Chapter

12

The Process of Persuasion

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Chapter Outline

12.1 The Nature of Persuasion

Persuasion is just one part of very large systems of influence and motivation, but its emphasis on reasoned, intentional messages and its insistence on ethical choice for receivers makes it a very special part indeed.

12.1a Influence, Motivation, and Persuasion

Influence, the most general of these terms, refers to *a power that affects a person or a course of events,* usually indirectly. It can be positive or negative, human or nonhuman, intentional or unintentional, ethical or unethical. Influence includes mood setters like lighting, music, and pictures as well as the actions or presence of other people.

Motivation pertains to *any stimulation or inducement that leads to an act or belief.* It could be caused by drives to reduce tension, achieve goals, or grow as a person, or by a need for self-understanding. These various causes suggest that we are motivated both by need and by plenty.

Human motives have been defined by Krech and Crutchfield as *survival, security, satisfaction*, and *stimulation*.[1] These motives are grouped into deficiency motives (survival and security) and abundancy motives (satisfaction and stimulation). **Deficiency motivation** is *characterized by needs to avoid danger, threat, disruption, and discomfort*. **Abundancy motivation** is *characterized by desire to grow, discover, create, enjoy, and achieve.*

Motivation need not be intentional; it can be accidental. A teacher who celebrates a student in front of the class for their accomplishment may unintentionally motivate others to achieve the same recognition. Additionally, motivation is essentially amoral—that is, not particularly concerned with notions of right or wrong, fair or unfair.

Persuasion is certainly concerned with social influence and human motivation but in a very special way. Persuasion is a change process resulting mostly from shared, symbolic-thinking activity. Whereas this text is concerned mostly with spoken messages, the effects of persuasion are in the thoughts and behaviors, the sociology, of the receivers. This fact suggests that receivers have some bias and also some choice in these matters. Persuasive messages attempt to influence how receivers choose or decide which information to process and respond to.

Persuasion is a nonviolent means of ethically influencing and motivating others through message

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Abundancy motivation **is characterized by desire to grow, discover, create, enjoy, and achieve. We see this demonstrated in how children seek out new activities, learn new words, or play.**

A persuader has an ethical responsibility for the strategies they employ and for their social consequences. Techniques and strategies are ethical unless they are dishonest, unfair to the facts, or so subtle that they give no clue to the receiver. The clue is important. It protects the receiver's fundamental right of choice. There is no lasting persuasion without honesty, pressure free of violence, receiver choice, tolerance for strategy, fair hearing, and a willingness to comply with persuasion from legitimate authority. In a democracy, ethical persuasion is the major means of lasting social influence. We may be motivated to vote for a candidate only to find out later we were deceived by his persuasive rhetoric, changing our voting pattern in subsequent elections.

In this context **persuasion** is *a nonviolent means of ethically influencing and motivating others through messages.* It is an instrument for obtaining reasoned adherence to rational propositions. By these definitions, persuasive influence must clearly protect a receiver's right to choice. "Your money or your life" may involve influence and motivation, but it does not afford a viable choice. We will talk further about ethical responsibility in the next chapter, under the section "Speaker Integrity."

12.1b The Concept of Attitude

Persuasive efforts are directed in large part at changing or maintaining the attitudes of others. These efforts are usually directed at producing some related behavior: a vote, the sale of a product, some compliant action. Does oral argument (speech) affect attitudes? For centuries we have answered "yes" on the basis of subjective observations. Objective observations and research as early as 1931 have also clearly indicated that persuasive speaking can make a difference.[2] Logical arguments work but so do the psychological and more emotional speeches.

Attitude refers to the *thinking, feeling, and behavioral intentions that govern your predispositions toward people, situations, and things.* Attitude has also been defined as a tendency to respond in a given way. This response may be **cognitive** *(how you think),* **affective** *(how you feel),* or **behavioral** *(how you behave or intend to behave).* The altering of attitudes is for some the altering of a receiver's cognitive, schematic structures as well as behaviors as a result of message processing.

People are persuaded by *logical appeals,* where the messages are focused on reasoning, as well as by *emotional appeals,* in which the messages are focused on feelings and emotions. *Credibility appeals,* in which messages carry weight due to the trustworthiness of the speaker, are also persuasive. When you are persuaded to buy a product, take a position, or join a cause, how much of your behavior is based on reasoned discourse? How much is based on appeals to your emotions? How much is based on who is doing the persuading? There is strong evidence that people are multimotivated. We will

discuss these appeals further when we introduce them as Aristotle's three **proofs of persuasion**: *logos, pathos,* and *ethos.*

Many of your attitudes are expressions of your experiences and values. They maintain and promote your value systems and your self-identity, the ways in which you see yourself. For example, if you value your health and clean air highly, you will probably have unfavorable attitudes toward smoking and fluorocarbons and would see yourself as health conscious and as environmentalist.

All of us are somewhat directed by *self-interest* or **egoism**. Egoism is thought by some to be a major motivator of all human conduct. People defend their own egos, welfare, and advancement. Take care of Number One! This behavior has been explained as an ego-defensive function. The more ego-defensive you are, the more destructive it can be, as people tend to be blind to possibilities outside of their own experience. The stronger the egoism, the harder it is to change attitude or motivate action.

Some theorists view attitudes as being underlaid by belief systems. **Beliefs** *are sets of inferences* we make about the world. Beliefs are *nonevaluative*. They are probability statements we hold about the world.

Consider the following belief statement: smoking and heart disease are related. This statement is a belief because it makes a probability inference between smoking and heart disease. Now consider the following attitude statement that might grow out of that belief: smoking is bad. The statement is an attitude because it makes an evaluation of one of the objects (smoking) in the belief statement. The significant point is that *attitudes are evaluative and grow out of belief systems, which are not evaluative.*

A single point on a scale, however, cannot always represent attitudes adequately. They represent different strengths and different ranges or latitudes of acceptance.

Consider Figure 12.1. This scale indicates a strong leaning toward objecting to abolishing all men's clubs. This person would be difficult to persuade to support the statement since the range of objection (or rejection, 3–7) is so large.

Suppose, however, that the data looked like Figure 12.2. This scale reveals less commitment to strong attitudes. The more acceptable or uncommitted positions you indicate, the wider the latitude of acceptance and, therefore, the greater likelihood of attitude change.

Beliefs are sets of inferences people make about the world and are *nonevaluative.*

Attitudes grow out of belief systems and *are* evaluative.

Figure 12.1 Strong and Committed Attitude Indicators

I think all "men only" clubs should be abolished

✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree			Neutral			Strongly agree

MARK:
(✗) All positions you find objectionable
(✓) All positions you can live with (acceptable)

Figure 12.2 Less Committed Attitude Indicators

I think all "men only" clubs should be abolished

✗		✓	✓	✓		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree			Neutral			Strongly agree

MARK:
(✗) All positions you find objectionable
(✓) All positions you can live with (acceptable)

The initial attitude your audience holds toward an issue or topic serves as an anchor for making judgments about the message. The stronger the anchor, the less change you can expect from your audience.

Research on how people make judgments about physical objects also gives insight into social judgments. If you put your hand in a pail of hot water for a minute or so and then put it in a pail of lukewarm water, you tend to judge the water *colder* than it is. If you go from cold to a pail of warm water, you tend to judge it *warmer* than it is. The hot pail (or cold) serves as a **reference point** or anchor for your succeeding judgments. When the temperature is sharply contrasted from that of the anchor, you tend to perceive it as farther from the anchor or colder than it really is; when temperatures are close to that of the anchor, you tend to assimilate it, to perceive it as warmer than it really is.

This tendency for assimilation and contrast has been applied to attitude change. A receiver's *initial* attitude toward the issue serves as a reference point, or anchor, for making judgments about the message. In general, the more extreme the initial attitude (anchor), the less attitude change you can expect. The less extreme the anchor, the more change you can expect.[3]

12.1c Intrapersonal Responses to Persuasion

Intrapersonal responses are the internal thoughts and responses we have toward things: people, places, objects, ideas, and so on. Successful persuasion evokes favorable thoughts or internal responses from receivers. These thoughts may then affect favorable behaviors, feelings, or ideas.

This familiar notion of communication as a process suggests that listeners, in their decoding, sort, select, and elicit from their storehouse of knowledge those things they feel relate best to the message elements. **Cognitive-Response Theory** helps show how people may respond to a persuasive message by evoking thoughts from their own storehouses of experience and knowledge that may not be contained in the message sent. If these "cognitive responses" (thoughts and ideas) agree with the persuader's purpose, they should promote attitude change in the desired direction. If, on the other hand, the message somehow backfires and evokes unfavorable or disagreeing thoughts, the sender's purpose may be defeated or at least inhibited attitudinally. The **Elaboration Likelihood Method** of persuasion is based on this approach, namely, that the more elaborately a receiver responds cognitively, the greater the likelihood of attitude change.[4]

Central and Peripheral Routes

Cognitive-response researchers Richard Petty and John Cacioppo suggest two components or "routes" to persuasion: *central* and *peripheral*.[5] **Central routes** are characterized by more elaborative reasoning process, critically thinking about the message itself and considering issue-relevant matters. **Peripheral routes** are characterized by more affective, nonissue-relevant, contextual cues. When listeners find the message complex or unimportant, they are likely to accept or reject the argument based on their feelings.

Of the two routes, Petty and Cacioppo found the more thoughtful *central* route resulted in more enduring and resistant persuasion than did the peripheral route.[6] This is not to say that the affective domain is unimportant. Advertising research suggests that the peripheral affective cues and the cognitive central cues are both important indicants of overall message effectiveness.[7] Nonetheless, as listeners to the persuasive messages of others, we should strive to engage more of our central processing route rather than relying solely on the easier, more emotional peripheral processing route.

Cognitive-response theory suggests that just as personal growth and development are often considered to be really self-growth and self-development (or that learning is, in the final analysis, self-generated), we really persuade ourselves through these cognitive reevaluations.[8] This theory explains why the receivers of highly polarized attitudes are sometimes so busy processing, repeating, and rehearsing their own thoughts and views that they really do not hear the message. Highly polarized audiences may have quite different constructions of reality than yours based on different experiences and a different sociology of knowledge. Analyzing an audience's cognitive responses from their view of reality should help you better decide the kind, the length, and the ordering of arguments that will promote favorable "self-generated" responses.

Enthymematic persuasion seems to be a logical extension of the strategy implicit in cognitive-response theory. **Enthymemes** are *syllogistic arguments with unstated premises*. Their rhetorical function is to let the audience correctly supply the desired missing premises. Like cognitive-response theory, enthymematic persuasion assumes that thoughts are often more influential if they are our own rather than if they were explicitly stated in the message by others.

12.1d How Does Aristotle Fit In?

Aristotle's explanation of the enthymeme and his routes to persuasion make clear that he too was most interested in a receiver's intrapersonal responses. He called the routes *modes*.

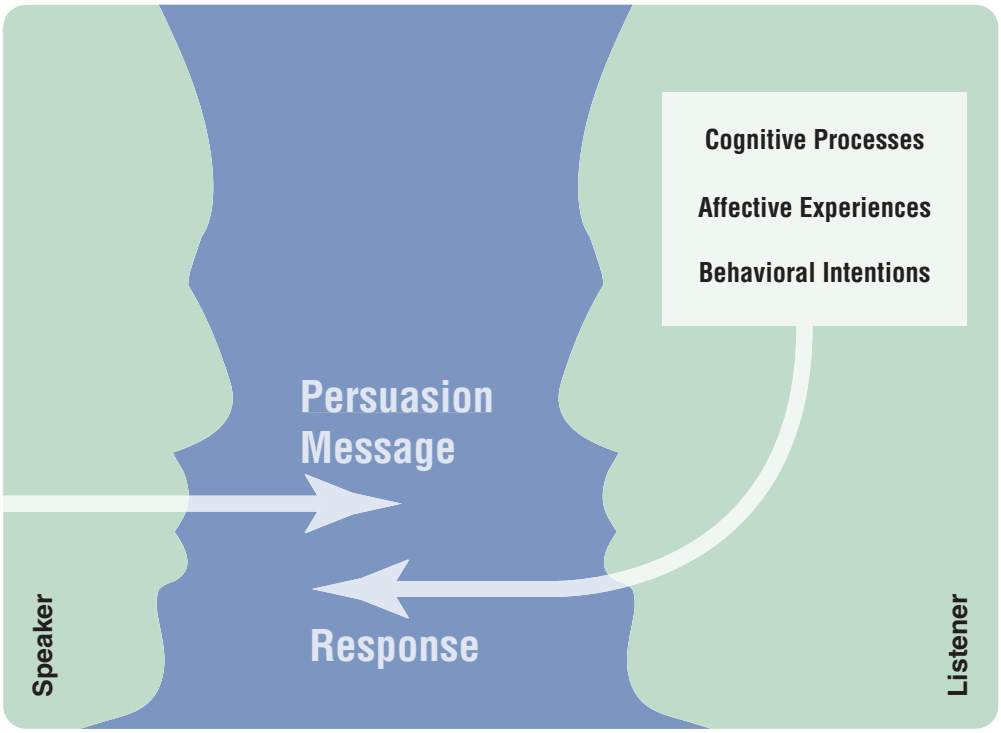
> Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal characteristics of the speaker, ETHOS; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind, PATHOS; the third on the proof or apparent proof provided by the words of the speech itself, LOGOS.[9]

These are strikingly similar to the dimensions of attitude discussed earlier: cognitive (logos), affective (pathos), and behavioral (ethos). By *ethos*, Aristotle meant speaker credibility or persuasion based on a person's behavior, past and present. We'll have more to say about credibility in the next section.

There are, then, three basic intrapersonal responses to persuasion and, therefore, three related methods or modes a speaker should consider.

In the model shown in Figure 12.3, *cognitive* refers to logical thoughts, to thinking, to the mental process by which knowledge is acquired, constructed, and elaborated. *Affective* refers to feelings and things more emotional. *Behavioral* can be an action, an action intention, or a thought response to the past or current speaking behavior, or ethical proof of the speaker.

Figure 12.3 Intrapersonal Response



Persuasion, in this context, is *a process of skillfully and ethically using logical appeals, affective appeals, credibility, and ethical proof to influence and motivate others to respond as you wish them to*.

Your first goal as an ethical speaker is to support your specific purpose with logical, consistent reasoning and argument. The affective and behavioral modes are not unethical as long as they reasonably relate to your logical argument and are fair to the facts. In fact, we reason via our emotions as well as our cognition. Therefore, in order to remain an ethical speaker, you will want to support your emotional appeals with facts.

Most persuasive speeches use a combination of logical, affective, and behavioral elements. Aristotle suggests that all three are necessary to "prove" an argument, though we know that many an argument has been won with one or more proofs missing. It is, of course, possible to have a speech based almost entirely on evidence and closely reasoned argument. On the other hand, many radio and television commercials make it abundantly clear that some efforts are based almost entirely on affective appeals.

Source credibility, ethical proof, and personal involvement embody both emotional and cognitive dimensions and are difficult to divide. How much of your perception of intent, trust, expertise, or status is based on affect? How much is based on evidence and logical deduction?

Persuasive efforts can be complex—sometimes very subtle, sometimes blatant. Consider the persuasion efforts of political campaigns. How much is logical persuasion? How much is affective? How much is based on source credibility? Aristotle reminds us of the importance of utilizing all three modes.

12.2 Routes to Effective Persuasion

Getting an audience to think or, more specifically, to rethink a proposition is the goal of most persuasive efforts. Internal reevaluation, as we just learned, is triggered by affective as well as cognitive arguments. Aristotle said that an argument cannot be won on **logos** *(appeal to reason)* alone; **ethos** *(appeal to the credibility of the speaker)* and **pathos** *(appeal to the emotional response of the audience)* also affect the reasoning process. A good persuasive speaker will keep this in mind when preparing her speech.

12.2a Improving Perceptions of Credibility

Credibility refers to a receiver's acceptance of or disposition toward the source. Aristotle used the term ethos to designate the audience's perception of the speaker. Ethos can be separated into four dimensions of which the speaker should be aware: *character*, *competence*, *caring,* and *charisma*. In regard to ethical proof, Aristotle set forth the general rule that "there is no proof so effective as that of the character."

Character refers to the audience's perception of the speaker's honesty and trustworthiness. It may be more fact than fiction that "what you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying." Perhaps it's also true for some that "if you're not part of my group or party, I won't hear what you're saying."

Competence refers to the audience's perception of the speaker's skills, ability, knowledge, experience, and wisdom. How well you deliver the message matters. If you are able to clearly articulate your ideas, show the audience you are knowledgeable on the topic, and not fumble about, the audience is more likely to believe you.

Caring refers to the goodwill toward the audience, the indication that the speaker actually has taken the needs and concerns of the audience into consideration. This is first addressed in choosing a topic that resonates with the audience and second in aligning your expectations of the audience with what they can understand and achieve.

Charisma refers to a speaker's personality that is seen by the audience as attractive, engaging, and dynamic. These credibility characteristics are further explored in this section.

Source Credibility

Source *credibility* is related to Aristotle's concepts of goodwill, good moral character, and good sense, because they are perceived and evaluated by receivers. Goodwill and good moral character refer to the audience's perception of the speaker's honesty and trustworthiness. Good sense refers to the audience's perception of the speaker's competence, her knowledge of the topic and ability to communicate the message. In both cases, the determination of source credibility lies in the hands of the audience. Providing the audience with reason to see the speaker as a credible source offers a stronger platform from which the message can be received. High source credibility generally produces more attitude change in the receiver.

Both reason and research tell us that an obviously untrustworthy speaker, regardless of her other qualities, will be viewed as a questionable message source. But many special aspects and conditions also affect people's perceptions of credibility. Although a convicted, hard-core, experienced car thief may not meet the classical tests of credibility (goodwill, good moral character, good sense), if he were to speak about the secrets of his trade, he might indeed be perceived as having a special credibility. After all, he is an expert!

(E+ / Getty Images)

Determination of source credibility lies with the audience. A car thief may not meet the classical tests of credibility, though he does possess special credibility, being an expert in his field.

Characteristics that you infer about a source may cancel all or some credibility. Jesse Delia hypothesizes that "many persons hearing a militant speaker openly and explicitly advocate an abhorrent position on an issue important to them would make with equal certainty the attributions that the speaker is honest and forthright, but also very misguided and unsafe."[10]

The receiver's perception of a sender's intent appears to influence credibility. In one study, a persuasive message was prepared on the topic of raising the minimum driving age, and the same speech was given to two groups of teenagers. One group of subjects was told that the purpose of the program was to study the speaker's personality. The other group was told that the speaker considered teenage drivers a menace. In the first group the speaker's intent to persuade was made less clear; in the second it was made abundantly clear. The second group saw the communicator as more biased, as might be expected; the first group made a greater attitude change in the direction advocated.[11]

In another study designed to persuade eighth graders to take a more conservative attitude about drugs, a law enforcement officer was less successful.[12] Perhaps his intent was perceived in a way that injured his credibility. His presentation may have been too threatening for his audience, or perhaps his status as a law officer didn't carry over to his expertise (if he had any) about drugs.

People's status may also vary with the issue. You may have high status in one role and low in another. George Patton had high status as a combat general but low status as a diplomat. When former President Barack Obama jokingly stated perhaps he'd go into coaching once he was no longer president, he was politely rejected. A good president does not necessarily make a good coach, and vice versa.

Apparently people form their general impressions of a sender's credibility on the basis of a wide array of variables: intent, trust, and competence are only the beginning. We should view credibility as an interactive process among sources, messages, and receivers. It is no wonder that research evidence on credibility is sometimes inconsistent. But when high source credibility is perceived, and when it is relevant to the message and the situation, it generally produces more favorable attitude change in the receivers.

There is also a practical credibility or likability that can be established or reinforced by the speaker's charismatic characteristics and behavior during the sending of the message. These speaker behaviors have been referred to as "ethical proofs" and are thought to be closely related to an audience's impressions of the honesty, character, wisdom, and goodwill of the speaker.

("Conan O'Brien," by Gage Skidmore, available under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license via Wikimedia)

Conan O'Brien is a speaker who is primarily known for his charisma and humor.

Ethical Proof and Self-Presentation

Other things being equal, persuaders may be most influential when the receivers perceive them as having attitudes *similar to their own.* Ethical proofs also include the speaker's self-presentation in terms of voice, language, humor, information, and evidence; in other words, the speaker's *charisma* or dynamism impacts how the audience perceives the speaker.

Studies have found that excess verbalizations and signals indicating disorganization detract from a speaker's credibility.[13] Recall that even social status may be inferred. Yet audiences tend to respond to speakers who have dynamic and energetic personalities and presentations.

The use of humor also may enhance speakers' pragmatic ethical proof, if not their persuasion, as measured by attitude shifts among the audience. Humor and satire, when used with a professional touch, can affect audience interest and attention and thereby retention. That they can boomerang when not used properly is very clear from research and common experience.

Can we manage these impressions? One sociologist thinks so.

Impression Management

According to Erving Goffman, impression management is a doable part of how you present yourself to receivers.[14] **Impression management** suggests that in our efforts to present our best and most persuasive self, we try to give appropriate performances on the stage of life. Let us consider a college student presenting his senior thesis before the faculty or a potential employer. He may attempt an impression of maturity, self-confidence, knowledge, and dependability. According to Goffman, this can be done in the following general ways:

An appropriate front This is general behavior that is designed to better define who you are. Your personal front includes such things as appearance and manner. It also includes things over which you have only limited control, such as sex, age, and size. Clothes, posture, gestures, facial expressions, and language patterns are more modifiable dimensions of your front. Should our college student appear in dirty shorts, needing a shave, and using the English language profanely, would that front offend or reassure his audience?

Dramatic realization According to Goffman, you must clearly realize the role expected of you and work it into the performance. You may have to put on an act to hide your lack of confidence. If the role calls for attentiveness, you had better give such an impression. You may be paying attention, but if you are not perceived that way, then you have done a poor job of impression management. A patient may suspiciously view a flip physician who writes a fast prescription, however accurate the quick diagnosis.

Mystification This aspect of impression management refers to perceptions of social distance between the actor and the audience. Our physician above is more apt to be concerned with this kind of impression than is our student presenter. That is, the physician must not become too casual lest she lose some of the mystery of the medical role. Our college student, however, must accommodate the real or fancied social-distance factors of the theater in which he finds himself.

The point of those various examples is that people *do* present themselves to others, and others *do* form impressions—good, bad, and indifferent. If, as a student of persuasion, you understand this dramaturgical model, you should be better equipped to deal with impression management. The important lesson is that credibility and ethical proof also involve impressions of trust and confidence based on the perceived intent, position, knowledge, and sincerity of the source.

12.2b Appeals to Human Needs

We have discussed the relevance of *ethos* or credibility in proving your argument. We move now to *pathos,* what Aristotle describes as the appeal to the emotions or motivations of the audience.

To a great extent, the sources of affective persuasion are found in an understanding of human needs and behavior. Some are learned; some are thought to be innate. Ever since ancient times, humankind has tried to find simple explanations of what motivates people to do what they do. If you could discover these explanations and determine universal systems of human motivation, you could theoretically control the behaviors of others in many ways. In modern times we speak of reducing

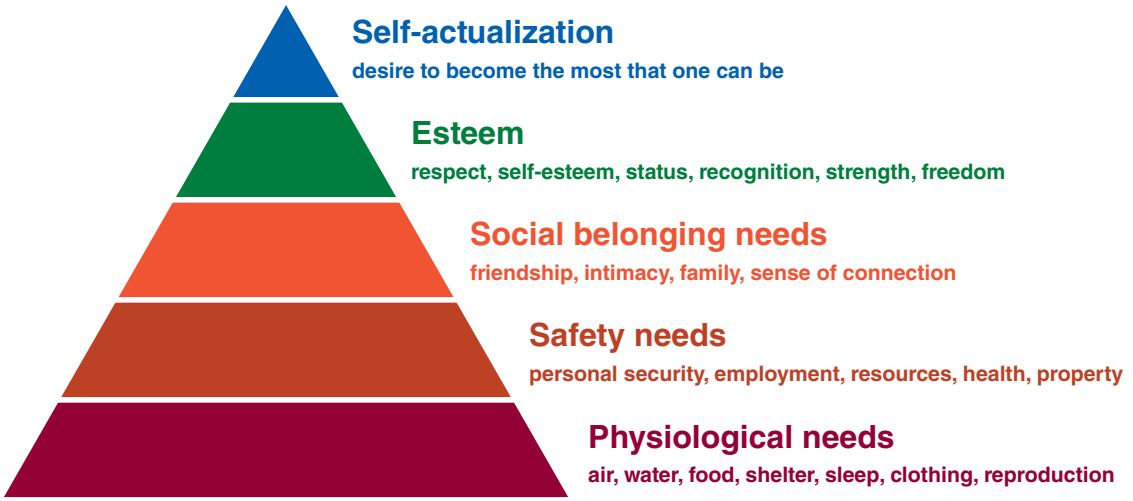
internal tensions but are wary of surefire manipulations of those tensions. We're not only interested in the message sent but also the message received. In a systems view, there is an interaction—something mutual about persuasion.

To some poets and philosophers, most notably Aristotle, "the proper study of man is man himself." The assumption is that all humans, at least in a general sense, are much alike. At the physiological level this assumption presents few problems, for despite obvious individual differences in height, weight, color, and other physical attributes, all people exhibit a striking physical similarity. We could hardly have a science of medicine were this not true. In the nonphysiological realm the problem is more complicated. Plato argued that to study humans you must investigate their environment; for Plato, "man" was but a reflection of his own society, a view not unlike the social constructionist theories of today. Both Plato and Aristotle make sense. We can learn much from studying the similarities among all of us, perhaps even more by studying the social environments that produce many of our differences.

Any attempt to classify similar human needs must begin with biological needs. A. H. Maslow has supplied such a system.[15] His notions synthesize much of the tension-reduction theorizing and also extend our understanding by suggesting that human needs are arranged hierarchically.

These five general categories of needs, in the order of their importance, are *physiological, safety, social belonging, esteem,* and *self-actualization*. As each need in the sequence is satisfied, a person seeks out the next highest level. This hierarchy of needs may be thought of as a pyramid, with the basic needs foundationally at the bottom and the higher needs appearing in order up to the top of the pyramid shown in Figure 12.4.

Figure 12.4 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



If members of your audience cannot fulfill even the basic needs at the bottom of the pyramid, they theoretically are not as likely to be persuaded by the higher levels of needs appeals. Starving people are thought to be almost blind to all appeals except those promising food and drink. Once fat and full, they become concerned with safety. After achieving a feeling of safety, they can be appealed to more easily by the higher needs. In simple terms, individuals are no longer motivated by needs (however basic) that are pretty much satisfied. These needs can all be operating at one time but with varying strengths.

(E+ / Getty Images)

Starving people are thought to be almost blind to all appeals except those promising food and drink.

Certain prerequisites in the Maslow system are so important that they themselves become strong motivators when denied or endangered.[16] The environmental prerequisites include such things as free speech, intellectual freedom, the right to self-defense, and a desire for justice, honesty, and orderliness.

In Chapter 1 we pointed out that receivers decode according to their past experiences, emotions, and attitudes. More specifically, they decode in terms of their interacting needs. At one time the need for love and belonging may predominate, coloring the meaning listeners attach to a communication; at another time the need for esteem may be foremost, and their openness to persuasion is altered accordingly.

12.2c Engaging the Consistency Principle

Our thought systems seek an agreeable, balanced set of relationships between our view of the world and our latest information. This search for consistency suggests that speakers can persuade by using reasoning that causes an audience feelings of dissonance with their own thoughts, beliefs, or point of view. The word **dissonance** refers to these ill-fitting, inconsistent thoughts or beliefs. Sources of such dissonance range from logical argument to emotion and mixed feelings.

Consider the example of Andrew. He sees himself as honest, a hard worker, and a good student. He has a paper due in the morning, but he has told his friends he would go out with them this evening. If he stays home to work on his paper, he feels he has let himself down as an honest person. If he goes out with his friends, he feels he has let himself down as a good student. Either behavior leads to discomfort or dissonance.

Cognitive Dissonance

Leon Festinger, chief architect of cognitive-dissonance theory, points out that we could substitute the words *frustration* and *disequilibrium*, among others, for *dissonance*.[17] Whatever the label, the word refers to ill-fitting, inconsistent relationships among our thoughts and beliefs. *Logical* inconsistency is a typical source of dissonance. There are, of course, other sources of dissonance between beliefs based, for example, on past experience and cultural norms.

The basic hypotheses of cognitive-dissonance theory are as follows:

1. The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance.
2. When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information that would likely increase the dissonance.[18]

The **Cognitive-Dissonance Theory** clearly states that *behavior can cause self-persuasion*. Many very creative research projects support this point and provide suggestions for involvement and self-persuasion.[19] For example, in arguing against your own point of view, as college debaters must often do, it was found that the speakers changed their attitudes more than the listeners. This experience of logical inconsistency apparently creates intrapersonal dissonance and, often as a result, self-persuasion.

The practical suggestions stemming from cognitive consistency indicate that a persuader may need to create dissonance through argument (a need) and then show how to achieve consonance (a plan). Audience analysis is needed to see how much need may already exist.

The second hypothesis suggests that *too many* dissonance-provoking arguments might induce avoidance. How many are too many? That is not easily answered because an audience's *personal involvement* or commitment, especially a public one, to an issue or its source (pro or con) can make a real difference in how a receiver is apt to respond.[20] A superficial opinion on the number of beans in a jar doesn't represent much personal involvement; a lightly held belief or attitude, such as a preference for one brand of coffee over another, suggests only a modest personal involvement. A public commitment to a religion, family, country, or lifestyle is quite another matter. Here we are dealing with values and serious social constructions of reality. Values were defined earlier as *frameworks that hold attitudes together*. Values involve us very personally. They help define our self-concept. They are ego-centered; our personal involvement with them is very high.

Recent research suggests that when receivers perceive your message as having high personal relevance for them, three really strong arguments are better standing alone than adding another two or three weak ones. Interestingly, when listeners had low personal involvement with the issue, the combination of strong and weak arguments was more persuasive than the strong arguments alone.[21] When people don't see much personal relevance in an issue but *like* the speaker, one good strong argument is often sufficient. It was found more effective than a *disliked* speaker using even as many as five strong arguments.[22] Likability sure has persuasive influence!

It seems clear that a speaker is well advised to adapt the message to the personal interests of the audience. Clarify early why your message is relevant to your audience members.

Affective-Cognitive Dissonance

Both research and experience suggest that people suffer dissonance when what they feel (affective) and what they believe (cognitive) do not agree.[23] If clear evidence is suddenly discovered that long-time Representative Smith is receiving kickbacks from his staff after their salaries have been padded, you may suffer considerable dissonance (or inconsistency) in supporting him. Your new information (he's dishonest) is inconsistent with your longtime affection for Smith, the man.

Scandals involving politicians, political candidates, and even televangelists have caused many Americans to suffer pangs of affective-cognitive dissonance. How do you reduce such tensions and achieve consistency in such dilemmas? Affective-cognitive theory suggests three things that you can do. All have implications for speakers who would use this merged mode of persuasion.

Upon hearing the evidence regarding Representative Smith, a receiver might

1. reject the data and communication that brought about the difficulty: "I simply don't believe it";
2. fragment the original attitude by trying to isolate the affective and cognitive elements: "Others do it. He just got caught," or "The good he's done outweighs the bad"; or
3. change your attitude by accommodating the dilemma in such a way that your feelings and beliefs are consistent: "I'll not vote for him. My feelings have changed. I don't believe in dishonesty."

Presumably you could also escape by trying not to think about the inconsistency.

As you learned earlier, the amount of your involvement with or commitment to Representative Smith could make a difference. A heavily involved person might simply stop at choice one, that is, reject the news of Representative Smith's dishonesty as preposterous. Lightly involved people might briefly test choices one and two and then decide on choice three and change their attitude.

Indeed, a hierarchical sequence is suggested here. Your first tendency is to reject, then fragment, and then change your attitude.

12.2d Using Both-Sides Persuasion

When you feel that you have good, solid arguments to support your position but also know that your audience clearly doesn't agree, is it better to stick with just your one-sided arguments? Or is it better to acknowledge opposing arguments as well?

(OJO Images / Getty Images)

Presenting arguments on both sides of an issue is more effective than giving only the arguments supporting the point being made.

Both-sides persuasion presents arguments both pro and con to the point you are making. This method of organization typically opens with the other side, that is, a conceding of some of the obvious arguments against your position. It is a particularly good method when there is obvious antagonism or opposition toward your point of view or when the audience has been inoculated against your position.

The effects of argument arrangement on antagonistic receivers when their initial attitudes are known have been generalized as follows:

1. Presenting arguments on both sides of an issue is more effective than giving only the arguments supporting the point being made.
2. Audiences previously persuaded by both-sides argumentation are more resistant to counterpersuasion than those persuaded with one-sided argumentation.

The supporting research concludes that a two-sided presentation is more effective in the long run than a one-sided one when, regardless of initial opinion, the audience is exposed to subsequent counterpersuasion, or when, regardless of subsequent exposure to counterpersuasion, the audience initially disagrees with the speaker's position.[24]

Both-sides persuasion has the appeal of objective, rational evaluation. It is a subtle yet honest call for fair play. Opposing arguments are not omitted; therefore, opposed listeners are less antagonized. Listening should be more favorable because the listener will not be rehearsing as many counterarguments during the positive persuasion. Hearing their counterargument expressed keeps them engaged and open to continued listening. Both-sides persuasion not only helps insulate or inoculate audiences against counterarguments but also forces speakers to be more audience oriented.

He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that.

J. S. Mill,
English philosopher and political economist

12.2e Using Natural-Order Thinking

If the goal of the speaker is to motivate an audience to action or changed attitudes and beliefs, then following the natural way humans think should help make the argument understandable and hopefully acceptable to the audience. Persuaders and speech scholars have made many adaptations to the model of reflective thinking. One scholar, H. L. Hollingworth, suggests that the fundamental tasks of a speaker are attention, interest, impression, conviction, and direction.

Of course, any message-arrangement prescription is a simplification of a very complex persuasion system. Nevertheless, the popular practices shown in Table 12.1 are very useful in showing the relationship of message, receiver, sender, and how one begins to organize the parts of a message.

Table 12.1 A Comparison of Natural-Order Systems

	Hollingworth	McGee[25]	Monroe	Ross
Introduction	Attention Interest	Attention Problem	Attention Need	Attention Need
Body	Impression Conviction	Solution Visualization	Satisfaction Visualization	Plan Reinforcement
Conclusion	Direction	Action	Action	Direction

Natural-order systems for organizing persuasion make much of the attention concept. William James once said, "What holds attention determines action …" This readiness to respond does not, of course, follow every good attention step, but the research on emphasis and its use in successful advertising does suggest its importance. Attention is also selective and often fleeting. It is necessary to concentrate on keeping an audience attentive and interested throughout the steps in the organizing process.

In Chapter 11 we discussed the forms of emphasis useful in transferring information to the audience. Audiences were better able to remember things that they had been told with emphasis. Granted, an improvement in an audience's remembering or interest does not necessarily mean that their attitudes have been changed, or even that they are more open to change. However, if attention and interest do help determine action and a readiness to respond, as James says, then the suggestions for presenting information fit here also.

12.2f Using Evidence and Logical Reasoning

The intrapersonal and cognitive-response models discussed earlier argued that when receivers could be induced to think or elaborate about issue-relevant arguments they were most likely to be persuaded. This was the more central versus the peripheral route to effective persuasion. Clearly a responsible and ethical persuader needs intelligent arguments supported by valid evidence, logical reasoning, and critical thinking. Aristotle refers to this proof of persuasion as *logos:* reasoning, valid evidence, and arrangement. We will save "Logical Reasoning and Argument," for Chapter 14, because in the next chapter, we will discuss arrangement (organization methods).

(E+ / Getty Images)

Clearly a responsible and ethical persuader needs intelligent arguments supported by valid evidence, logical reasoning, and critical thinking.

Chapter Review

Summary

All speeches to persuade involve efforts to get receivers to do the following: accept your interpretation of disputed facts (what is or is not the case) or in conjecture (what will or will not be the case); align their beliefs, attitudes, and values more closely with yours (what is better, worse, right or wrong); and/or move them to action on your proposition (what should or should not be done).

When we deal with more involved courses of action, we are talking about policy—speeches on what should or should not be done over time. In action speeches you must demonstrate a need or problem and then provide a plan or solution and show the practically of the plan in fixing the problem. Most attitudes are changed incrementally.

Influence refers to any power that affects a person or course of events. *Motivation* pertains to any stimulation or inducement that leads to an act or belief. *Deficiency motivation* is characterized by needs to avoid danger or pain. *Abundancy motivation* is characterized by the desire to grow and create. Motivation need not be intentional and is essentially amoral. *Persuasion* is an ethical, nonviolent means of influencing and motivating others through messages. It is an instrument for obtaining reasoned adherence to rational propositions.

Attitudes refer to thinking, feeling, and behavioral intentions that govern our predispositions toward people, situations, and things. An attitude may also be defined as a tendency to respond in a given way. The dimensions of attitude have been described as *cognitive, affective,* and *behavioral.* Attitudes are underlaid by belief systems, which have vertical and horizontal structures; that is, we can engage them at different levels. A single point on a scale cannot always adequately represent attitudes. They have different ranges or latitudes of acceptance. There is also a tendency for attitude response to have assimilation or contrast effect depending on how discrepant your initial attitude is.

The *Elaboration Likelihood Method* of persuasion suggests that the more elaborately a receiver responds cognitively, the greater the likelihood of attitude change. *Cognitive-response theory* suggests that people really persuade themselves through cognitive (or thought) reevaluations. The basic speaker strategy is to develop messages that evoke favorable thoughts and induce people to rehearse and remember these thoughts.

In the *intrapersonal-response model,* these responses may be affective and behavioral as well as cognitive. Persuasion, in this context, is a process of skillfully and ethically using logical thoughts, affective appeals, credibility, and ethical proof to influence and motivate others to respond as you wish them to.

Five routes to effective persuasion include appealing to credibility *(ethos),* appealing to human needs *(pathos),* engaging the consistency principle, using both-sides persuasion, and appealing to logical reasoning *(logos).*

Credibility (referred to as proof of *ethos* by Aristotle) refers to the audience's acceptance of or disposition toward the source. It is related to Aristotle's notions of goodwill, good moral character, and good sense—which can be described as the speaker's *character* and *competence.* High source credibility generally produces more attitude change. Ethical proof includes attitude similarity, language, humor, voice, evidence, and general impression—which can be described as the speaker's *charisma.*

Impression management includes practical facts on how you present yourself to receivers. *Front* is your appearance and manner. *Dramatic realization* is the role you play on the stage of life. *Mystification* refers to the social distance between you and the audience.

Maslow's theory provides us with a useful classification of human needs. From the basic to the higher order, these needs are physiological, safety, social belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. A satisfied need is no longer a motivator according to this theory. Motive appeals (what Aristotle refers to as proof of pathos) are useful triggers of human needs.

Cognitive-dissonance theory assumes that when new information is contradictory to or inconsistent with a person's ideas and attitudes, some psychological confusion and tension will result. This tension motivates people to adjust their attitudes or behavior in order to reduce this inconsistency. (A persuader needs to create enough dissonance [or need] and then show how to achieve consonance [a plan].) However, too many dissonance-provoking arguments might induce avoidance. Other variables that may intrude are speaker likability and the personal involvement of the audience.

An audience's personal involvement or commitment to an issue or its source makes a difference in how they are apt to respond. The number and strength of arguments used by a sender should vary with the personal relevance perceived by receivers.

Affective-cognitive consistency theory suggests that when our beliefs are in conflict with our feelings, the resulting dissonance can be relieved by rejecting the data, fragmenting the original attitude, or changing our attitude.

How you organize or arrange the message as well as the logic and reasoning provided is what Aristotle refers to as *logos*. Both-sides persuasion has been shown to be superior to one-sided persuasion when the audience is initially opposed to the point of view being presented or when, regardless of initial attitude, the audience is pre-exposed to counterargument. A rational form of persuasion, the both-sides approach is characterized by objectivity, suspended judgment, nonspecific opponents, critical willingness, qualified language, audience sensitivity, and ethical conduct.

If the goal of the speaker is to motivate an audience to action or changed attitudes and beliefs, then following the natural way humans think should help make the argument understandable and hopefully acceptable to the audience. Persuaders and speech scholars have made many adaptations to the model of reflective thinking. Hollingworth suggests that the fundamental tasks of a speaker are attention, interest, impression, conviction, and direction.

Clearly a responsible and ethical persuader needs intelligent arguments supported by valid evidence, logical reasoning, and critical thinking.

Key Terms

Abundancy Motivation Characterized by desire to grow, discover, create, enjoy, and achieve

Affective How you feel

Attitude Thinking, feeling, and behavioral intentions that govern your predispositions toward people, situations, and things; they are evaluative and grow out of belief systems

Behavioral How you behave or intend to behave

Belief Nonevaluative sets of inferences people make about the world

Both-Sides Persuasion Presenting arguments both for and against the point you are making

Caring The indication that the speaker actually has taken the needs and concerns of the audience into consideration

Central Routes Persuasion by more elaborative reasoning process, critically thinking about the message itself and considering issue-relevant matters

Character The audience's perception of the speakers' honesty and trustworthiness

Charisma A speaker's personality that is seen by the audience as attractive, engaging, and dynamic

Cognitive How you think

Cognitive-Dissonance Theory Suggests that a person's inconsistent and contradictory thoughts, beliefs, values and behaviors will cause tension and discomfort, causing one to seek ways to alleviate the discomfort through explanation or behavioral shifts

Cognitive-Response Theory Shows how people may respond to a persuasive message by evoking thoughts from their own storehouses of experience and knowledge that may not be contained in the message sent

Competence The audience's perception of the speakers' skills, ability, knowledge, experience, and wisdom

Credibility A receiver's acceptance of or disposition toward the source

Deficiency Motivation Characterized by needs to avoid danger, threat, disruption, and discomfort

Dissonance The feeling created when reasoning causes an audience to see inconsistencies in their own thoughts, beliefs, or point of view

Egoism Self-interest

Elaboration Likelihood Method The more elaborately a receiver responses cognitively, the greater the likelihood of attitude change

Enthymemes Syllogistic arguments with unstated premises

Ethos Appeal to the credibility of the speaker

Impression Management In our efforts to present our best and most persuasive self, we try to give appropriate performances on the stage of life.

Influence A power that affects a person or a course of events

Logos Appeal to reason

Motivation Any stimulation or inducement that leads to an act or belief

Pathos Appeal to the emotional response of the audience

Peripheral Routes Persuasion characterized by more affective, nonissue-relevant, contextual cues

Persuasion A nonviolent means of ethically influencing and motivating others through messages

Proofs of Persuasion Aristotle's three major appeals a speaker must make for an argument to be sound and persuasive to the audience: ethos, the appeal of credibility; pathos, the appeal of emotion; and logos, the appeal of logic

Reference Point An anchor for our succeeding judgments

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