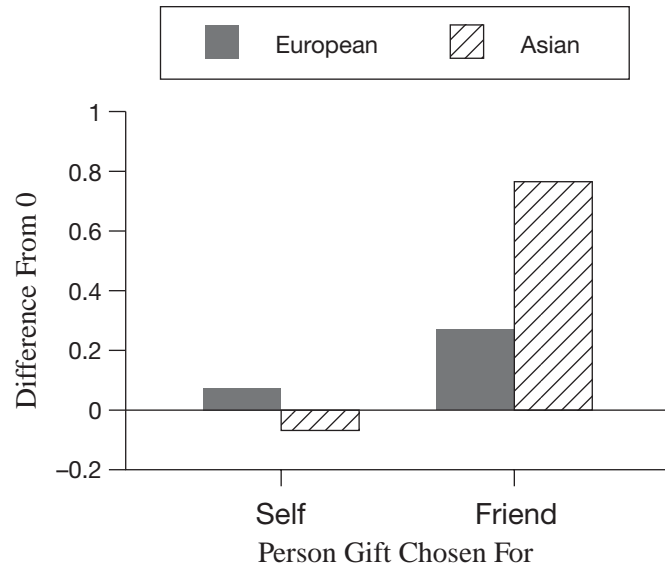
Figure 6.9   Dissonance when making a choice for oneself or a friend among Asian and European Canadians.

Based on data from Hoshino-Browne et al. (2005).

or their friend (in the other preference condition). The results, as shown in Figure 6.9 showed that when European Canadians were making a choice for themselves, more dissonance reduction was shown than when making a choice for the friend. The opposite was true for the Asian Canadians. They showed more dissonance reduction when making a choice for their friend than for themselves.

Responsibility: Another View of Cognitive Dissonance

Another view suggests that cognitive dissonance occurs only when our actions produce negative consequences (Cooper & Scher, 1992). According to this view, it is not the inconsistency that causes dissonance so much as our feelings of personal responsibility when bad things happen (Cooper & Fazio, 1984).

Let's say, for example, that you wrote a very good essay in favor of something you believed in, such as not raising tuition at your school. You knew that the essay could be presented to the school's board of trustees, the body that determines tuition rates. You then learned that your essay was actually used to convince the board to raise tuition. Or perhaps you were asked to write an essay taking a position you did not believe in—raising tuition. You then learned that the essay convinced the board to raise tuition. How would you feel?

According to this responsibility view, simply doing something counter to your beliefs will not produce dissonance unless there are negative results. If you are opposed to tuition hikes and write an essay in favor of them, but there are no hikes as a result, you do not experience dissonance. In several similar studies, people were asked to write essays advocating a position—raising tuition—that conflicted with their beliefs. When rates were increased and essayists felt responsible for the outcome, they resolved the dissonance by changing their attitude in the direction of the outcome. That is, they began to say they were now more in favor of a fee increase than before they wrote the essay. When students wrote essays in favor of a fee increase, and fees were not increased, they did not experience dissonance and did not change their attitudes. When there is no tension, there is no attitude change.

So, what creates dissonance, inconsistency, or a sense of responsibility? There have been hundreds, perhaps thousands, of experiments that support the basic ideas of cognitive dissonance theory—namely, that inconsistency leads to attitude change. That there are valid alternatives simply means the theory may have to incorporate those ideas and continue to be revised.

Attribution Processes and Dissonance

We noted earlier that dissonance is unlikely to be aroused when a person has a sufficient external justification (attribution) for his or her attitude-discrepant behavior. An experiment by Cooper (1998) highlighted the role of attribution processes in mediating dissonance reactions. Cooper had participants write a counter attitudinal essay advocating the institution of 7:00 A.M. classes on campus (something students opposed). They wrote the essays under either a high-choice (participants were asked to write the essay "if you are willing") or a low-choice condition (the "if you are willing" phrase was left out). Participants were also randomly assigned to a misattribution condition (an instruction that inconsistent lighting makes many feel tense and aroused) or a no-misattribution condition (the instruction about the lighting effects was deleted). The main measure was the participants' ratings (positive or negative) about instituting 7:00 A.M. classes.

Cooper found that greater attitude change occurred under the high-choice condition. This confirms our earlier statement that under conditions of free choice, dissonance is more likely to be aroused and attitude change more likely to occur. Additionally, there was less attitude change in the direction of the essay under the misattribution condition than the no-misattribution condition. Participants in the misattribution condition had an external explanation for their arousal (dissonance), and were consequently less likely to change their attitude. The greatest amount of attitude change in the direction of the essay was realized in the high-choice (participants chose to write the essay)/no-misattribution condition. In a follow-up experiment using a different task, Cooper found that participants who had previously misattributed their arousal to the lighting did not show dissonance-consistent attitude change.

Attribution style also relates to the arousal of dissonance. Stalder and Baron (1998) investigated the relationship between *attributional complexity (AC)* and dissonance-produced attitude change in a series of experiments. Specifically, attributional complexity refers to how complex a person's attributions are for explaining behavior and events. High-AC individuals are those who normally engage in thorough attributional searches for information. Thus, a high-AC person will search long and hard for the source of arousal in a given situation (e.g., a situation that arouses dissonance). A low-AC person is less likely to engage in such a search.

The results from their first experiment confirmed the idea that high-AC individuals show little dissonance-related attitude change, most likely because they are able to generate a wide variety of possible causes for the arousal associated with dissonance (Stalder & Baron, 1998). Having attributed the arousal to something other than the dissonance-arousing situation, the high-AC individual would not be expected to show much attitude change. In their second experiment, Stalder and Baron found that low-AC individuals showed the typical dissonance-related attitude change after dissonance arousal.

The two experiments just discussed suggest strongly that dissonance-related attitude change is mediated by the attributions made about the dissonance situation. If an alternative to dissonance is provided for an explanation for dissonance-related arousal, the typical dissonance result does not occur. Stalder and Baron's study shows us that there are individual differences in attributional style, which correlates with dissonance-related attitude

change. Those individuals who are highly motivated to find causes for their arousal are less likely to show dissonance-related attitude change because they settle on an alternative attribution for their arousal, more so than a person who is not so motivated.

Lessons of Cognitive Dissonance Theory

What can we learn about persuasive techniques from cognitive dissonance theory? The first lesson is that cognitive inconsistency often leads to change. Therefore, one persuasive technique is to point out to people how their behavior runs counter to their beliefs. Presumably, if people are aware of their inconsistencies, they will change. Persuasion may also occur if individuals are made aware that their behavior may produce a negative outcome (Cooper & Scher, 1992).

A second lesson is that any time you can induce someone to become publicly committed to a behavior that is counter to their beliefs, attitude change is a likely outcome. One reason for the change is that people use their public behavior as a kind of heuristic, a rule that says people stand by their public acts and bear personal responsibility for them (Baumeister & Tice, 1984; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1992). In other words, the rule is, "If I did it, I meant it."

Cognitive Dissonance and Cult Membership

Cognitive dissonance plays an important role in the formation and maintenance of cults. Once people make a public commitment to a leader and a movement, it is hard for them to acknowledge their misgivings. Instead, they have to throw more and more resources into maintaining their commitment, even when it becomes obvious to others that the loyalty is misplaced. This phenomenon has occurred many times in human history. It happened in 1978 in Guyana, in Jonestown, the "utopian" community of the Reverend Jim Jones. On his orders, his followers committed mass suicide by drinking Kool Aid laced with cyanide. It happened again more recently in Waco, Texas.

In March 1993, a religious cult known as the Branch Davidians came to national attention at the beginning of its stand-off with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF). The cult was led by David Koresh, who claimed to receive orders from God. Koresh created the group's social reality. He separated cult members from the rest of the world, both physically and psychologically. He told them that he was Jesus and that "others" would deny the fact and try to destroy the cult. The Davidians stocked arms, food, and ammunition to prepare for apocalypse and confrontation with the outside world. Koresh's predictions seemed to come true when ATF agents came to seize the cult's automatic weapons. Guns blazed on both sides, leaving several agents dead and wounded.

A siege of the compound began that lasted nearly 2 months. Federal authorities grew increasingly concerned about the welfare of the many children inside and the lack of progress in the negotiations with Koresh. Finally, assured by experts that the Davidians would not commit mass suicide if threatened, agents pumped tear gas into the compound to force them outside. However, fires erupted inside the buildings, apparently started by the cult. Eighty-six cult members, including 23 children, were incinerated. Apparently, the Davidians chose self-destruction rather than destruction of their reality. Why were members so persuaded by Koresh's outrageous claims? How did they become so committed to the cult?

All cults have many characteristics in common. The primary feature is a charismatic leader. He or she takes on a supernatural aura and persuades group members to devote their lives and fortunes to the cult. Koresh was such a charismatic individual, able to convince large groups of people through clever arguments and persuasive appeals. For

example, he refuted doubters by claiming to possess sole understanding of the Scriptures and changed interpretations often to keep cult members constantly uncertain and reliant on him. Koresh used charm and authority to gain control of followers' lives. However, charisma alone is not enough to account for the behavior of the Davidians. We must also look at the cognitive dynamics of the individual members to see how they became so committed to Koresh and his ideals.

Joining the cult was no easy feat. At first, few demands were made, but after a while, members had to give more. In fact, members routinely turned over all of their possessions, including houses, insurance policies, and money. Once in the group, life was quite harsh. Koresh enforced strict (and changeable) rules on every aspect of members' lives, including personally rationing all their food, imposing celibacy on the men while taking women as his wives and concubines, and inflicting physical abuse. In short, residents of the compound had to expend quite a bit of effort to be members.

All the requirements for membership relate directly to what we know about attitudes and behavior from dissonance theory. For example, dissonance research shows that the harder people have to work to get into a group, the more they value that group (Aronson & Mills, 1959). By turning over all of their possessions, members were making an irreversible commitment to the cult. Once such a commitment is made, people are unlikely to abandon positive attitudes toward the group (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1982). After expending so much effort, questioning commitment would create cognitive dissonance (Osherow, 1988). It is inconsistent to prove devotion to a belief by donating all of your possessions and then to abandon those beliefs. In other words, to a large extent, cult members persuade themselves. Dissonance theory predicts that the Davidians would come to value the group highly and be disinclined to question Koresh. This is, in fact, what happened.

Interestingly, cult members do not lose faith when the situation begins to sour. In fact, there is sometimes an increase in the strength of their commitment. One study investigated a "doomsday" society, a group that predicts the end of the world (Festinger et al., 1982). The study found that when a prophecy failed, members became more committed to the group. There are five conditions that must be met before this effect will occur.

1. The belief must be held with deep conviction and must be reflected in the believer's overt behavior.

2. The believer must have taken a step toward commitment that is difficult to reverse, for example, giving all of his or her money to the group.

3. The belief must be specific and well enough related to real-world events that it can be disconfirmed, or proven false—for example, the prediction that the world will end on a specified day.

4. There must be undeniable evidence that the belief is false (the world doesn't end).

5. The individual believer must have social support for the belief after disconfirmation.

Most, perhaps all, five conditions were present in the Waco tragedy. Members were committed to their beliefs and gave everything they had to Koresh. There was evidence that the situation was unstable; several members had left the cult, and some were even talking to federal officials. And when it started to become obvious that

Koresh was not invincible, members had each other to turn to for social support. As negotiations deteriorated, Koresh altered his rhetoric to emphasize apocalyptic visions, rationalizing the cult's destruction and self-sacrifice. Cult members probably came to believe it was their destiny to die, if necessary. The power of persuasion can be seen in the tragic results.

Alternatives to Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Not all social psychologists believe cognitive dissonance theory is the best way to explain what happens when cognitive inconsistencies occur. Other theories have been proposed to explain how people deal with these discrepancies. In the sections that follow, we explore some alternatives to traditional cognitive dissonance theory.

Self-Perception Theory

Daryl Bem, a student of the great behaviorist psychologist B. F. Skinner, challenged cognitive dissonance theory, because, he asserted, he could explain people's behavior without looking at their inner motives. Bem (1972) proposed **self-perception theory,** which explains discrepant behavior by simply assuming that people are not self-conscious processors of information. People observe their own behavior and assume that their attitudes must be consistent with that behavior. If you eat a big dinner, you assume that you must have been hungry. If you take a public stand on an issue, the rule of self-perception theory is, "I said it, so I must have meant it." We don't look at our motives; we just process the information and conclude that there is no inconsistency.

self-perception theory
A theory suggesting that we learn about our motivations by evaluating our own behavior, useful especially in the area of attitude change.

Bem supported his theory with some interesting experiments. In one, he trained people to tell the truth whenever a "truth" (green) light was lit and to lie whenever a "lie" (red) light was lit. When the green light was on, people had to say something about themselves that was true. When the red light was on, people had to lie about themselves. Bem then asked the participants to make further statements that were either true or false under both truth and lie lights. Participants who told lies when the truth light was on came to believe that those false statements were true. Likewise, subjects who made true statements when the lie light was on reported that they lied.

The point of self-perception theory is that we make inferences about our behavior in much the same way an outside observer might. If you were observing the experiment, you would infer, quite reasonably, that whatever anyone said when the light was red was a lie and anything said under the green light was true. The participants assumed the same thing. According to self-perception theory, something does not have to happen "inside" the person for inconsistencies to be resolved—no tension, no motivation to reconcile attitudes and behavior, just information processing.

Rationalization

Imagine a group of cigar smokers sitting around a cigar shop talking about the potential health hazards of their cigar-smoking habit. There is ample evidence that cigarette smoking poses health risks. There is also evidence that cigar smoking may have some health risks as well. How do smokers reconcile the conflict between the health-related risks and continuing to smoke? Cognitive dissonance theory would predict that dissonance would be aroused in this situation. The fact that millions of people smoke is proof that dissonance does not always lead to behavior change. So, how can one continue to smoke, knowing the health risks? The answer is that smokers often engage in

rationalization. Smokers convince themselves that: "Nothing will happen to me," "I'll stop when I'm 40," or "My grandfather lived until 80, and he smoked like a chimney." Rationalizations are important in maintaining a coherent self-concept.

An interesting study was conducted by DeSantis (2003) that illustrates this rationalization process. DeSantis, being a cigar smoker himself, was part of a group of regulars who meet at a Kentucky cigar store to smoke their cigars and talk sports. DeSantis decided to study the inner workings of this group using a participant observation ethnography method. DeSantis continued his membership and at the same time carefully studied the interactions among the group members (with their knowledge and permission). DeSantis found that members generated five rationalizations to support their continued cigar smoking in the face of evidence of its harmful effects. These rationalizations are listed in Table 6.1, along with a brief explanation of each. Interestingly, these rationalizations were maintained even after one of the members died from heart disease. Rationalization can, indeed, be a powerful thing.

Self-Affirmation Theory

Dissonance may threaten a person's self-concept with negative implications, making the person appear stupid, unethical, or lazy (Steele, 1988). Nonsmokers probably view smokers as being all three. Then why don't people in dissonant situations alter their behavior? In the case of cigarette smoking, a large part of the answer is the highly addictive nature of nicotine. Many people try to quit and fail, or they can't face the prospect of never having another cigarette. So they are stuck with the dissonance. **Self-affirmation** theory suggests that people may not try to reduce dissonance if they can

self-affirmation theory
A theory that individuals may not try to reduce dissonance if they can maintain (affirm) their self-concept by showing they are morally adequate in other ways.

Table 6.1   Five Rationalizations Made By Cigar Smokers (Based on data in Desantis, 2003)

Rationalization	Explanation
Things done in moderation won't hurt you	Participants expressed that smoking in moderation won't be harmful. Some indicated that they cut down or only smoked in certain, limited situations. Some indicated that their physicians said it was OK to smoke cigars in moderation.
There are health benefits to smoking	Participants pointed to the stress-reducing effect of smoking. Some saw the stress-reducing effect as a legitimate trade-off for any health risks.
Cigars are not as bad as cigarettes	Participants deny that research on health risks of cigarettes do not apply to cigars, indicating that one smokes cigars less frequently than cigarettes and that one does not inhale cigars.
Research on health effects of cigar smoking is flawed	Discounting of research on effects of cigar smoking on the basis that the research is methodologically flawed. Two flaws cited: Lack of adequate research and inconsistent nature of findings.
Life is dangerous	Relative comparisons made between cigar smoking and other hazards (e.g., air pollution, driving). Dangers of smoking minimized in the light of other hazards.

maintain (affirm) their self-concept by proving that they are adequate in other ways: "Yes, I may be a smoker, but I'm also a good mother, a respected professional, and an active citizen in my community." These self-affirmations remove the sting inherent in a dissonance situation (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1992). People cope with a threat to one aspect of the self by affirming an unrelated part of the self (Steele, 1988).

The Action-Based Model

Some recent research has called into question the applicability of self-affirmation theory to cognitive dissonance (Harmon-Jones, 2000). According to Harmon-Jones, "engaging in self-affirmation following dissonance-evoking behaviors seems subordinate to resolving the specific discrepancy aroused by the behavior" (2000, p. 132). As an alternative, Harmon-Jones suggests that one need not deviate much from the original cognitive dissonance theory to understand discrepancy reduction. Harmon-Jones proposed the **action-based model** of cognitive dissonance reduction. According to this model, "cognitive discrepancy generates dissonance motivation because the cognitive discrepancy has the potential to interfere with effective unconflicted action" (Harmon-Jones, Petertson, & Vaughn, 2003, p. 69). Anything that enhances the prospect for effective, unconflicted action should, according to the model, enhance cognitive dissonance reduction.

> An experiment by Harmon-Jones and Harmon-Jones (2002) demonstrated this clearly. Participants made either a difficult decision (between two equally valued physical exercises they had previously evaluated favorably) or an easy decision (between a highly valued and a lowly valued physical exercise) under one of two mind-sets. Half of the participants in each decision condition wrote down seven things that they could do to improve their behavior concerning the chosen alternative (action-oriented mind-set). The other half of the participants in each decision condition wrote about seven things they do during a normal day (neutral mind-set). After making their choices, participants once again evaluated the desirability of the exercises. The researchers predicted that the most dissonance reduction (evidenced by the greatest change in predecision and postdecision evaluation of alternatives) would be when the decision was difficult and an action-oriented mind-set was adopted. The results confirmed this prediction. The greatest amount of postdecision spread was found when the decision was difficult and an action-oriented mind-set was adopted.

action-based model
A model of cognitive dissonance stating that cognitive discrepancy generates dissonance motivation because the cognitive discrepancy has the potential to interfere with effective unconflicted action.

Psychological Reactance

Psychological tension can be reduced in several ways. Sometimes, when people realize they have been coerced into doing or buying something against their wishes, they try to regain or reassert their freedom. This response is called **psychological reactance** (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). The theory of psychological reactance, an offshoot of cognitive dissonance theory, suggests that when some part of our freedom is threatened, we become aroused and motivated to restore that freedom.

> The Coca-Cola Company found this out in 1985 when it tried to replace the traditional Coke formula with "New Coke." The company conducted an in-depth marketing study of the new product that included 200,000 taste tests. The tests showed that people really liked New Coke. The company went ahead with plans to retire the old formula and put New Coke in its place. However, the issue was not taste; it was perceived choice. People resented having a choice taken away and reacted by buying the traditional Coke as if it were manna from heaven, never to be seen again. Some people even formed Old Coke clubs. The company got over 1,500 angry calls and letters every day. Coca-Cola had to change its marketing plans, and "Classic Coke" still holds an

psychological reactance
A psychological state that results when individuals feel that their freedom of action is threatened because other people are forcing them to do or say things, making them less prone to social influence attempts.

honored place on the grocery shelves (Oskamp, 1991). Whether consumers liked New Coke did not matter. Their emotional ties to old Coke did matter, as did their freedom to buy it. New Coke just wasn't it for these folks.

Persuading the Masses through Propaganda

Propaganda: A Definition

We now turn our attention to the application of persuasion techniques on a mass scale. History abounds with examples of persuasion techniques aimed at changing the attitudes and behavior of entire populations. Such mass persuasion can take many forms. Advertisers routinely craft persuasive messages we call advertisements to get you to buy one product rather than another. Various public service persuasive messages attempt to get us to change a wide range of behavior, including not driving drunk, practicing safe sex, wearing seat belts, and avoiding illegal drugs.

Perhaps the most controversial application of mass persuasion techniques is the use of **propaganda**. Propaganda is "a deliberate attempt to persuade people, by any available media, to think in a manner desired by the source" (Taylor, 2003, p. 7). Throughout human history there are many examples of the use of propaganda to shape the attitudes and behaviors of masses of individuals. For example, propaganda was extensively used during the American Revolution to both sell the colonists' cause and demonize the British. It was also used extensively in World War I by both the Germans and Allies. However, perhaps the best example of the application of propaganda was by the Nazis during the years leading up to and throughout World War II. Although it is true that both sides in World War II used propaganda, the Nazis under the guidance of Josef Goebbels raised propaganda to levels never before seen.

There are a few things that you should understand about propaganda before we continue with our discussion. First, it is common to characterize propaganda as a pack of lies used by the enemy to manipulate attitudes and behavior. While it is true that propaganda is often aimed at one's enemy, it is also used extensively to shape the attitudes and behavior of one's own citizens. And, as noted earlier, it is also used by the "good guys." For example, during World War II the U.S. government engaged in propaganda aimed at boosting the war effort at home. Hollywood films such as *Wake Island* (1942) portrayed the Marines on the island holding out to the last man against the Japanese onslaught. In fact, there was no such heroic last stand. Many of the Marines and civilians were captured and a good number of them were murdered by the Japanese military. The film was intended to provide a much needed boost in morale on the home front, which it in fact did provide. Second, propaganda is not always a "pack of lies." Quite the contrary, modern propaganda attempts to stay as close to the truth as possible (Taylor, 2003). This is not to say that lies are never used; they are. However, a good propagandist knows that his or her credibility is an important commodity. Caught in a lie, this credibility suffers. Finally, propaganda is neither good nor bad. It is simply a means to an end (Taylor, 2003).

Characteristics of Propaganda

Ellul (1965) defines two broad characteristics of propaganda. The *internal characteristics* of propaganda refer to the characteristics of the target of the propaganda. According to Ellul, a good propagandist must know the "psychological terrain" on which he or she is operating. This means that the propagandist must know which attitudes and behaviors can be easily manipulated. Typically, the propagandist stays away from deeply held

propaganda A deliberate attempt to persuade people, by any available media, to think in a manner desired by the source.

beliefs and concentrates on those that are more malleable. For example, Communist propaganda in cold war Poland shied away from attacking the Catholic Church and the Catholic religion. This is because Catholicism and the Catholic Church were extremely important to the Polish people. Conversely, Nazi propaganda exploited already existing anti-Semitism to shape the German population's attitudes about Jews.

The *external characteristics* of propaganda refer to the characteristics of the propaganda itself. One important point that Ellul makes is that in order for propaganda to be effective, it must be *organized and total*. "Organized" means that the propaganda is the product of a concerted effort to shape attitudes and behavior. It is not a hit-or-miss proposition. The good propagandist has a clear plan in mind and uses propaganda to execute that plan. As an example, consider the fact that the Nazis spent around a million dollars a day (in 1939 dollars) on propaganda at the start of World War II in 1939. "Total" means that the masses must immerse the population in the propaganda. This second characteristic is why propaganda works best in situations where the propagandist can control all of the outlets for propaganda. For example, Josef Goebbels had total control over all of the media outlets of the day: newspapers, radio, and film. Additionally, Nazi propaganda permeated every aspect of life in Germany. The stamps people put on their letters had Nazi images, children's books portrayed Jews in stereotyped ways, museums were full of Nazi art, and pro-Nazi plays filled the theaters. Another external characteristic is the fact that propaganda is directed at the individual in the context of the masses (Ellul, 1965). That is, the propagandist directs propaganda at individuals but uses the masses to help break down individual thought. An individual apart from the masses will offer too much resistance to propaganda (Ellul, 1965). It is for this reason that Nazis held huge rallies (often at night so that one's critical thinking skills were not at their peak). Imagine how difficult it would be for you to counterargue Nazi ideas when you are part of a huge crowd pledging their undying support for those ideas. In short, Nazi propaganda was aimed at making each individual feel as though he or she was a part of something much larger.

A host of other characteristics are typically true of propaganda. These are listed in Table 6.2.

The Aims of Propaganda

As noted, propaganda was extensively used during the American Revolution. For example, Paul Revere made an engraving of the "Boston Massacre" that depicted the event inaccurately (Go to *http://www.mediaworkshop.org/csd18/csd18web_site/pat/html/attucksphotolink.htm* to see the engraving and a list of errors in the engraving). The British were shown in a military picket line with their commander behind them giving

Table 6.2   Additional Characteristics of Propaganda

Takes advantage of emotion
Prevents critical analysis of issues
Propagandist has vested interest and some goal
Attempts to manipulate how we think and act
Used by just about every society at one time or another (not just the bad guys)

the order to fire. The scene was shown in a wide open area between rows of buildings in clear weather. The Colonists were portrayed as passive and peaceful, only to be ruthlessly mowed down by the evil British. In fact, the actual event was much different. The Colonists were armed and were taunting the British. There was much confusion in the confined space. And, there is evidence that the Colonists fired the first shot. In fact, a Colonial jury acquitted the British soldiers of any crime in the event. (The picture at *http://www.historywiz.com/bostonmassacre.htm* is a more accurate portrayal of the event.) Despite the inaccuracies, Revere's engraving was widely distributed throughout the Colonies and was successful in its aim of arousing hatred for the British.

Samuel Adams worked for the *Boston Globe* at the time and organized a propaganda team known as the Committee of Correspondence. The committee would gather the news and report back to Adams, who would then send his version of the events out to other newspapers (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1986). Adams had a reputation for being something of a rabble-rouser. However, he did have a clear vision of his cause (separation from England) and how to achieve it. Adams developed five aims of propaganda (Jowett & O'Donnel, 1986). They are as valid today as they were then:

1. The aims of the cause must be justified.

2. The advantages of victory must be made clear and known.

3. The people need to be aroused to action by instilling hatred for the enemy.

4. Logical arguments of the enemy must be negated.

5. All issues must be stated in clear-cut, black-and-white terms.

Propaganda Techniques

The techniques used by propagandists may vary from case to case. However, the goal is the same: Persuade the masses. Common propaganda techniques include the following (Brown, 1967):

- *Use of stereotypes:* Propagandists often take advantage of our natural tendency to stereotype people. Propaganda can eventually lead us to think of a group of people in terms of the stereotype, rather than as individual human beings.

- *Substitution of names:* Propagandists often use derogatory names to refer to disliked groups. Victims of propaganda become dehumanized, and it becomes easier to persecute them.

- *Selection of facts:* Propagandists do not present a balanced view of events. They select specific facts that support their point of view.

- *Downright lying:* Falsehoods are used to persuade others.

- *Repetition:* The same message is repeated over and over. Repeated exposure eventually leads to acceptance of the message.

- *Assertion:* Propagandists are not interested in debating. Instead, they assert their point forcefully.

- *Pinpointing an enemy:* Propaganda is most effective if an enemy can be identified who poses a threat to all. This directs aggression or blame away from the propagandists and strengthens in-group feelings of unity and solidarity. This technique plays on the "us versus them" mentality.

- *Appeals to authority:* Propagandists often make references to or identify their leaders with higher sources of authority. This can mean a higher political authority (e.g., approval from a revered leader) or to a higher power (e.g., God). In either case, the propagandists leave the impression that their leader has the support and blessing of the higher authority.

Fritz Hippler, the head of the Nazi film industry, captured the essence of successful propaganda. He boiled down propaganda to two main techniques: simplification and repetition. All messages used in propaganda should be stated in simple terms so that even the least intelligent members of a society can understand the message. Once the message is formulated, it is then repeated so it becomes familiar to the targets of propaganda.

Hitler's Rise to Power

Looking back at the years between 1924 and 1945 when a darkness descended across Europe, it is obvious to see the outcome of the rise of Nazism and Hitler to power in Germany. However, how could a failed painter, army corporal, and later political prisoner rise to the peak of power in Germany in just nine years? Part of the answer, of course, is the fact that the Nazi Party had a well-organized paramilitary wing that effectively intimidated or eliminated opposition parties such as the Communist Party. However, such street muscle cannot fully explain how a large segment of the German people came to accept and support Hitler and Nazism. To answer this question we need to look at how the Nazis, through Josef Goebbels, used propaganda to rise to power, consolidate power, and prepare the German people for war and for the extermination of the Jews.

In the years following the end of World War I, the German people and economy were suffering greatly. War reparations were causing widespread economic depression. Inflation ravaged the economy. Within this context Adolph Hitler would emerge to become the most powerful man in Germany. But it didn't happen right away. On September 9, 1923, Hitler and his followers attempted to overthrow the Bavarian government in Munich. The so-called "Beer Hall Putsch" was a complete failure. The Bavarian government refused to capitulate and no popular uprising occurred. Instead, Hitler and his followers were imprisoned in Lansberg Prison. This was on April 1, 1924. At this point the Nazi Party was in a shambles. Its leaders were in prison, the party newspaper was shut down, and the party was declared illegal. During his prison stay, Hitler dictated his manifesto *Mein Kampf* to Rudolph Hess.

On December 24, 1925, Hitler was released from prison. His release provided one of the first propaganda opportunities for his propagandists. The exit from the prison was quite ordinary. So, a photograph was taken at a different location showing an imposing gate and a large black car awaiting the emergence of Hitler. Soon after his release *Mein Kampf* was published. Still, the party was in dire straits. In fact, on March 9, 1925, the government issued an order prohibiting Hitler from speaking in public. This provided another early propaganda opportunity for the Nazis. A poster was distributed showing Hitler with tape across his mouth. The caption read "He alone among 2,000 million people is forbidden to speak." It would take a while, but the ban was finally lifted in September of 1928. But the party was still not terribly strong, though things were moving along. By 1929 Hitler was the head of the Nazi party. Josef Goebbels gave the party a better image with his skillful application of propaganda. Then on October 29, 1929, the German (and world economy in general) crashed and entered the Great Depression. An already shaky German economy was devastated. People who had secure jobs in the past found themselves unemployed and starving. This gave Hitler and the Nazis their best opportunity to take power. The Nazi message started to sound better and better to many Germans in misery. The party began

to grow and on September 14, 1930, the Nazi Party won 107 seats in the Reichstag (the German Parliament). In April 1932, Hitler lost a runoff election against the immensely popular President Hindenburg, but he did garner 36% of the vote. Despite the overwhelming victory by Hindenburg, political turmoil still existed. With the German government near to collapse and Hitler agitating for power, the 85-year-old Hindenburg reluctantly appointed Hitler to be Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933. Just a few short weeks later in March of 1933, Hitler consolidated his power and became the absolute ruler of Germany, the Reichstag was burned, and Germany entered into its darkest period of its history—a history that would include persecution and extermination of Jews and other Eastern Europeans in death camps and the loss of nearly 80 million people in World War II.

The Power of Propaganda in Nazi Germany

Let's turn our attention to how Josef Goebbels used propaganda at various points in the Nazi rise to power and selling of Nazi ideas to the German public and the world. We shall organize our discussion around the techniques of propaganda reviewed earlier. For each technique, we shall explore briefly how Goebbels used propaganda to shape the attitudes and behaviors of the masses. (Examples of Nazi propaganda can be found at *http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa.*)

- *Use of stereotypes:* As noted earlier, propagandists take advantage of the tendency to stereotype people. Propaganda from the Nazi era used this technique to marginalize and demonize the Jews. Various anti-Semitic posters were widely used. Typically these portrayed Jews as hook-nosed evil characters bent upon controlling the German people and the world. For example, one such poster showed a caricature of an evil Jew inciting people into war with the caption "The Jew. The inciter of war, the prolonger of war." Another poster, called "The String Puller, showed a caricature of a Jew as a puppeteer pulling the strings of the German people. German propaganda movies also were used to reinforce negative stereotypes of the Jews and instill fear and loathing of them into the German people. The most infamous of these films was Fritz Hippler's *The Eternal Jew*. In this film Jews were likened to rats and other vermin and Jewish rituals (e.g., Kosher slaughter of animals) were portrayed in hideous ways. Even children's books were laced with anti-Semitic images and themes. The most famous of these was the series of children's books called *Der Giftpilz* (*The Poison Mushroom*). As in other propaganda materials, Jews were portrayed as crafty, evil, hook-nosed characters, often preying on innocent Germans.

- *Substitution of names:* Nazi propaganda succeeded in characterizing Jews and Eastern Europeans as subhuman. One cartoon that appeared in the Nazi news paper *Der Sturmer* in February 1930 showed a huge black spider with a Star of David on its torso sucking Germans that were hanging in its web dry, the caption reading "Sucked Dry." Eastern Europeans were often referred to as "untermenchen" (subhuman) in posters that juxtaposed the perfect Aryan against the mongrel-like Eastern European.

- *Selection of facts:* Even when the war was not going well, Goebbels painted a rosy picture of what was happening by selectively releasing information. For example, in a 1943 article Gobbels said:

> Was there ever a nation that had so favorable a position after five years of war as we do today? The front is unbroken. The homeland is morally and materially able to withstand the bombing terror. A river of war material flows from our factories. A new weapon against the enemy air attacks is being prepared. Countless able hands are working at it day and night. We have a hard test of patience before us, but the reward will come one day. The German farmer is bringing in a good harvest.

What he failed to mention was that the German military industry was being pounded almost around the clock by Allied air forces, the wonder weapons of which he spoke were of little tactical value, and the German military was experiencing defeats on all fronts.

- *Downright lying:* Apparently, Hitler wanted a pretext on which to invade Poland in 1939. So, on August 31, 1939, SS officers took Polish prisoners from a concentration camp, dressed them in Polish army uniforms, and shot them. Their bodies were scattered outside a German radio station and comprised a contrived attack on a German radio station on the Polish border. In fact, Hitler said, *"Polish regular officers fired on our territory. Since 5:45 a.m. we have been returning the fire."* The German invasion of Poland began soon after Hitler's false statement.

- *Repetition:* Nazi propaganda hammered home the same messages and images over and over. For example, several propaganda posters portrayed Hitler as the savior of Germany and a skilled military leader.

- *Assertion:* In 1943, despite the fact that the tide of the war was turning against Germany, Josef Goebbels continued to assert that Germany would win the war. In a New Year's Eve speech in 1943 he stated, "Our war position has indeed become tighter than it was at the end of 1942, but it is more than sufficient to guarantee us a certain final victory." He went on to list the failures of the Allied army and asserted that the facts supported a German victory.

- *Pinpointing an enemy:* Propaganda works best when it comes out against something. An old saying goes that nothing unites people like a common enemy. The enemy becomes the focus of negative thoughts and emotions and serves to deflect criticism from the propagandist's group. Nazi propaganda identified two enemies: the Jews and opposing countries. Of the Jews, Goebbels wrote in 1941, "Every Jew is our enemy in this historic struggle, regardless of whether he vegetates in a Polish ghetto or carries on his parasitic existence in Berlin or Hamburg or blows the trumpets of war in New York or Washington. All Jews by virtue of their birth and their race are part of an international conspiracy against National Socialist Germany." A poster showed a fist smashing the bodies of enemies (one clearly with a British flag on his back) with the caption "Into dust with all enemies of Germany.

- *Appeals to authority:* Even as Hitler rose to power in 1933, he still had an image problem. People, politicians, and military leaders were skeptical of Hitler and his party. So, it was important to show that Hitler had the blessing of someone held in high esteem by the German people. Nazi propagandists went to work giving the German people the idea that Hitler had the support and blessing of the much beloved President Hindenburg. A propaganda poster showed the "Corporal and the Field Marshal" together. In reality, Hindenburg despised Hitler and handed the chancellorship over to him only when he had no other choice. Additionally, Nazi art often showed Hitler in god-like poses and settings, giving the impression that he also had the support of a supreme being.

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The Leopold and Loeb Case Revisited

Clarence Darrow used all his powers of persuasion to save his clients, Leopold and Loeb, from execution. As a skilled communicator, he knew how important it was to establish and maintain his credibility. Many of his arguments aimed, sometimes subtly, sometimes not, at destroying his opponent's credibility and enhancing his own.

Darrow also understood that a communicator who seems disinterested in persuading his audience is usually more successful than one who is clearly trying to persuade. He took the high moral ground, arguing that it would be inhumane to execute two young men who weren't entirely responsible for their actions.

Darrow did not neglect his audiences, the trial judge and the public. He carefully structured and presented his arguments in order to have the greatest effect on them. Darrow knew that arguments too far from the judge's "latitude of acceptance" would not succeed. He didn't argue against capital punishment (although he personally opposed it), just capital punishment in this particular case. He knew Judge Caverly was listening carefully to his arguments, elaborating on them and placing them in the context of American criminal justice. He knew the world was listening, too. The Leopold and Loeb "thrill murder" case became one of the most infamous incidents in U.S. history, for Americans were shocked at the spectacle of two wealthy young men who killed just to see what it would feel like.

Judge Caverly handed down his decision on September 10, 1924. Leopold and Loeb were sentenced to life imprisonment for murder and 99 years for kidnapping. Loeb died in 1936 in a prison fight; a model prisoner, Leopold was released at the age of 70 and spent the rest of his life in Puerto Rico helping the poor.

Chapter Review

1. What is persuasion?

    Persuasion is a form of social influence whereby a communicator uses rational and/or emotional arguments to convince others to change their attitudes or behavior.

2. What is the Yale communication model?

    The Yale communication model is a theoretical model that guides persuasion tactics. It is based on the assumption that persuasion will occur if a persuader presents a logical argument that clarifies how attitude change is beneficial.

3. What factors about the communicator affect persuasion?

    The Yale model focuses on the credibility of the communicator, an important determinant of the likelihood that persuasion will occur. The components of credibility are expertise and trustworthiness. Although an important factor in the persuasiveness of a message, communicator credibility may not have long-lasting effects. Over time, a message from a noncredible source may be as persuasive as one from a credible source, a phenomenon known as the sleeper effect. This is more likely to occur if there is a strong persuasive argument, if a discounting cue is given, and if sufficient time passes that people forget who said what. Other communicator factors that increase persuasion are physical attractiveness, similarity to the target, and a rapid, fluent speech style.

4. What message factors mediate persuasion?

Messages that include a mild to moderate appeal to fear seem to be more persuasive than others, provided they offer a solution to the fear-producing situation. The timing of the message is another factor in its persuasiveness, as is the structure of the message and the extent to which the communicator attempts to fit the message to the audience. Research supports inoculation theory, which holds that giving people a weakened version of an opposing argument is an effective approach to persuasion. Good communicators also know their audience well enough not to deliver a highly discrepant message. When this cannot be avoided, as when there is a multiple audience problem, communicators use hidden messages and private keys and codes to get their point across.

   Additionally, the amount of discrepancy between the content of a message and the audience members' existing attitudes makes a difference. According to social judgment theory, persuasion relates to the amount of personal involvement an individual has with an issue. A message can fall into a person's latitude of acceptance (positions found to be acceptable), latitude of rejection (positions found to be unacceptable), or latitude of noncommitment (positions neither accepted nor rejected, but to be considered).

5. What is the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion?

Cognitive response models focus on the active role of the audience. They assert that people respond to persuasive messages by connecting them with their own knowledge, feelings, and thoughts related to the topic of the message. The elaboration likelihood model (ELM), which examines how individuals respond to the persuasive message, proposes two routes to persuasion. The first, central route processing, is used when people have the capacity and motivation to understand the message and analyze it in a critical and effortful manner. Central route processors elaborate on the message by connecting it to their knowledge and feelings. Sometimes this elaboration will persuade the recipient, depending on the strength of the message. Central route processors tend to experience more durable attitude changes.

   The second avenue to persuasion is peripheral route processing. This occurs when individuals do not have the motivation or interest to process effortfully. Instead, they rely on cues other than the merits of the message, such as the attractiveness of the communicator. Whether a person uses central or peripheral route processing depends on a number of factors, including mood, personal relevance, and use of language. The flexible correction model augments the elaboration likelihood model. It suggests that individuals using central route processing are influenced by biasing factors when they are not aware of the potential impact of those factors—for example, when they are in a good mood. Under these conditions, correction for biasing factors takes place.

6. What is the impact of vividness on persuasion?

Overall, the effect of vividness of a message on persuasion is not very strong. Studies show, however, that individuals exposed to vivid messages on an issue that was important to them felt the vivid message was effective. Vividness may be beneficial in political ads or in jury trials. For example, jurors awarded more money to a plaintiff when the evidence they heard was vivid as opposed to nonvivid. Vivid information has its greatest impact when a persuasive message requires few resources and a person is highly motivated to process the message. For a message with a highly motivated target that requires many resources, vividness does not have an effect on persuasion.

7. What is the need for cognition?

Need for cognition (NC) is an individual difference variable mediating persuasion. Individuals who are high in the need for cognition will process persuasive information along the central route, regardless of the situation or the complexity of the message. Conversely, individuals low in the need for cognition pay more attention to peripheral cues (e.g., physical characteristics of the speaker) and are more likely to use peripheral route processing of a persuasive message.

8. What is the heuristic and systematic information model of persuasion?

The heuristic and systematic information-processing model (HSM) focuses more heavily on the importance of heuristics or peripheral cues than does the elaboration likelihood model. This model notes that often issues are too complex or too numerous for effortful, systematic processing to be practical.

9. What is cognitive dissonance theory, and what are its main ideas?

Cognitive dissonance theory proposes that people feel an uncomfortable tension when their attitudes, or attitude and behavior, are inconsistent. This psychological discomfort is known as cognitive dissonance. According to the theory, people are motivated to reduce this tension, and attitude change is a likely outcome. Dissonance theory suggests that the less reward people receive for a behavior, the more compelled they feel to provide their own justification for it, especially if they believe they have freely chosen it. Similarly, the more they are rewarded, the more they infer that the behavior is suspect. The latter is known as the reverse-incentive effect.

Additionally, cognitive dissonance theory states that an individual will experience dissonance after making a decision between two mutually exclusive, equally attractive alternatives. This is known as postdecision dissonance.

Another, more recent view suggests that cognitive dissonance results not so much from inconsistency as from the feeling of personal responsibility that occurs when inconsistent actions produce negative consequences.

10. What is self-perception theory?

One alternative to cognitive dissonance theory is self-perception theory, which argues that behavior and attitude change can be explained without assuming that people are motivated to reduce the tension supposedly produced by inconsistency.

Instead, self-perception assumes that people are not self-conscious processors of information. They simply observe their own behavior and assume that their attitudes must be consistent with that behavior.

11. What is self-affirmation theory?

Another alternative to cognitive dissonance, self-affirmation theory explains how people deal with the tension that dissonant thoughts or behaviors provoke. Self-affirmation theory suggests that people may not try to reduce dissonance if they can maintain their self-concept by proving that they are adequate in other ways—that is, by affirming an unrelated and positive part of the self.

12. What is psychological reactance?

Individuals may reduce psychological tension in another way as well. When people realize they have been coerced into doing or buying something against their will, they sometimes try to regain or reassert their freedom. This response is called psychological reactance.

13. What is propaganda?

Propaganda is defined as a deliberate attempt to persuade people, by any available media, to think in a manner desired by the source. The internal characteristics of propaganda refer to the psychological makeup of the targets of propaganda. In order for propaganda to be effective, the propagandist must know which attitudes, sentiments, and behaviors can be easily manipulated. Deeply held beliefs are commonly left alone. The external characteristics of propaganda refer to the characteristics of the propaganda itself. In order for propaganda to be maximally effective, it must be organized and total.

14. How are the tactics of propaganda used on a mass scale?

Propagandists use a variety of techniques to persuade the masses. These include use of stereotypes, substitution of names, selection of facts, downright lying, repetition, assertion, pinpointing an enemy, and appeals to authority.

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