

## Attitude Change and Persuasion

### The Lost Art of Persuasion

- In Ancient Rome and Greece, people learned how to persuade others
- Today, only \_\_\_\_ students receive this kind of education, which leaves many of the rest of us vulnerable

### Information Overload

- This is particularly bad when you consider the daily assaults on our will
- TV, radio, print media, now the Internet – all try to “persuade us”
- We simply cannot avoid the constant efforts to persuade us to change our opinions, our behavior, and most of all...
- TO BUY!

### Professional Persuaders

- Advertising is enormously successful
- Telemarketing is, too
- How do they do it?
- Today we’ll examine persuasion strategies
  - Knowing what the pros know allows us to become more sophisticated consumers (and persuaders)

### Classical Conditioning (CC)

- The goal is to \_\_\_\_\_ two things together that were previously not linked
- Involves repeated pairings of unconditioned stimulus (UCS) with the conditioned stimulus (CS)
- Remember Pavlov’s dogs?
  - (\_\_\_\_\_ = meat; \_\_\_\_\_ = bell)
  - The link created between meat and bell led the dogs to salivate at the sound of the bell

### Workers’ Slogan research

- Similarly, you can be more persuasive if you pair your message with pleasant things
- In the 1930’s, people attending worker’s rallies signed up to volunteer more often when the slogans were paired with a free lunch, compared with the smell of rotting fish

### Advertising and CC

- Advertisers use CC to get you to pair their product with other pleasant things, like...
- Sex
- Freedom
- Having fun

### Advertisers Also Target Basic Human Needs

- Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Self-actualization, status and self-esteem, love and belonging, safety and security)

Need for \_\_\_\_\_

- Pepsi Generation
- "Wouldn't you like to be a Pepper, too?"
- "Reach out and touch someone" (AT&T)
- "At Saturn, we treat you like family"

Which need is being targeted?

Need for \_\_\_\_\_

- Michelin's ad campaign showed kids inside of their tires
- Which need is being targeted?

Need for \_\_\_\_\_

- BMW ads pairs Powerful, Unique, and Inspiring with their cars
- Which need is being targeted?

Need for \_\_\_\_\_

- "Be all that you can be" (U.S. Army)
- "Where do you want to go today?" (Microsoft)
- These ads imply that the product can help you achieve all of your goals and dreams
- Which need is being targeted?

### Desire for \_\_\_\_\_

- Advertisers also sometimes emphasize that their product is “not for everyone”
- Of course, advertisers really want millions of people to buy their product

### Volkswagon

- VW’s campaign – “Drivers Wanted”

### Apple Computers

- Emmy-winning campaign – “Think Different”

### Summary

- By using CC principles, and targeting basic human needs, advertisers are very successful persuaders
- Social psychologists have also contributed to consumer research – let’s see how

### Self-monitoring and Persuasion

- High self-monitors are more persuaded by “\_\_\_\_\_” oriented ads, and ads that play on our need for status
  - Ads for luxury products (Rolodex, Lexus)
  - Passport Scotch “Because you enjoy going first class”
  - Michael Jordan’s Gatorade campaign “I want to be like Mike”

### By contrast

- Low self-monitors are more persuaded by ads that focus on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the product
- Subaru had a campaign in the late 1990’s that deliberately targeted lows
- “Look, this car isn’t going to boost your prestige in the eyes of your neighbors. But hey, if your neighbors care about the kind of car you drive, you live among snobs”

### Dual-Process Model

- Social psychologists have focused on the processes by which persuasion takes place
- Two main processes have been identified, and they are very different

## 2 Routes to Persuasion

- \_\_\_\_\_ route
  - Thoughtful, deliberative
  - Systematically process the message
  - Weigh pros and cons, then decide
- \_\_\_\_\_ route
  - Mindless, automatic
  - Based on message “cues”
  - Surprisingly effective (and common)

### The Central Route

- We may think we use this most often
  - We do use it when we are \_\_\_\_\_
  - And when we have the resources to think things through
- But in general, people are “\_\_\_\_\_ misers”
  - We try to preserve our mental resources whenever we can
- This leaves a lot of room for peripheral (mindless) persuasion

### Mindless Consumer Behavior Facts

- Ads that contain the words *new*, *improved*, *amazing*, and *introducing* sell more products
- In supermarkets, products that sell best are placed
  - at eye level
  - at the end of the aisle
  - close to the cashier
- Companies pay extra to have their products placed strategically
- This doesn't make much sense, when you think about it
- But consumer behavior is often mindless
  - Studies show that \_\_\_\_% of grocery store purchases are unplanned
  - \_\_\_\_% of consumers make at least one spontaneous purchase per store visit
- By playing to the peripheral route, companies make a fortune

### Peripheral Power

- You can also persuade people more generally by using the peripheral route

- Ellen Langer's classic research on "mindless" compliance
  - Her groundbreaking study showed that people are often on "automatic pilot"

#### The copy machine study

- Experimenters approached people at a copy machine, asking if they could butt in line
- Of course, if they had a reason, they were more successful
- But if they gave a mindless reason (e.g., "Can I please go ahead of you? I have to make some copies") were they just as successful? Yes/No

#### Mindless Persuasion "Cues"

- We often use "cues" in the message to tell us when it is good
- \_\_\_\_\_ = correct
  - Subjects are more persuaded when the message indicates that others agree
  - "More hospitals use Tylenol than any other brand"
  - "9 out of 10 doctors recommend..."
- \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_
- Research shows that if you take the SAME argument and just enlarge the font and increase the margins, people will be more persuaded by it (it looks longer)
- Moreover, if you just increase the number of WEAK arguments, you can be more effective – so, 6 lame arguments are better than 3 or 4
- Experts are trustworthy
  - Subjects more persuaded by (the same) message if a professor, versus a student, "wrote it"
- Familiar (or attractive) people are trustworthy
  - Celebrities and models used to pitch products
- One ad for a pain reliever combined familiarity cue with "expertise" cue
  - "I'm not a doctor, but I play one on TV"

#### Are we always "pushovers"?

- Peripheral persuasion often works because our resistance is low
- But when we are motivated and have the ability to counter-argue, we can be as stubborn as a brick wall

\_\_\_\_\_ theory

- Brehm (1966) was inspired by teenagers, but his theory applies to us all
  - We often resist \_\_\_\_\_ attempts to influence us
  - Protects our need for freedom and autonomy

Don't be obvious!

- In TV ads, we often watch people (happily) interacting with a product
- The appearance is one of “eaves-dropping”
- The message we get slips in (peripherally) because it is not blatantly obvious
- Parents often fail when lecturing their kids – the attempt at influence is too \_\_\_\_\_
- Public Service Announcements are also not very persuasive

The solution?

- Maybe they should take a lesson from advertisers
  - Pair seat belts with sex
  - Make vegetables “high status” food
  - Convince us that it's cool to use condoms

The condom study

- Researchers tried exactly this idea
- Some subjects watched the typical PSA message, filled with direct information
  - Health info (scare tactics)
  - Utilitarian (“here's how”) info

The other group

- Watched a film involving a couple having a few drinks, flirting, getting more serious, and then reaching for a condom (lights out, laughter, moans)
- A month later, subjects reported how many condoms they had bought  
WHAT did they find? \_\_\_\_\_

### Role Modeling

- We all know that “do what I say, not what I do” seldom works
  - People imitate others more readily than they follow orders
- Role modeling is probably more effective than direct communication because your audience doesn’t have its guard up (less \_\_\_\_\_)

### Dissonance and Attitude Change

- Cognitive dissonance - a classic theory of attitude change

Reminder:

- It argues that people are driven to behave “in line” with their attitudes
- If you can’t “take back” the behavior, you change the attitude to fit the action

### When does this work?

- When people \_\_\_\_\_ act
- That is, when they don’t have another justification for the action
- If they can justify the action, no attitude change results
  - If you give them a high reward (\$20 vs. \$1)
  - If you force them to act

### The “induced compliance” paradigm

- Has popularly shown support for this assumption
  - Subjects “induced” to write an essay against their attitudes typically change their attitudes to be consistent with the action
  - Subjects “forced” (told) to do the same thing \_\_\_\_\_ change their attitudes

### Example

- Imagine you are \_\_\_-affirmative action (as assessed by a pre-test measure)
- Weeks later, you are asked to write an essay that is \_\_\_-affirmative action
- You are told that the dean is collecting student opinions, as she is thinking about abolishing affirmative action on your campus

### You protest...

- But the experimenter says he has already collected several pro-affirmative action essays – he really needs you to provide a balanced view
- You (voluntarily) agree

- Once you have written your essay, you are asked to read it aloud into a tape recorder – the tape to be “given to the dean”
- Afterwards, you are asked to give your attitude again – what will it be?
- We conducted this study at the U of MN (Fleming & Rudman, 1993)
- Some people were induced to write anti-affirmative action essays
- Others were forced to
- Per cognitive dissonance theory, we found attitude change – but only for “volunteers”

#### Attitudes Toward Aff-Action Results

- This shows the well-established effect of cognitive dissonance on attitude change
- People who voluntarily wrote against their pro-AA beliefs wound up reporting more anti-affirmative action attitudes
- Their behavior now seemed to be more consistent with their attitudes, reducing dissonance

#### Avoiding attitude change

- Most of the research shows that attitude change effects are common
- But we wondered if we could \_\_\_\_\_ attitude change in volunteers
- How might this attitude change effect be deterred?

#### Distancing behaviors

- Have you ever crossed your fingers while telling a lie?
- Talked to someone on the phone while rolling your eyes or with sarcasm?
- These are ways of \_\_\_\_\_ the behavior
- Called distancing behaviors ( “It’s not the real me”)

#### Hypothesis

- If volunteers (asked to write against affirmative action) distanced themselves from their behavior, they might avoid dissonance-induced attitude change
- How to get them to distance?
- Here’s what we did

### Affirmative Action Study

- All subjects were pre-tested to be pro-affirmative action, and then asked to voluntarily write \_\_\_\_\_-affirmative action essays
  - They were also asked if another person (a confederate) might “sit in” on the study
    - He or she was thinking about becoming an RA and wanted to get a feel for the projects going on
  - All subjects agreed to both requests
  - They then wrote essays that argued against helping \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
  - Just as the subject was about to tape-record their essay for the dean, the confederate entered
  - Who was the confederate? Who would most likely cause distancing?
  - Subjects randomly assigned to one of two conditions
    - \_\_\_\_\_ confederate (\_\_\_\_\_)
    - White Male confederate (WMC)
  - WMC is the control condition – important to find out whether anyone in the room would cause distancing
  - We made SOME subjects nervous - but would they be nervous enough to distance themselves from their behavior?
  - We videotaped this part of the experiment through a one-way mirror
  - Let me show you two examples
  - Todd (\_\_\_\_\_ condition)
  - Eric (WMC condition)
- Todd
- Notice he was reluctant – I had to prompt him to go on after she walked in
  - He read his essay in a sarcastic tone of voice, making a lot of speech errors
  - When it’s over, he tells her “It’s not my opinion, I had to write this”
  - These are all forms of \_\_\_\_\_
- Eric
- When the WMC walked in, Eric was not happy about having an audience
  - But he “got down to business” right away, and made a persuasive tape
  - When it was over, the WMC asked him “What are you supposed to be doing?” to give him the chance to distance – but he didn’t. He simply said: “Write about affirmative action”

- So these were two very different reactions to the situation
- Todd and Eric are typical representatives of their condition
- Much more distancing was done by \_\_\_\_\_ compared with WMC, subjects
- Some examples of distancing used were...

#### Distancing behaviors

- \_\_\_\_\_ before or after reading the essay
  - “This was not my idea”
  - “I am doing this only as a favor to the E”
- Reading the essay in a flat voice, or with many pauses and errors
  - Trying to sound as \_\_\_\_\_ as possible
- Reiterating their own beliefs afterwards
  - “I am not a racist, I am not a sexist”

#### Hypothesis

- This was a very dramatic experiment to conduct (high in experimental realism)
- But the main question was, would distancing result in less attitude change?
- Let’s see if it did

#### Attitudes Toward Aff-Action

##### Results

- WMC showed the usual attitude change effect
- BFC subjects not only \_\_\_\_\_ it, they \_\_\_\_\_ their attitudes in a pro-affirmative action direction!

#### Summary

- Dissonance-induced attitude change is a robust phenomenon
- But it is NOT inevitable
- Subjects forced to \_\_\_\_\_ themselves from their behavior wound up strengthening their original attitude

### Questions

- Your best friend is in a bad relationship. If you want to help them, you probably should not deliver a “lecture” due to
  - A. central route processing
  - B. classical conditioning
  - C. reactance theory
  
- An ad for Bose speakers that focuses on the quality of the sound (as opposed to its image enhancing qualities) would most likely appeal to
  - A. high self-monitors
  - B. low self-monitors
  - C. audiophile nerds
  
- An ad poses 3 people (2 women, 1 man) who wear nothing but Jordache jeans provocatively together. What strategy is being used?
  - A. classical conditioning
  - B. it targets our need for status
  - C. it targets our need for uniqueness
  
- When researchers ask people to behave in a way that contradicts their attitudes and then see if that changes their attitude (to match the behavior better) they are using:
  - A. cognitive dissonance theory
  - B. the induced compliance paradigm
  - C. the forced choice paradigm
  - D. Both A and B
  
- In the video clip, Todd most likely changed his attitudes to be MORE pro-affirmative action because
  - A. it matched his behavior better
  - B. he distanced himself from his behavior
  - C. it matched his mood better
  - D. none of the above