PERSUASION, CRITICAL THINKING, AND WRITING

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Persuasion, Critical Thinking, and Writing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: An Introduction to Persuasion

1.1: The Roots of Persuasion

Do you ever stop and think about how amazing words are? As your eyes or ears or fingertips take in the symbols on this page, what thoughts or images are bubbling up in your brain? Using words–communicating–provides structure for our thoughts, enables us to make human connections and share meaning, create culture, and provides a means to persuade–among so many other things. Language is likely the single greatest invention of humankind!

Many communication textbooks will tell you that language and culture cannot be separated; it's next to impossible to fully immerse in a culture if one does not speak the language, and it's hard to completely understand the nuanced meanings of a language if one is not a member of a culture. A simple analogy for this is cake batter: eggs and flour and butter are separate things, but once they're mixed together, you can no longer separate them. Trying to separate culture and language would be like trying to remove an egg from a bowl of cake batter. Our languages are very much a part of our cultures.

We see this with the concept of persuasion. Although there is debate about where, precisely, democracy was born, the democratic government of Athens, Greece was early and extremely influential. Imagine the enormous shift in Western culture when the ideals and language of Athenian democracy took root. The rule of the privileged and powerful was replaced when the merchant, trading and artisan classes took power (James 16). Regular citizens (this meant free, Athenian-born men, who comprised about 20% of the population) not only had the right to participate in government, it was their duty to participate. The Assembly, which met weekly to decide all public policy, included every citizen 18 or older. Imagine the change in power dynamics: regular citizens, not kings or dictators or aristocrats, were the driving force behind government, legal decisions, and jury verdicts (Davis). Common citizens were making powerful, sometimes life-or-death decisions. The Council, which set the agenda for the Assembly, "consisted of 500 Athenian males over 30, drawn by lot from those who put themselves forward. Each councillor served for one year only, and could never serve for more than two" (Jones 25). "After a number of years, practically every citizen had had an opportunity to be a member of the administration, so that the body of citizens who formed the public assembly consisted of men who were familiar with the business of government" (James 5).

Today, government leaders and elected officials would likely disagree with the idea that randomly-selected citizens could do their work, but that was precisely the guiding principle of Greek Democracy. One of the greatest civilizations the world has known flourished under this form of government:

> *Now if the ancient Greeks had done little beside invent and practice this unique form of human equality in government, they would have done enough to be remembered. The astonishing thing is that they laid the intellectual foundation of Western Europe. Today when we speak about philosophy, logic, dialect; when we speak of politics, democracy, oligarchy, constitution, law; when we speak of oratory, rhetoric, ethics; when we speak of drama, of tragedy and comedy; when we speak of history; when we speak of sculpture and architecture; in all these things we use the terms and build on the foundations that were discovered and developed by the Greeks (James 8-9).*

New language and ideas accompanied the shift in governance, power and culture. With free will, a voice, and real power, a whole new way of communicating would emerge alongside the new form of governance. The despot was replaced with debate; edicts gave way to eloquence, and supreme rule was set aside for reason. It is absolutely no coincidence that the discipline of persuasion closely trailed the birth of democracy.

1.2: Persuasion, Defined

Persuasion is powerful and it is pervasive. But, what, exactly, *is* persuasion?

Communication scholar and researcher Daniel O'Keefe argues that "definitions are troublesome because there will always be individuals who find a particular definition too broad, while others find it too narrow" (Brownell 83). O'Keefe makes a strong argument! Depending upon who one asked for a definition of persuasion–and when one asked–one would get very different answers.

The word "persuasion" comes from the Latin verb *persuadere*, to persuade, from *per*, strongly, and *suadere*, to urge. The ancient Greek term for persuasion was *Peithṓ*.

Some definitions of persuasion are very far-ranging, such as Gass and Seiter's: "persuasion involves one or more persons who are engaged in the activity of creating, reinforcing, modifying, or extinguishing beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations, and/or behaviors within the constraints of a given communication context" (40).

Communication scholar and author Richard Perloff offers the following definition: "a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice" (Perloff 8).

A more concise definition is offered by Mirriam-Webster: "to move by argument, entreaty, or expostulation to a belief, position, or course of action ("Persuade," def. 1).

The Moody College of Communication at UT-Austin offers another brief definition: "persuasion is a form of social influence in which an audience is intentionally encouraged to adopt an idea, attitude, or course of action by symbolic means" ("Persuasion and Social").

We could go on (and on), but areas of overlap among common definitions of persuasion include intention, a positive result, free choice, and a lack of threat or harm (Powers 126).

Penny Powers offers this definition of ethical persuasion:

> when a sender presents a true, honest, logical and complete argument that includes presentation of other real choices, has no personal benefit in the result, and when the receiver understands the arguments and has unrestrained freedom of choice and ability to choose, and all of this happens within a context of unhurried respect and equality, then this situation could be said to be persuasive and ethically justified (129).

1.3: Classical Persuasion

Using the terms "persuasion" and "rhetoric" interchangeably is not uncommon, but it is not correct. This misuse is akin to asserting that "soccer" and "scoring a goal" are the same thing. Rhetoric refers to the art of using language well, particularly in terms of written and spoken discourse ("Rhetoric in Literature"). The goal of rhetoric–using language well–is often to persuade or convince someone. Just as scoring a goal is a function of playing soccer, persuasion is a function of rhetoric. Rhetoric is the means; persuasion is the goal or objective.

This distinction is pertinent as we briefly explore the roots of the study of persuasion.

Persuasion as an art, science, discipline, concept–however you wish to conceptualize it–came about shortly after the birth of democracy, and, again, this was no coincidence:

The study of persuasion originated through the study of rhetoric. The ancient Greeks were the first to advocate the importance of rhetoric, oration, persuasion, and communication for the egalitarian arrangement and functioning of deliberative democracy among and within the Greek city-states (i.e. *polis*). The power of *suasion* was perceived as critical to the welfare of all citizens living within democracy, due to its power to induce free exchange of opinions and counterarguments within the political arena, which would guarantee arrival at a political consensus on the basis of persuasion and free choice, rather than through coercion and the civil strife (Radakovic).

Historian Hannah Arendt summarized this succinctly by pointing out that "To be political, to live in a *polis*, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence" (26-27).

The ability to persuade others became paramount as people gained freedom, choice, and agency. However, the study of rhetoric was not without controversy. Plato largely rejected rhetoric, expressing concern that rhetoric could be used to manipulate audiences, gratify audiences, and promote one's self-interests (Girouard). Fortunately for generations of communication scholars, Aristotle disagreed.

Many historians argue that Aristotle wrote his famous *Rhetoric* in order to defend rhetoric from other philosophers' criticisms. "By offering a complex conception of public speech that appeals to reason as well as human passions and emotions, Aristotle defend[ed] rhetoric against claims that it was simple flattery, or worse still, an artful cloak for injustice" (Triadafilopoulos 744). Aristotle distinguished rhetoric, which he defined as the capability "to see the available means of persuasion," from dialectic, the go-to form of skilled debate used by the Greek philosophers (Floyd-Lapp 3). Although Aristotle recognized that rhetoric could be used by people and for causes that lack integrity, he advocated rhetoric as a tool of public discourse; one that engages both reason and emotion (Floyd-Lapp 3).

Aristotle identified three *pisteis*, or "proofs," as being available to rhetoricians. Although *pistis* is usually translated as "proof," Aristotle meant more broadly "reason for or cause of belief" (Nichols 663). The Aristotelian modes of proof are *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*.

Although the proofs seem separate, the three modes of proof are inseparable from one another (Nichols 664). Aristotle's arguments in *Rhetoric* illustrate that "the character of the speaker, the passions he arouses, and the arguments he employs are mutually dependent" (Nichols 665).

1.4: The Aristotelian Modes of Proof

Ethos

Ethos has come to mean the influence of speaker credentials and character. It can include such things as one's education, expertise, background, and good character. The word “ethos” looks very much like the word “ethics,” and there are many close parallels to the trust an audience has in a speaker and his or her honesty and ethical stance.

Logos

Aristotle’s original meaning for logos had philosophical meanings tied to the Greek worldview that the universe is a place ruled by logic and reason. Logos in a speech is related to standard forms of arguments that the audience would find acceptable. Today we think of logos as both the logical and organized arguments and the credible evidence used to support the arguments in a speech.

Pathos

In words like “empathy,” “sympathy,” and “compassion,” we see the root word behind pathos. Pathos, to Aristotle, was using the emotions such as anger, joy, hate, desire for community, and love to persuade the audience of the rightness of a proposition. One example of emotional appeals is using strong visual aids and engaging stories to get the attention of the audience. Someone asking you to donate money to help homeless pets may not have a strong effect, but seeing the ASPCA’s commercials that feature emaciated and mistreated animals is probably much more likely to persuade you to donate (add the music for full emotional effect).

Emotions are also engaged by showing the audience that the proposition relates to their needs. However, we recognize that emotions are complex and that they can be used to create a smokescreen to logic. Emotional appeals that use inflammatory language, like name-calling, are often unethical or at least counterproductive.

One negative emotion that is often used in advertising and that can be used ethically is fear. When you think about it, we do a number of things in life to avoid negative consequences. Avoiding negative consequences often means making decisions out of fear. We will explore fear appeals as persuasive strategy elsewhere in this textbook.

1.5: Ethical Rhetoric Today

Aristotle did such an excellent job establishing the value or rhetoric that it became a major component of a classical education. Rhetoric, along with grammar and logic, made up the Trivium–the three lower division subjects of the seven liberal arts. From classic Greece to the Roman era, the Middle Ages, the Enlightenment, to the late 19th century, rhetoric was considered a core subject for statesmanship and was a key subject in Western education.

Fast-forward to today, and we see that the proliferation of media platforms has fundamentally changed the available means of persuasion. Advancements in neuroscience are giving us a whole new look–quite literally–into how humans process and react to persuasive messages. Much persuasion is still attempted through spoken and written words, but olfactory persuasion, sonic persuasion, visual persuasion and other forms are now being studied and will be explored in this text.

Ethical Persuasion

One of Aristotle's most famous quotes about persuasion is that "Character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion." Aristotle understood that "we believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided."

Around 400 years later, the Roman rhetorician Quintilian defined rhetoric as "a good man speaking well."

What does it mean to be a good person or a person of good character in the context of persuasion? On its face, ethical persuasion means to put the interest of one's audience first. Persuasion should not occur as a result of dishonesty, force, coercion, propaganda, bribery, bias or manipulation. We will explore these concepts at greater length in future chapters.

Sherry Baker and David L. Martinson developed a tool called the TARES test, which seeks to establish robust principles for ethics and a more ethical approach to persuasion, particularly commercial persuasion. This test has five principles: truthfulness, authenticity, respect, equity and social responsibility.

- Truthfulness
  - Is this communication factually accurate and true? Does it lead people to believe what I myself do not believe?
  - Has this appeal downplayed relevant evidence?
- Authenticity
  - Does this action compromise my integrity?
  - Do I feel good about being involved in this action?
  - Do I truly think and believe my audience will benefit?
- Respect
  - Is the appeal made to others as rational, self-determining human beings?
  - Does this action promote self-interest at the unfair expense of or to the detriment of my audience?
- Equity
  - Am I doing to others what I would not want done to me or to people I care about?
  - Does my audience know they are being persuaded rather than informed?
- Social Responsibility
  - Does this action take responsibility to promote and create the kind of world and society in which persuaders themselves would like to live with their families and loved ones?
  - Have I unfairly stereotyped society's constituent groups in my persuasive message?

We will close this chapter with a brief paraphrase of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* from political scientist Mary P. Nichols:

"If a rhetorician is to be persuasive, he must show that his advice is advantageous to his audience, that what he is praising is noble, or that he has justice on his side. In such cases, his premises, his conclusions, and his examples all reveal his character" (Nichols 665).

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Critical-Cultural Approaches to Persuasion

2.1: Introduction and Objectives

Learning Objectives

- Explore other forms of persuasive rhetorical approaches.
- Understand how the critical-cultural approach impacts motive and goal of persuasion.
- Understand and apply critical-cultural approaches to rhetorical analysis.

So far, we've explored the understanding and application of rhetoric, persuasion, and argumentation from a Western, Eurocentric lens, specifically from an Aristotelian rhetorical approach. Aristotle is the "godfather" of persuasion and his approach to rhetoric has significantly influenced Western approaches to examining and enacting persuasion, generally, and American approaches, specifically.

But there are *other* rhetorical approaches! One paradigmatic approach that has gained attention and popularity is the critical-cultural approach. The critical-cultural approach is rooted in critical theory, a perspective that emerged in the aftermath of World War I. Critical theory is considered a post-modern theory developed from the Frankfurt school of social and philosophical thought. It has evolved over time, is the subject of critique, and is no way limited in its scope or applications.

Despite critical theory's lack of comprehensive form and its disputed impact and relevance, critical theory's commitment is clear - its aim is the "unveiling the political stakes that anchor cultural practices" (Conquergood 351). The goal of critical theory is to examine, interrogate, and critique the power dynamics that create and uphold the structures and practices that keep folks in power.

In this chapter, we will learn more about three approaches that emerge from this paradigmatic perspective: critical-cultural approaches, the ancient Eastern rhetorical approach, and a Feminist approach.

2.2: The Critical-Cultural Approach

Some of the assumptions of the Western, Eurocentric approach to rhetoric posit that we, as human communicators, are rational beings – that we will be presented with evidence that will aid us in making a “good” decision; when presented with the “truth”, we, as rational beings, will be convinced of the truth. This assumption is reflected in Aristotle’s approach to persuasion, which is grounded in the idea of the ethical integrity of the persuader and the ethical integrity of the message. Much of Aristotelian rhetorical practice emphasizes development of an argument and expression of that argument through oration. Prior to 1970, much of the rhetorical analysis of persuasive messages explored the influence and impact of oration on public, civic life (McKerrow 198).

However, in the 1970s, with the growing influence of the critical paradigm, a shift started to occur. One shift questioned the assumption that persuasion is based upon the “truth” that humans are rational beings. First, Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm argued that humans are storytellers and are more convinced, or persuaded, by a “good story” (Fisher 1) . Fisher also called out inequities in academe, stating:

> *I was concerned with the concept of technical reason and the way it rendered the public unreasonable; with the idea of rationality being a matter of argumentative competence in specialized fields, leaving the public and its discourse irrational; with the apparent impossibility of bridging the gaps between experts and the public and between segments of the public; and with the necessity to learn what was supposed to be of the essence of persons–rationality–so that one class of citizens can always be superior to another" (Fisher 15).*

Then, in the early 1990’s, communication scholars Sonja Foss and Nancy Griffin proposed a new approach to examining rhetoric from a distinctly feminist perspective: invitational rhetoric. More recently, in the last couple of decades, there is more access and attention to the larger global community of rhetorical scholars, past and present, who have taken the opportunity to challenge ethnocentric Western approaches to rhetoric and persuasion. These approaches amplify non-Western approaches to rhetoric in persuasion. Let’s take a closer look at some of these approaches, starting from the past and working our way to the present.

2.3: Ancient Eastern Rhetorical Tradition

In the 2019 edition of *Argumentation: an International Journal on Reasoning,* university professor Yun Xie makes the case that the Ancient Chinese philosophers also followed a systematized approach to argument. Like Aristotle's approach, the Ancient Chinese rhetorical tradition seeks to persuade, however, Aristotle sought to persuade through evidence that could be proven, whereas the Ancient Chinese approach focuses more on reasoning from shared or understood principles in the metaphysical or epistemological level. This approach can be understood as argumentation by analogy.

Ancient texts refer to *tu lei* or argument by kind (sort). According to some Chinese philosophers, an effective argument will contain three elements:

- Gu (Reason)
- Li (Principle)
- Lei (kind/sort)

"More specifically, a claim should be established on the basis of some reason(s), and this establishment, or the inference from the reason(s) to the claim, needs to comply with an underlying principle. And more importantly, the legitimacy of both the reasons *(Gu)* and the underlying principle *(Li)* will have to be based on the knowledge about the kind in question" (qtd. in Xie 238).

The effectiveness of an argument examined whether the analogy effectively reflected the comparison of the two issues at hand (alignment) or whether the analogy effectively and correctly categorized the issues at hand. It is important to remember that many Asian cultures are collectivistic and indirect in their communication patterns. Meaning is often embedded in context; therefore, this rhetorical approach and analysis of argument is more flexible and contextual than typical, Western cultural communication patterns.

An example of *tu lei:* Human nature and flowing water both belong to the same kind of "things that can be 'channeled' (or developed) arbitrarily", and it is clear that flowing water has no tendency (to go east or west), therefore, human nature also has no tendency (of being good or bad) (Xie 345).

Aristotle also included analogical arguments as an acceptable form of argumentation in his epistle on persuasion, *Rhetoric*. However, a key difference between the ancient Eastern rhetorical tradition and Aristotle's perspective is that the Eastern philosophers compare agreed-upon principles ("truths" from a metaphysical or epistemological perspective) whereas Western analogies tend to compare principles of natural and physical law.

This difference in approach to persuasion is key to understand how assumptions and perceptions of the world are shaped by our culture, society, politics, etc… which in turn shape our understanding of persuasion as a process and as a practice.

The next critical cultural approach is another example of how our world and life perspective can shape our view of persuasion as a process and practice.

2.4: Narrative Paradigm- Challenging the Rational Paradigm

Usually, when one thinks of rhetoric, the Aristotelian pillars of persuasion come to mind: ethos, logos and pathos. Western rhetorical thought and practice operated on the assumption that humans are rational beings and when presented with complete data (evidence), humans will make a rational decision. In the late 70's, Walter Fisher challenged that assumption with the introduction of his narrative paradigm.

The narrative paradigm is a theory that rests on the assumption that all meaningful communication happens through storytelling or first-hand accounts. This was already a stunning proposition, but Fisher went further to propose that humans are essentially storytellers and that stories – narratives – are more persuasive than arguments. Talk about a paradigm shift! Fisher posited that narrative is a more compelling and intriguing tactic that is naturally persuasive because it invites and encourages connection between people and the issue(s) involved. He summarized this new paradigm as follows:>

1. Humans are…storytellers.
2. The paradigmatic mode of decision making and communication is "good reasons," which vary in form among situations, genres, and media of communication.
3. The production and practice of good reasons are ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character…
4. Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings - their inherent awareness of narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story, and constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives….
5. The world as we know it is a set of stories that must be chosen among in order for us to live in a process of continual re-creation. (Fisher 5).

Holihan and Baaske make the following observation: "Virtually all arguments can be understood and evaluated as stories" (31). But how do we evaluate these stories? Fisher maintains that decision making is based on "good reasons." What does that mean?

There are a few considerations to keep in mind when evaluating persuasive stories. The first is **narrative probability.** This concept explores the coherence and consistency of the story or persuasive message. A few questions that one may ask in assessing a narrative argument could be: is the story complete? Does the story make sense? Are the characters involved credible and do they act realistically? These are just a few of the questions that "test" the reliability and probability of the argument.

The second consideration is **narrative fidelity.** Narrative fidelity examines whether or not the story aligns with social reality. Does the story ring true for what we know about history or what we know about natural law or according to our experience? This second evaluative measure allows for us to assess the values embedded in the argument. As mentioned earlier, Fisher claims that people make their decisions based on their own values. These values are the basis of the "good reasons." If the story makes sense in terms of narrative probability and in terms of narrative fidelity then we have "good reason" to make a decision.

The other consideration is the **credibility of the storyteller**. Is the speaker a person of character? Can we trust the story they are telling? The integrity and character of the speaker is another important element when evaluating the persuasive story.

Fisher's narrative paradigm expands our understanding of persuasion and how it can work in our everyday experiences. By understanding how we, as humans, use story to advance our arguments, perspectives, and values, we can examine and gain insight into how some stories can persuade us, and others do not.

2.5: The Feminist Approach- Invitational Rhetoric

This approach is a feminist take on the art and science of rhetoric. Developed by sister scholars (literally!) Sonja Foss and Karen Foss, invitational rhetoric provides another framework to explore how we argue, approach controversial issues, and participate in decision making. Just as the critical perspective interrogates power dynamics in our rhetorical practices, invitational rhetoric addresses the patriarchal bias that is embedded in many traditional rhetorical theories and the positive value they accord to changing and thus dominating others (Foss and Griffin 2). Invitational rhetoric is an alternative rhetoric grounded in the feminist principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination. "Its purpose is to offer an invitation to understanding, and its communicative modes are the offering of perspectives and the creation of the external conditions of safety, value, and freedom" (Foss and Griffin 2).

Foss and Griffin further argued that that the very definition of rhetoric as persuasive embodies patriarchal values: “Implicit in the conception of rhetoric as persuasion is an assumption that humans are on earth to alter the environment and to influence the social affairs of others" (2). They argue that embedded in the Western idea of “rhetoric” is the desire for power, influence, control, and even domination. “The act of changing others not only establishes the power of the rhetor over others but also devalues the lives and perspectives of others“ (Foss and Griffin 3). By contrast, invitational rhetoric seeks to reflect feminist principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination. These principles serve as a foundation that introduces a new attitude and approach in engaging in persuasive argumentation. Invitational rhetoric can be understood as “an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and see it the way the rhetor does” (Foss and Griffin 4). Change may occur while using invitational rhetoric, but change is not the main goal. The main goal is understanding, and thus, any change that occurs is more transformational because it is based upon understanding and insights gained through the open exchange of ideas.

A few characteristics of invitational rhetoric are as follows:

1. Openness - openness to other perspectives, but also openness in minimizing possible impediments to understanding. This could be being more flexible in the choice of language, construction of the argument, and/or even tone of communication.
2. Offering perspectives - the goal is to offer a viewpoint, without the expectation that all participants will hold or accept that viewpoint.
3. Safe, inclusive, and respectful environment - if participants are invited to share their true perspective, the environment should offer a safe space where others can respect and hold a variety of, and possibly differing, perspectives
4. Freedom of choice - the audience is free to accept or reject the rhetor’s perspective; the rhetor has the freedom to not be upset or bothered by the audience’s decision. (Foss and Griffin 5-6).

Invitational rhetoric offers another approach to engage in persuasive communication where influence is based upon understanding through exchange of ideas and insight. The relationship between rhetor and participants centers on mutual respect, freedom of choice, and preserving one’s value. Invitational rhetoric is also concerned with how participants in persuasion *feel* after the argumentation process. Rather than having a competitive environment, where one perspective “wins” over another, the environment is one where everyone leaves feeling heard, respected and valued, and understood. Invitational rhetoric can be a one way to encourage more collaborative decision making.

2.6: Summary and Works Cited

In Summation

Although traditional, Western approaches to persuasion are still largely regarded and favored in academia and popular culture, there are other approaches to understanding and practicing persuasion. In this chapter we explored how the critical perspective paved the way for more diverse understandings of persuasion and rhetoric. Eastern approaches to rhetoric shows us that reasoning and argument can be based upon more than natural law to be valid and logical. The narrative paradigm offers another approach to engage in and evaluate argument through narrative. Invitational rhetoric provides another perspective and process to understand and engage in rhetoric as persuasion. All of approaches to rhetoric help us understand how we, as humans, seek to understand, influence, and persuade one another.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: A Compendium of Persuasion Theories

3.1: Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviors

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

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

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

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

Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2: Strategy vs. Theory

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

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

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

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

3.3: Theories of Persuasion

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

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

Balance Theory - 1946

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

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

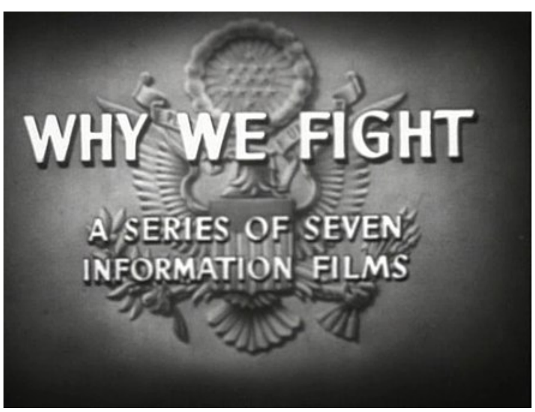
For instance, if looking at two individual's attitudes toward going to the gym:

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

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

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

Yale Attitude Change Approach - 1953



During World War II, the U.S. War Department created a series of training films entitled "Why We Fight." The Armed Forces created this series to quickly and effectively indoctrinate the mass influx of drafted soldiers and help them understand the events that led up to U.S. participation in the war (Baronne). Yale professor and researcher Carl Hovland was brought in to determine if the film series was effective as a means of communicating information and creating lasting change in opinion and attitude

(Lumsdaine 198). By the end of the war, Hovland and his team of researchers had conducted nearly 200 studies involving more than half a million soldiers from the Army and Navy. This research focused largely upon opinion control and the affect of media upon public opinion (Baronne).

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

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

Cognitive Dissonance Theory - 1957

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

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

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

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

Inoculation Theory - 1961

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

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

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

Social Judgment Theory - 1961

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

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

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

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

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

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

Psychological Reactance Theory - 1966

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

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

"Reactance is an unpleasant motivational arousal that emerges when people experience a threat to or loss of their free behaviors" (Steindl et al. 205). "People who are threatened usually feel uncomfortable, hostile, aggressive, and angry" (Steindl et al. 205). Threatened people may exhibit a range of behavioral and cognitive reactions, such as engaging in the restricted behavior, counterarguing, denigrating the source of the threat, to generally acting out in hostile or aggressive ways.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Elaboration Likelihood Model - 1980

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

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

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

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

Heuristic-Systemic Model - 1980

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

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

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

Narrative Paradigm - 1984

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

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

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

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

The Unimodel - 1999

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

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

Nudge Theory - 2008

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

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

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

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

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

More Theories Related to Persuasion

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

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

3.4: Questions for Consideration and Works Cited

Questions for consideration:

1. Given today's high levels of media saturation and fast pace, what implications might there be for how people are persuaded?
2. True or false: "A good story is more persuasive than a good argument." Justify your position.
3. Now that many popular news channels display clear bias in presenting the news, e.g., Fox News being unabashedly conservative and MSNBC being unabashedly liberal, what persuasive theory or theories might explain why news channels have shifted from more neutral reporting?
4. In your opinion, which theory best explains how or why people change their beliefs, attitudes, or behavior?

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Authors & Attribution

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Persuasive Strategies

4.1: Introduction to Persuasive Strategies

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

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

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

4.2: Persuasive Strategies Related to the Source

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.3: Persuasive Strategies Related to the Message

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

You've been framed. Check out this message, framed two different ways: "Doing your homework will improve your grade." Conversely: "Not doing your homework will diminish your grade." **Gain-framed persuasive messages** focus on the positives of compliance. **Loss-framed messages** focus on the disadvantages of non-compliance. The message framing effect has been studied extensively, particularly in health campaigns; e.g., the benefits of wearing sunscreen vs. the dangers of not wearing sunscreen; the benefits of eating fiber vs. the consequences of not eating enough fiber; the benefits of quitting smoking vs. the harm of not quitting, etc. The results are mixed; some studies show that loss-framed messages are more persuasive, often because fear arousal is so compelling, while other studies demonstrate that gain-framed messages are more persuasive. Still other studies found them equally persuasive (Nan 510). Nabi et al. (qtd. in Gass and Seiter 227) found that loss-framed messages tend to arouse negative emotions, while gain-framed messages tend to arouse positive emotions. The intensity of such emotions is associated with message effectiveness. Specifically, gain-framed messages become increasingly persuasive as positive emotions grow in intensity, while loss-framed messages become increasingly persuasive as negative emotions become more intense. "Practically speaking, then, if you want to be persuasive, try boosting people’s positive emotions when using gain-framed messages and amplifying their negative emotions when using loss-framed messages" (Gass and Seiter 227).

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

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

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

4.4: Persuasive Strategies Related to the Audience or Context

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Esoteric Appeals

5.1: Introduction

Chapter Objectives:

- To define esoteric persuasion
- To relate esoteric persuasion to dual process theories of persuasion
- To examine esoteric forms of persuasion, including color, music, sonic persuasion, aroma/smell, and typography
- To discuss the scientific validity of these forms of persuasion

Introduction

On my last trans-Atlantic flight, I noticed that Miley Cyrus' "Flowers" was playing as we boarded the plane. They played the same song when we were deplaning. Why? Did one of the flight attendants have a serious thing for that song? It turns out that boarding music "is a common practice among airlines to create a calming and relaxing atmosphere for passengers, making the flight experience more enjoyable" (Foster). As for deplaning, research by airlines has shown that people move faster to up-tempo music (Odom). It turns out that music is used intentionally and persuasively to change the experience of travelers - and to hustle them off the plane!

Music isn't the only form of esoteric persuasion, however. I have also found myself moved to the line at a cookie counter in a shopping mall, after having been assailed by the aroma of freshly-baked chocolate chip cookies. Can people be influenced by things such as music, sound, color, smell, or even a font? And if so, how?

Esoteric Persuasion: A definition.

What, exactly, is esoteric persuasion? “Esoteric” is defined as being understood by or meant for only the select few who have special knowledge or interest. Words synonymous with esoteric include abstruse (meaning hard to understand); arcane (known or understood by few); recondite (beyond ordinary knowledge or understanding); and enigmatic (puzzling, perplexing, or mysterious). According to these definitions, one might think that esoteric persuasion is either a somewhat elite form of influence understood by a select, erudite few, or that esoteric persuasion is not considered to be a mainstream, widely accepted form of persuasion. Regardless of how one defines esoteric persuasion, its various forms are fascinating.

What constitutes this esoteric or extraordinary form of influence? This chapter will examine color, music, sonic persuasion, aroma/smell, and typography.

Esoteric Persuasion: Theoretical Implications.

Before examining various forms of esoteric persuasion, it is important to understand some possible explanations as to why or how esoteric forms of persuasion might work. Elsewhere in this book, dual processing models of persuasion, such as Petty and Cacioppo’s elaboration likelihood model and the heuristic-systematic information processing model, have been examined. Both of these theoretical models assert that when one encounters some form of communication, this information is processed with varying degrees of thought. The elaboration likelihood model contends that, when a high degree of thought or mental elaboration is being used to process information, a central route is being used, whereas when a low degree of thought or elaboration is being employed, a peripheral route is being used. The heuristic-systematic model of persuasion asserts that systematic processing is defined by effortful scrutiny and comparison of information, whereas heuristic processing is defined by the use of cues to arrive more easily at a judgment (Trumbo 391).

In these models, the central and systematic routes are associated with a person’s motivation and ability to think: therefore effort, reasoning and mental energy are at play. The peripheral and heuristic routes, on the other hand, are associated with the message recipient having little motivation or ability to process a message. In the elaboration likelihood model, the peripheral route relies on association with positive characteristics such as positive emotions (Petty and Cacioppo). In the heuristic-systematic information processing model, certain heuristics or indicators, such as consensus (“everyone is doing it”); expertise (“experts know what they’re talking about") or argument length ("a long argument is a strong argument”) tend to influence opinions and attitudes (Chen and Chaiken 75). In short, central and systematic routes rely on processing information; peripheral and heuristic routes rely on cues or associations.

How are color, music, smell, sound, and typeface processed? When we encounter the smell of freshly-baked cinnamon rolls, hear the tell-tale sound of a beating heart, or fill our ears with music, we are probably not engaging in critical analysis, the evaluation of evidence, or heavy reasoning. And yet, evidence shows that, in some instances, persuasion is occurring. Esoteric communication is largely persuasion through association; we associate color, smells, music, etc. with emotions and memories.

5.2: Color

It is strange how deeply colours seem to penetrate one, like scent. –George Eliot

"Pexels" by Miguel Á. Padriñán is licensed under CC0 1.0

Color has long been associated with emotional states. When we're mad, we're "seeing red." We can be green with envy. When we are sad, we say we are feeling blue. An evil or malicious person is said to be black-hearted. Because the association between a feeling and color can be strong, some wish to conclude that colors *cause* feelings, that color is somehow tied to affective states, or that color causes certain behavioral outcomes. Research does not bear this out, however. "There aren't many clinical studies that prove the effectiveness of color psychology, and the ones that exist are somewhat inconclusive" ("How Do Colors"). No matter the color of a team's jersey, skill levels (and testosterone levels) do not appear to be affected by color. If color were causal, it would be hard to explain how the color blue is associated both with sadness and with calmness, or how the color yellow is associated with happiness as well as with cowardice. "Elements such as personal preference, experiences, upbringing, cultural differences, context, etc., often muddy the effect individual colors have on us" (Karthikeyan and Joy 65). In short, different life and cultural experiences equal different color associations. "According to color-in-context theory, color effects are rooted in the repeated pairing of color and particular concepts, messages, and experiences, and in this way, the mere perception of the color may evoke meaning-consistent affect, cognition and behavior" (Kesong et al.).

If colors have no objective bearing on our psychological states, they certainly have power over our purchasing decisions! Just as colors are often associated with feelings, colors are very much associated with brands. Marketing and branding rely heavily upon color association. Try to imagine Coca-Cola or Target without seeing the color red, or the Barbie logo in a color other than hot pink. Is it even McDonald's without the iconic golden arches? Just a hint of dark green gets me thinking about Starbucks! Most companies carefully consider color in their branding.

The IDealogic Brand Lab, a branding agency, states: "When it comes to choosing a brand's color scheme, it's critical that designers understand how each color will resonate with various target audiences. This can vary depending on the demographic or behavioral differences in consumers ("The Science of Color").

IDealab features colors frequently used in marketing and "their influence:"

- *Red* – creates a sense of urgency, triggers powerful emotions, and encourages appetite. It is associated with movement, excitement, power, fearlessness, and passion.
- *Blue* – trust, loyalty, dependability, logic, security, and serenity. Provides a sense of security and stimulates productivity. It is also known to be the preferred color of men.
- *Green* – health, tranquility, growth, freshness, prosperity, hope, and nature. Used to promote environmental issues. Green can encourage balance and harmony.
- *Purple* – commonly associated with wisdom, wealth, spirituality, imagination, and sophistication.
- *Yellow* – cheerful color that promotes optimism, warmth, happiness, creativity, intellect, and extroversion. Can be used to create a sense of anxiety that can draw in impulsive buyers and window shoppers.
- *Orange* – creates a sense of courage, confidence, warmth, innovation, friendliness, and energy.
- *Pink* – imaginative, passionate, caring, creativity, innovative, quirky. Often associated with femininity.
- *Black* – associated with sophistication, security, power, elegance, authority, and substance. Often associated with luxury and power.

- *White/Grey* – innocence, purity, cleanliness, simplistic, pristine. Represents cleanliness and can provide a modern feel.

"Color Emotion Guide" by The Logo Company is used with permission.

5.3: Music and Sonic Persuasion

"Music evokes emotion, and emotion can bring with it memory… it brings back the feeling of life when nothing else can." - British Neurologist Oliver Sacks

Most of us hear music shortly after we are born, usually in the form of lullabies. We hear music during the most momentous occasions in our lives, from weddings to graduations to funerals. Music brings people closer together and helps us form communities (Rosas). Music emanates from our alarms in the morning, fills our cars, gives us chills, and makes us cry (Changizi). "Music has been culturally selected to sound like an emotionally expressive human" (Changizi).

Music induces emotions in listeners (Juslin and Västfjäll 562). "Positive emotions dominate musical experiences. Pleasurable music may lead to the release of neurotransmitters associated with reward, such as dopamine. Listening to music is an easy way to alter mood or relieve stress. People use music in their everyday lives to regulate, enhance, and diminish undesirable emotional states (e.g., stress, fatigue)" (Heshmat). In addition, listening to pleasurable music alters the time-processing areas of our brain, making us less aware of the passage of time (Droit-Volet, et al. 417).

Music and emotions are strongly related to memory. Dr. Oliver Sacks stated that "musical emotions and musical memory can survive long after other forms of memory have disappeared" (Kakutani). Part of the reason for the durable power of music appears to be that "listening to music engages many parts of the brain, triggering connections and creating associations" (Hashmet).

Music affects more than mood and memory; music affects behavior. Hashmet notes that music creates strong tendencies to move with the music; people will find themselves swaying, tapping their feet, snapping their fingers, and even dancing. Our heart rate will speed up or slow down to become one with the music. In addition, listeners will mirror their emotions to the music, smiling and cheering with happy music or feeling sad to sad music.

"Drummer John Otto of Limp Bizkit in 2006" by Childishknack is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license

Music affects consumer behavior. One study (North, et al. 271) exposed customers in a supermarket drinks section to either French music or German music. The results showed that French wine outsold German wine when French music was played, whereas German wine outsold French wine when German music was played. Background music affects shoppers' moods (Hashmet). Classical music influenced shoppers to purchase more expensive wines than Top 40 music (Arendi and Kim 336). Slower tempo music resulted in a slower shopping pace in the store and increased sales volume (Milliman 89-90). Thus, music is an important consideration for most retailers; they spend billions of dollars on music systems, music providers and royalty fees (Allan 34).

Sonic Persuasion

"One could always look away, but as sound theorists know, one can never close one's ears." -Stephen Connor

Somewhat akin to music is the concept of sonic persuasion, or persuasion through sounds. Sonic persuasion includes paralinguistic cues, which are related to speech (volume, pauses, intonation, accents, etc.) as well as sounds in general. Greg Goodale asserts in his book, *Sonic Persuasion: Reading Sound in the Recorded Age* that "a pause, or an intonation, or even a noise can make a forceful argument" (3). Why? Because "the plethora of platitudes reaching our ears during the day would be unbearable if we encountered them in print. And so it is that whatever is human, personal, or intimate seems favored by auditory communication" (Cantril and Allport).

Goodale recounts one of the most famous instances of sound persuasion:

"Orson Welles' [1938] broadcast of *War of the Worlds* during the Columbia Broadcasting System's *Mercury Theater* was intended to manipulate. Listeners were frightened by sound effects that producers and actors employed to portray an alien attack on the United States. Actors sounded like panicked reporters or government officials (one actor adopted the cadence of FDR's Fireside Chats), while Welles' staff put on all the sonic tricks they could muster to imitate sonic expectations about an alien attack. The audience's panic is enlightening." (Goodale 3)

Although Welles' radio production of *War of the Worlds* is remembered because "it so perfectly captures our unease with the media's power over our lives" (Pooley and Socolow) and because of the ensuing controversy over how widespread the resulting panic actually was, the broadcast is also a phenomenal example of early sonic persuasion. Would the "breaking news" format of the broadcast have been convincing without the sounds of panic and war machines, punctuated by what people believed to be voices of authority and "alarming-sounding on-the-scene reports" (Campbell 28)?

Michel Chion points out in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* that, because individuals who are able to hear cannot NOT hear, "sound more than image has the ability to saturate and short-circuit perception" (34). Think about how iconic the following sounds have become: crickets chirping; the whistle of a bomb falling; the ringing of a bell; the clickety-clack of a locomotive; the sounds of laughing and applause. These sounds elicit associations and emotions for listeners. "Voices and noises produce meaning beyond words uttered and recorded, particularly when they are broadcast to millions of listeners. Noises like the ticking of a clock, the dulcet tones of the deep-voiced announcer, and the moaning of the air-raid siren make persuasive arguments to us" (Goodale 4).

Psychology of Radio includes several early studies that analyzed auditory processing effects in radio listeners. Listeners were made more comfortable laughing along with a radio comedy if they heard the sound of others laughing. Arguments were judged to be more convincing if they were spoken slowly. "Recognition is a mental function definitely favored when the material to be recognized is heard rather than read" (Cantril and Allport). In other words, we recognize sounds more readily than text.

Although research has been done on voice characteristics such as speed of speech, accent, and tone, very few studies have been done upon the persuasive effects of sound effects, and yet, radio, television, videos and even speakers — particularly comedians – frequently use them. Sounds and sound effects appear to inject a "real-world" element to the listener's experience that in turn affects their perceptions. And, like music, certain sounds appear to affect a listener's mood and emotional state.

Collins and Dockwray examined how the spatial positioning of sound effects can significantly influence an audience by placing the audience in a particular subjective perspective. Such things as microphone distance, volume, reverberation, and sound mixing were examined. They looked at how sounds are used in public service announcements, which frequently rely upon emotional, and in particular, fear appeals. They analyzed how sounds are used to emphasize key themes in a message and how they are used to draw audience focus, demonstrating how volume, reverb and the manipulation of sounds are used to "place listeners intimately within the scene" (55). They posit that sound proxemics create underlying messages that "work on an emotional level that may not be obvious in the visual or verbal message" (56). "In particular, because we are rarely taught a language with which to unpack auditory aspects of communication, it is especially important to understand how audio can be used as a rhetorical device to persuade audiences" (56).

5.4: Olfactic Persuasion

Olfactic Persuasion: Aroma & Smell

“Woman Smelling Flowers" by Petr Kratochvil is Licensed under CC0 Public Domain

“Odors have a power of persuasion stronger than that of words, appearances, emotions, or will. The persuasive power of an odor cannot be fended off, it enters into us like breath into our lungs, it fills us up, imbues us totally. There is no remedy for it.” — Patrick Süskind, Perfume: The Story of a Murderer

“Olfaction is the most ancient sense and is directly connected with emotional areas in the brain. It gives rise to perception linked to emotion both in everyday life and in memory-recall activities” (Pizzoli et al.). Unlike the other senses, smell does not synapse in the thalamus before connecting to the cerebral cortex. This intimate connection between the olfactory system and the cerebral cortex is one reason why smell can be a potent trigger of memories. This side-stepping of the thalamus also causes smells to be powerfully linked with emotions (Van Hartevelt and Kringelbach 1220).

Author Marcel Proust coined the term “involuntary memory” to describe the triggering of a powerful memory by a smell, a taste, or even a sound. A famous anecdote from his book *In Search of Lost Time (À la recherche du temps perdu)* recounts how the taste of a madeleine cake dipped in lime-flower tea takes his main character back to his childhood, with all its colors, smells, and feelings (Van Campen 2).

A Norwegian friend of mine was once stopped in his tracks by such a Proust effect. I was making glögg, a Nordic mulled wine and brandy concoction that is heavily spiced with cinnamon sticks, cardamom pods, peeled ginger, orange and cloves. He walked into our kitchen and abruptly stopped, looking completely awestruck, and began recounting the vivid memory he was experiencing: his dad, standing at the stove in their 1970’s kitchen, fishing the bundle of cheesecloth-wrapped spices out of the glögg. He could recall what his dad had been wearing and even the sounds of the party in the next room. This vivid memory was suddenly, powerfully, and involuntarily triggered by a smell.

Memories elicited by smell are more emotional and more evocative than those triggered by images or sounds (Herz and Schooler 27), which may explain the persuasiveness of olfactory cues. Haberman examined the interactive effects of argument strength and olfactory cues on behavior, and concluded that scents in a persuasive advertising context can have a strong influence on consumers’ affective reactions, product evaluations, and purchase behavior (14). In their study, when no scent was present, customers were very critical and showed a negative reaction to weak arguments and a positive reaction to strong arguments, suggesting that customers were engaging in systematic processing when no heuristic cues were present. However, when pleasant scents were present, customers appeared to be more influenced by the scent than by the strengths of the arguments, and weak and strong arguments elicited similar positive reactions. “Customers’ cognitive resources seem to divert away from the presented information and the scent appears to provide sufficient diagnostic information for forming a judgment and making a choice” (15). A similar study demonstrated that customer attitudes toward a store, its products, and their intention to loyally patronize the store, as well as actual purchases, were significantly impacted by scent complexity. Simple or more familiar scents led to more positive responses from customers (i.e., more favorable attitudes, greater loyalty and increased sales). In contrast, more complex or unfamiliar scents had no effect on retail patrons (Haberman et al. 10). Spangenberg et al. found that gender-scent congruity affects consumer behavior. Shoppers in a clothing store scented either with rose maroc, previously determined to appeal to males, or vanilla, previously determined to appeal to females, had a positive impact on that gender. “Each gender evaluated the store and its merchandise more favorably and spent about 50% more time there, bought almost twice as many items and spent more than twice as much money” (1286). Ambient scents, or scents in the environment, improve both recall and recognition of familiar and unfamiliar brands (Morrin and Ratneshwar 10).

Olfactory persuasion does not appear to be limited to shopping behavior. In a museum setting, a noticeable number of visitors slowed down their step or even stopped and spent more time overall in the area where scent was diffused. This suggests that museum and art gallery curators can guide people to certain locations with the help of scents (Seljanko and Tookmaa 20). In a nightclub setting, pleasant scents increased dancing activity, improved the evaluation of the evening, the evaluation of the music, and the mood of the visitors (Shifferstein et al.).

Although research in olfactory persuasion and scent marketing is relatively new, these early studies demonstrate not only that the sense of smell is powerfully linked to memory and emotion, but also to behavior.

5.5: Typography

"When typography is on point, words become images." — Shawn Lukas

Typeface and Mood

Handwritten letters can communicate information about the writer and convey this feeling to the readers. A person writing from the trenches in WWII might reveal pain or fear through shaky script. A 13-year old might use hearts to replace the dot on an "i" as a demonstration of true love. Cursive writing can convey tradition and formality.

Today, computers offer a wide range of fonts in various weights and sizes. The challenge in the modern world is to select a font that matches the feeling the words are meant to convey.

Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

For example, this "I Want You to Panic" protest sign uses a font to convey a sense of urgency in dealing with climate change. The font matches the feeling of panic the protester hopes to create in the reader.

TikTok and *Instagram* use fonts that appeal to younger users, while *The New York Times* and *The Globe and Mail* use serif fonts to reinforce the credibility that comes with older and experienced organizations. Serif fonts are thought to inspire confidence and meet the expectations of an older reading audience.

Consider the ability of fonts to convey feelings as you craft business documents and slides. Ask yourself,

- What is the mood or feeling of the typeface(s) I have chosen?
- What image or impression is suggested by this choice?
- Does the typeface communicate the feeling I wish to convey?

For example, Jim would like to open an accounting business. What mood does each typeface convey? Does the typeface suggest the image Jim would like to convey?

- Jim's Accounting Services
- Jim's Accounting Services
- Jim's Accounting Services

Among other possible impressions, the first typeface conveys playfulness, the second conveys immaturity, and the third may indicate that Jim is bossy or possibly self-absorbed. Not the impressions that Jim would like to send. A better choice is one that conveys reliability and credibility:

- Jim's Accounting Services

This typeface is Times New Roman, a serif font carrying “a distinguished feeling of heritage and pedigree” (Gendelman 2015). The font may look familiar to you: many businesses and agencies use this typeface.

Serif and Sans Serif

Because they convey a professional tone, serif fonts (those with letters that have small tags on them) like Times New Roman, Garamond, Georgia, Baskerville, and Palatino are all popular for printed business and academic documents. When you write a cover letter for a loan application or a formal report for a client, you need a font that appears trustworthy and reliable. As designer Dylan Todd says, “When you are designing with type, the typeface you choose tells a story” ("The Science of Color"). The font conveys and affirms the story you would like the audience to hear about you as a young professional or a representative of the organization. Serif fonts are harder to read on lower quality monitors, but some can work well for online content if the font size is adjusted, if the letters do not appear to touch, and if the line height (the space between lines of text) is big enough.

"Characters Rendered in Several Fonts" by Alan M1 is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 license.

Restraint and Consistency

Documents and slides can look busy, cluttered, or incoherent if too many typefaces and sizes are used in a single document or slide set.

Use type styles like bold, capitalization, or italics to add emphasis. Keep in mind that if too much is emphasized, nothing is emphasized at all.

Layout & Composition

The arrangement of visual elements on a page also contributes to its persuasive appeal. A single-spaced block of text with no paragraph breaks or headings can overwhelm a reader. Densely packed PowerPoint slides can have the same detrimental effect.

In reports, negative space (or white space) provides a place for the eye to rest and is essential for distinguishing sections. This white space adds rhetorical appeal by emphasizing organizational structure (an element of logos). Consistency in heading styles and alignment of visual elements add to readability.

5.6: Conclusion and Works Cited

Conclusion

Esoteric messages via color, music, sound, smell, and typography rarely constitute the substance of a persuasive message, but by appealing to our senses of sight, taste, hearing and smell, these unusual messages add dimension and association to more conventional persuasive messages. Pay attention to the thoughts, moods, and feelings that colors, sounds, songs, and smells evoke; you are being influenced!

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Motivational Appeals

6.1: Introduction

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

"Angel" by Sarah McLachlan

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

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

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

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

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

6.2: Internal and External Motivation

Internal and External Motivation

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

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

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

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

6.3: Positive and Negative Motivation

Positive and Negative Motivation

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

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

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

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

6.4: Common Motivational Appeals

Common Motivational Appeals

Fear

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

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

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

Humor

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

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

Sex

We've probably all heard the adage that "sex sells". But does it? A sexual appeals is a "persuasion attempt that uses words, images and/or actions by models to evoke sexual thoughts, feelings, and/or arousal in a target audience" (Wirtz et al. 169). Advertising research reveals that "sexual appeals are attention-getting, arousing, affect-inducing, and memorable" (Reichert et al. 1). In social marketing campaigns, sexual appeals that are relevant, free of sexism, and appealing to both genders are persuasive: "sexual appeals are attention-getting, likeable, dynamic, and somewhat more apt to increase interest in the topic than are nonsexual appeals. In a saturated media environment, the ability to attract favorable attention and interest to the message is vital" (Reichert et al. 13).

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

Hope

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

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

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

Pity

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

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

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

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

6.5: Appeals to Human Needs

Appeals to Needs

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

"Maslow" courtesy of University of Minnesota Libraries is published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

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

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

Ethics of Using Fear Appeals

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

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

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

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

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

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Visual Persuasion

7.1: Introduction to Visual Persuasion

Visual Persuasion

> *"People might decide not to read an article, or tune out the radio, but they won't be able to unsee images that are published." - Margarida Alpuim and Katja Ehrenberg*

The idea that humans are visual creatures is debatable, however, there are some fascinating facts about how humans process visual images. A team of neuroscientists from MIT found that the human brain can process entire images that the eye sees for as little as 13 milliseconds (Trafton). This is 13 one-thousandths of a second! We not only recognize images very quickly; we are also more likely to remember pictures than words. This phenomenon is known as the **picture superiority effect:** "It has been clearly established that pictures are remembered better than words in tests of recall and tests of item recognition" (Hockley 1351). Although there are several explanations as to why visual images are better remembered than words, it has become evident that our memories find pictures to be more elaborate, distinctive, or meaningful than words (Hockley 1351).

"Rage, Flower Thrower Banksy 2003 Palestina" by GualdimG - Own work, is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Visual images also affect our emotions. "When we 'see' an image, it's not just the visual cortex that's involved. The brain region for emotional processing - the amygdala - is also activated" (Alpuim and Ehrenberg). The amygdala is "considered the single most important region of interest in the brain when considering the impact of visual images on fear, anxiety, and pain" (Nanda et al. 40). Sub-cortical brain structures like the amygdala are shaped by evolution to generate emotional responses such as fear, anger, and disgust that are meaningful for survival and adaptation; "compared to words, pictures may be perceived as more biologically relevant and are therefore more capable of eliciting emotional reactions" (Feng et al. 338).

In addition to being memorable and emotion-evoking, pictures also have a "truthiness" effect (Newman et al. 1337). "Photos influence people's judgments...and help people generate pseudoevidence to support claims" (1337). For example, people more often judged the claim "Macadamia nuts are in the same evolutionary family as peaches" to be true when the claim appeared with a photo of a bowl of macadamia nuts than when it appeared alone. The photo was related, but offered no proof (or disproof) of the claim. Related photos tend to inflate the subjective truth of claims (1337).

As advancements in printing, television, and digital media have made visual images easy to produce, reproduce and share, visual messages have proliferated. Because visual images can communicate multiple ideas rapidly and simultaneously, because they are more memorable, because they elicit emotional responses, and because they boost "truthiness", images are used heavily in advertising and other forms of persuasive communication.

7.2: Indexicality

Indexicality

"Froot Loops Cereal Bowl" by Evan Amos is licensed under the Creative Commons CCO 1.0 Universal Public Doman Dedication.

One way images persuade is through **indexicality** (Messaris *x*). This refers to the ability of images, in particular photos and video, to document that an event happened or that something took place. *Indexicality* is the idea that "a photographic image can serve as documentary evidence or proof of an advertisement's point" ("Visual Persuasion"). Photographs and videos can have a documentary aspect; they can "serve as documentary evidence or proof of an advertisement's point" (Gass and Seiter 359). "Any picture made through photographic means, whether on film or video, fits {the} notion of a sign produced as a physical trace of it's object...they are, in certain respects, direct physical imprints of the reality recorded in them (Messaris *x*). In the photo above, for example, you can see what the cereal looks like; it is documented in the photograph. This is indexicality.

When we see influencers trying products on social media, when we see "before & after" photos, products being used in infomercials, and sadly, when we see video footage of riots or murders, we are experiencing indexicality: not the actual events or products, but rather photos or footage of the event or product. When we see an image of something, it is just that: an image. It is NOT the actual thing, but the image serves as "proof" of the thing.

Younger generations tend to have greater experience with the realities of easy video editing, AI-generated images, and deepfakes. Whereas there may have been a time when "seeing was believing," people today should exercise caution and discernment when viewing images.

"Off to Puerta Vallarta" and "More Like Puerta Backyarda" by Paula Cardwell are licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 Deed (For the record, that is a brand-new toilet seat.)

7.3: Iconicity

Iconicity

An icon is widely defined as a celebrity, character or item whose exposure constitutes a defining characteristic of a society or era. Oxford Dictionary defines an icon as "a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol or as worthy of veneration ("Icon" def. 2). Betty White is a U.S. cultural icon, the Eiffel Tower is iconic of France, and the Statue of Liberty is strongly associated with the United States by people all over the world. Basically, some images are so strongly associated with places, feelings, and ideas that the image becomes representative of those places, feelings and ideas.

Rosie the Riveter" by J. Howard Miller, CC0 Public Domain

Messaris explains how iconicity persuades in his book, *Visual Persuasion: The Role of Images in Advertising*: "When we look at the real world that surrounds us, the sights we see do not register in our brains as neutral, value-free data. Rather, each visual feature, from the smallest nuances of a people's facial expressions to the overall physical appearance of people and places, can come with a wealth of emotional associations. Images can...call forth "preprogrammed" emotional responses" (Messaris *xiii*). More loosely defined, iconic means representative. Again, certain images come to represent ideas, feelings, places, etc. Icons are often used in persuasion to call forth those ideas, feelings, and sense of place.

"If there is one property that most clearly distinguishes pictures from language and other modes of communication, that property is iconicity” (Messaris 3). In marketing, visual icons are used to distinguish brands. One cannot see the green, two-tailed mermaid logo and not think of Starbucks. The golden arches are iconic of McDonald's, the red-and-white bullseye is strongly associated with Target, and the white apple silhouette is iconic of Apple. These icons conjure strong associations, ideas, and feelings with or about the companies they represent. The "Rosie the Riveter" image above is iconic of female empowerment, a "can-do" attitude, and the World War II era.

7.4: Syntactic Indeterminacy

Syntactic Indeterminacy

Language is an amazing and highly adaptable system. Cultures coin new words, terms or phrases - neologisms - to capture new ideas quite often (one of my recent personal favorites is "splooting"). Language also allows us to be pretty explicit about relationships between things. We have words that express logical relationships; for example, "this *leads to* that" or "such-n-such *causes* that. Words allow us to make a causal claim, draw an analogy, and express other kinds of logical connections between ideas (Messaris *xviii*). Words allow us to make explicit arguments.

Photo by Andres Ayrton, CC0 Public Domain

Pictures are not words and cannot make explicit arguments. Visuals can, however, imply relationships. Take, for example, an image of happy, smiling people at an amusement park. For most viewers, an association is made between the people being happy and their location, but a picture does not explicity state that "this place causes people to be happy."

Although some might see the lack of explicitness as a negative, it turns out that in visual persuasion, ambiguity is a positive. Because relationships are not explicitly stated in images, the viewer must work harder to make some sense of the message. More mental participation is needed. As we learned in the dual processing theories of persuasion, this sense-making would lead to a higher amount of cognitive elaboration and engagement with the topic. "Each viewer's interpretation [of the image] is likely to contain nuances of meaning that literally make it her or his own creation" (Messaris xviii). If it is true that people are more persuaded by ideas they've helped to construct, visual images could lead to better persuasion.; Another "positive" of visual persuasion is that, because explicit claims cannot be made, there is less accountability. "This ability to imply something in pictures while avoiding the consequences of saying it in words has been considered an advantage of visual advertising since the earliest days of its development as a mass medium" (Messaris *xix*).

So when we see cool, attractive people riding around in certain makes of cars, or political ads juxtaposing candidates with good (or bad) events and situations, or rugged people smoking cigarettes, or any image that creates an association between things, we are experiencing syntactic indeterminacy.

7.5: Framing Images- More Than Decoration

Framing: More Than Decoration

"When we look at a picture, we know perfectly well that it's a picture and not the real thing, but we suspend disbelief. For a moment, the picture is 'real'" (Bang 52).

Although some might believe that images are decorative or "extra" in the persuasive context, this is rarely the case. Visuals in persuasion and advertising are purposeful, intentional, and strategically placed. "Creators of visual messages...are in control of where the viewer's eye looks within an image, the information it delivers, and the emotions that it evokes" (Jordan). One should not assume that an image's function is decorative, particularly in persuasion, because, as Bang so eloquently states, for a moment that image is very real to us.

Images, camera angles, colors, design; all of these are chosen, and they are usually chosen for a reason. Case in point: when searching for a photo to illustrate the concept of syntactic indeterminacy, I chose the first photo of a happy couple drinking wine that I came across that fit the licensing requirements for open source textbooks. As I continued my research on visual persuasion, however, I read this amazing quote in Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others:* "The photographic image…is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude" (39). I realized that in my quest to find an open-source photo, I, too had made a choice and that choice had excluded diversity. Simply by changing my search parameters, I was able to find a more inclusive image that illustrated the same point. Photographers choose what and what not to photograph; others choose which photos to use or not. **Framing** refers to choices about what is included and what is left out. Both the choices made regarding the composition of a visual as well as the choices made about whether to include or exclude a visual ultimately affect the message conveyed.

7.6: Visual Hierarchy

Visual Hierarchy

Again, creators of visual images are in control of where the eye looks, the informative provided by the image, and the emotions evoked by the image. In his 2021 book, *Techniques of Visual Persuasion: Create Powerful Images that Motivate,* Larry Jordan identifies six priorities that determine the order by which information is delivered in a visual:

1. **Movement**. Our brains are hard-wired to pay attention to anything that moves. Our survival instincts are activated. "Our first thought is, is that food, or are *we* food? Movement always gets our attention" (Jordan Chapter 2). The eye is drawn to movement or, in the case of still photographs, the illusion of movement. Think of what the advent of "moving pictures" (video) has done for visual persuasion!
2. **Focus.** Next, our eyes move to focus. If focus varies within an image, our eyes travel to objects in focus. If everything is in focus, our eyes travel to the next priority: that which is different.
3. **Different.** Different could be a different shape, a different color, a different clothing style, a different gender, etc. Our eyes are drawn to that which is unique or contrasts with the rest of the visual field.
4. **Brightness.** If there is no movement in an image, everything is in focus, and all elements are similar, our eye turns next towards the brightest object in the visual.
5. **Size.** The next thing our eyes our eyes are drawn to is the largest element in the image.
6. **In Front.** Lastly, if all else is equal or consistent in a photo, our eyes tend to fall upon that which is in the front of the photo.

"Contrast" by Shubhammaideo is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

The photo above has several of the priorities mentioned. Most images combine multiple priorities in an attempt to increase the likelihood that the viewer's eye will go where the creator of the image wants. It is rare for only one priority to be used (Jordan Chapter 2).

When analyzing persuasive images through the lens of these priorities, it's pretty interesting to see the composition efforts that are made in order to capture our attention, and now we know that it takes only thirteen-thousandths of a second for our brains to recognize what we're seeing.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Persuasive Language: Style and Inclusion

8.1: Vivid Language

When persuading, whether orally or in writing, language choice matters. This chapter discusses language choices that can influence mental imagery, memory/recall, and cadence. In addition, several types of inclusive language–which greatly foster connection and credibility–are explored.

Vivid Language

Vivid language helps your listeners create strong, distinct, clear, and memorable mental images. Good vivid language usage helps audience members truly understand and imagine what a speaker is saying. Two common ways to make your speaking more vivid are through the use of imagery and rhythm.

Imagery

Imagery is the use of language to represent objects, actions, or ideas. The goal of imagery is to help an audience member create a mental picture of what a speaker is saying. A speaker who uses imagery successfully will tap into one or more of the audience's five basic senses (hearing, taste, touch, smell, and sight). Two common tools of imagery are concreteness and metaphor.

When we use language that is concrete, we attempt to help our audiences see specific realities or actual instances instead of abstract theories and ideas. The goal of **concreteness** is to help you, as a speaker, show your audience something instead of just telling them about it. Imagine you've decided to give a speech on the importance of freedom. You could easily stand up and talk about the philosophical work of Rudolf Steiner, who divided the ideas of freedom into freedom of thought and freedom of action. Would such a talk captivate an audience?

Instead of defining what those terms mean and discussing the philosophical merits of Steiner, you could use real examples where people's freedom to think or freedom to behave has been stifled. For example, you could talk about how Afghani women under Taliban rule have been denied access to education, and how those seeking education have risked public flogging and even execution ("The Taliban's War" 3). You could further illustrate how Afghani women under the Taliban are forced to adhere to rigid interpretations of Islamic law that functionally limit their behavior. As illustrations of the two freedoms discussed by Steiner, these examples make things more concrete for audience members and thus easier to remember. Ultimately, the goal of concreteness is to show an audience something instead of talking about it abstractly.

The other commonly used form of imagery is the **metaphor**. A metaphor is a figure of speech where a term or phrase is applied to something in a non-literal way to suggest a resemblance. In the case of a metaphor, one of the comparison items is said to *be* the other (even though this is realistically not possible). Let's look at a few examples:

- Love is a *battlefield*.
- Upon hearing the charges, the accused *clammed up* and refused to speak without a lawyer.
- Every year a new *crop* of activists are *born*.

In these examples, the comparison word has been italicized. In the second example, the accused "clams up" which means that the accused refused to talk in the same way a clam's shell closes. In the third example, we refer to activists as "crops" that arise anew with each growing season, and we use "born" figuratively to indicate that they come into being. We say this metaphor even though it is understood that people are not newborn infants at the time when they become activists.

To use a metaphor effectively, first determine what you are trying to describe. For example, maybe you are talking about a college catalog that offers a wide variety of courses. Second, identify what it is that you want to say about the object you are trying to describe. Depending on whether you want your audience to think of the catalog as good or bad, you'll use different words to describe it. Lastly, identify the other object you want to compare the first one to, which should mirror the intentions in the second step. Let's look at two possible metaphors:

- Students *groped* their way through the *maze* of courses in the catalog.
- Students *feasted* on the *abundance* of courses in the catalog.

While both of these examples evoke comparisons with the course catalog, the first example is more negative and the second is more positive.

One mistake people often make in using metaphors is to create two incompatible comparisons in the same sentence or line of thought. Here is an example:

- “That’s awfully thin gruel for the right wing to hang their hats on” (Nordquist).

This is known as a mixed metaphor, and it often has an incongruous or even hilarious effect. Unless you are aiming to entertain your audience with a fractured use of language, be careful to avoid mixed metaphors.

Rhythm

Our second guideline for vivid language use in a speech or in writing is to use rhythm. When most people think of rhythm, they immediately think about music. What they may not realize is that language is inherently musical. **Rhythm** refers to the patterned, recurring variance of elements of sound or speech. Whether someone is striking a drum with a stick or standing in front of a group speaking, or leading readers to conclusions in writing, rhythm is an important aspect of human communication. Think about your favorite public speaker. If you analyze their speaking pattern, you’ll notice that there is a certain cadence to the speech. Writers also use cadence and pattern; some writers are quite terse and use more direct sentences, while others use more complex sentence structures and more nuanced cadences. In speaking situations, much of this cadence is a result of the nonverbal components of speaking, some of the cadence comes from the language that is chosen as well. In writing, punctuation, pace and literary devices tend to drive the fluidity and rhythm of the writing. Let’s examine four types of rhythmic language: parallelism, repetition, alliteration, and assonance.

Parallelism

When listing items in a sequence, audiences will respond more strongly when those ideas are presented in a grammatically parallel fashion, which is referred to as **parallelism**. For example, look at the following two examples and determine which one sounds better to you:

- “Give me liberty, or I’d rather die.”
- "Give me liberty or give me death!"

Technically, you’re saying the same thing in both, but the second one has better rhythm, and this rhythm comes from the parallel construction of “give me.” The lack of parallelism in the first example makes the sentence sound disjointed and ineffective.

Repetition

One of the major differences between oral and written language is the use of **repetition**. Because speeches are communicated orally, audience members need to hear the core of the message repeated consistently. Repetition as a linguistic device is designed to help audiences become familiar with a short piece of the speech as they hear it over and over again. By repeating a phrase during a speech, you create a specific rhythm. Probably the most famous and memorable use of repetition within a speech is Martin Luther King Jr.’s use of “I have a dream” in his speech at the Lincoln Memorial on August 1963 during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In that speech, Martin Luther King Jr. repeated the phrase “I have a dream” eight times to significant effect.

Alliteration

Another type of rhythmic language is alliteration. **Alliteration** is repeating two or more words in a series that begin with the same consonant. In the *Harry Potter* novel series, the author uses alliteration to name the four wizards who founded Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry: Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff, Rowena Ravenclaw, and Salazar Slytherin. There are two basic types of alliteration: immediate juxtaposition and nonimmediate juxtaposition. *Immediate juxtaposition* occurs when the consonants clearly follow one after the other—as we see in the *Harry Potter* example. *Nonimmediate juxtaposition* occurs when the consonants are repeated in nonadjacent words, e.g., “It is the **p**oison that we must **p**urge from our **p**olitics, the wall that we must tear down before the hour grows too late” (Obama). Sometimes you can use examples of both immediate and non-immediate juxtaposition within a single speech. The following example is from Bill Clinton’s acceptance speech at the 1992 Democratic National Convention: “Somewhere at this very moment, a child is **b**eing **b**orn in America. Let it be our cause to give that child a **h**appy **h**ome, a **h**ealthy family, and a **h**opeful future” (Clinton 421).

Assonance

Assonance is similar to alliteration, but instead of relying on consonants, assonance gets its rhythm from repeating the same vowel sounds with different consonants in the stressed syllables. The phrase “how now brown cow,” which elocution students traditionally used to learn to pronounce rounded vowel sounds, is an example of assonance. The iconic "I Like Ike" campaign slogan from the 1950's is another example. While rhymes like “free as a breeze,” “mad as a hatter,” and “no pain, no gain” are examples of assonance, speakers should be wary of relying on assonance because when it is overused, it can quickly turn into bad poetry.

- **Imagery** is the use of language to represent and help visualize objects, actions, or ideas.
  - **Concrete** language is language we use to help our audiences see specific realities or actual instances instead of abstract theories and ideas.
  - A **metaphor** is a figure of speech where a term or phrase is applied to something in a non-literal way to suggest a resemblance.
- **Rhythm** refers to the patterned, recurring variance of elements of sound or speech.
- **Parallelism** is used when a speaker is listing items in a sequence using a grammatically parallel fashion.
- **Repetition** is designed to help audiences become familiar with a short piece of the speech as they hear it over and over again.
- **Alliteration** is repeating two or more words in a series that begin with the same consonant.
- **Assonance** gets its rhythm from repeating the same vowel sounds with different consonants in the stressed syllables.

8.2: Microaggressions vs. Inclusive Language

Microaggressions

Microaggressions is a term used to describe experiences of systemically disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Chester Pierce defines microaggressions as "the everyday, minor, and apparently innocuous 'degradations and put-downs' experienced by members of oppressed, systematically disadvantaged or marginalized groups" (qtd. in McTernan 261). Although such degradations or put-downs may be unintentional, they are no less real. Microaggressions damage speaker credibility and can potentially harm or offend audience members.

People often and very unwittingly use language that is derogatory or harmful to others. A lot of people think there's no harm in a term if no harm was intended. This is far from true; we do not control others' definitions, and we do not get to decide what a word means to someone else. Lastly, we do not get to say that a word or phrase is not hurtful because we did not mean it to be.

One way to avoid microaggressions is to consciously use inclusive language. Language can either inspire your listeners or turn them off very quickly. One of the fastest ways to alienate an audience is through the use of non-inclusive language. **Inclusive language** is language that avoids placing any one group of people above or below other groups while speaking.

Let's look at some common problem areas related to language about gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disabilities, as well as more inclusive language that can remedy these problems.

Gender-Specific Language

The first common form of noninclusive language is language that privileges one of the sexes over the other. There are three common problem areas that speakers run into while speaking: using "he" as generic, using "man" to mean all humans, and gender-typing jobs.

Generic "He"

The generic "he" happens when a speaker labels all people within a group as "he" when in reality there is a mixed-sex group involved. Consider the statement, "Every morning when an officer of the law puts on his badge, he risks his life to serve and protect his fellow citizens." In this case, we have a police officer that is labeled as male four different times in one sentence. However, both male and female police officers risk their lives when they put on their badges. A better way to word the sentence would be, "Every morning when officers of the law put on their badges, they risk their lives to serve and protect their fellow citizens." Notice that in the better sentence, we made the subject plural ("officers") and used neutral pronouns ("they" and "their") to avoid the generic "he."

Use of "Man"

Traditionally, speakers of English have used terms like "man," "mankind," and (in casual contexts) "guys" when referring to both females and males. In the second half of the twentieth century, as society became more aware of gender bias in language, organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English developed guidelines for nonsexist language ("Statement on Gender and Language"). For example, instead of using the word "man," you could refer to the "human race." Instead of saying, "hey, guys," you could say, "OK, everyone." By using gender-fair language, you will be able to convey your meaning just as well, and you won't risk alienating parts of your audience.

Gender-Typed Jobs

The last common area where speakers get into trouble with gender and language has to do with job titles. It is not unusual for people to assume, for example, that doctors are male and nurses are female. As a result, they may say "she is a woman doctor" or "he is a male nurse" when mentioning someone's occupation. We might say statements like this without realizing that the statements "she is a doctor" and "he is a nurse" already inform the listener as to the sex of the person holding that job. Speakers sometimes also use a gender-specific pronoun to refer to an occupation that has both males and females. Table 1 lists some common gender-specific jobs titles along with more inclusive versions of those job titles.

Table 1: Gender Type Jobs - Excessive and Inclusive Language

Exclusive Language	Inclusive Language
Policeman	Police officer
Businessman	Businessperson
Fireman	Firefighter
Stewardess	Flight attendant
Waiters	Wait staff/servers
Mailman	Letter carrier/postal worker
Barmaid	Bartender

Ethnic Identity

Another type of inclusive language relates to the categories used to highlight an individual's ethnic identity. **Ethnic identity** refers to a group of individuals who identify with each other based on a common culture. For example, within the United States, we have numerous ethnic groups, including Italian Americans, Irish Americans, Japanese Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Cuban Americans, and Mexican Americans. As with the earlier example of "male nurse," avoid statements such as "The committee is made up of four women and a Vietnamese man." Instead, say, "The committee is made up of four women and a man" or, if race and ethnicity are central to the discussion, "The committee is made up of three European American women, an Israeli American woman, a Brazilian American woman, and a Vietnamese American man." In recent years, there has been a trend toward steering inclusive language away from broad terms like "Asians" and "Hispanics" because these terms are not considered precise labels for the groups they actually represent. If you want to be safe, the best thing you can do is ask people who belong to an ethnic group how they prefer to label themselves.

Sexual Orientation

Another area that can cause some problems is referred to as heterosexism. **Heterosexism** occurs when a speaker presumes that everyone in an audience is heterosexual or that opposite-sex relationships are the only norm. For example, a speaker might begin a speech by saying, "I am going to talk about the legal obligations you will have with your future husband or wife." While this speech starts with the notion that everyone plans on getting married, which isn't the case, it also assumes that everyone will label their significant others as either "husbands" or "wives." Although some members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community will use these terms, others prefer for more gender-neutral terms like "spouse" and "partner." Notice also that we have used the phrase "members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community" instead of the more clinical-sounding term "homosexual."

Ability

The last category of exclusive versus inclusive language that causes problems for some speakers relates to individuals with physical or mental disabilities. Table 2 provides some other examples of exclusive versus inclusive language.

Table 2: Inclusive Language for Disabilities

Exclusive Language	Inclusive Language
Handicapped People	Person with a disablity
Insane person	Person with a psychiatric disability (or label the psychiatric diagnosis, e.g. "person with schizophrenia")
Person in a wheelchair	Person who uses a wheelchair
Crippled	Person with a physical disability
Special needs program	Accessible needs program
Mentally retarded	Person with an intellectual disability

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Authors & Attributions

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Antisocial Persuasion

9.1: Dieselgate

Dieselgate

In the spring of 2013, graduate students from West Virginia University's Center for Alternative Fuels Engines and Emissions road-tested three Volkswagens on California freeways.

> *The back end of their cars...sprouted a tangle of pipes and hoses. Flexible tubes sucked exhaust from the tailpipes and fed the gas into a mysterious gray box sitting on a slab of plywood in the car's cargo area. Bolted to the plywood was the portable generator needed to power the whole mess. It stank and made an infernal racket (Ewing).*

The WVU team was perplexed. The cars' emissions of nitrogen oxides, which cause asthma, bronchitis, heart attacks, and contribute to smog and global warming, were irregular – despite Volkswagen's claim that their cars were "clean diesel." Volkswagen promotional materials claimed that its diesel vehicles have low emissions and that "they reduce nitrogen oxides (NOx) emissions by 90 percent and have fewer such emissions than gasoline cars" ("FTC Charges"). It was later established that some Volkswagens emitted as much as 40 times the legal limit of pollution (Chappell)!

Ultimately, the work of the WVU students blew open one of the largest corporate scandals in history. Volkswagen had intentionally installed "defeat devices" that were programmed to defeat emissions tests by activating emissions controls only during emissions testing conditions. When the cars were not in testing conditions, they were spewing pollutants. The scandal cost Volkswagen over $30 billion dollars and seven current and former employees were charged with crimes connected to the scandal (Eisenstein). Volkswagen's reputation took a major hit, and the carmaker lost the trust of regulators and its customers.

> *"The company which had once proclaimed the importance of resource conservation, climate protection and emissions reduction was publicly vilified for lacking the very values that it prided itself in. Caught red-handed, the future of Volkswagen was cast under a dark shadow of doubt. At best its reputation was in tatters, at worst its continued existence was in question. Almost a third of the company's market value was wiped out in less than a week (Rhodes).*

"CPB Attends Press Conference at the DOJ - Volkswagen Emissions Scandal" by Donna Burton is licensed under a Public Domain.

The Volkswagen Dieselgate scandal is a case study in unethical advertising and illegal business practices; however, antisocial persuasion goes far beyond the realm of commercial advertising and business. Unfortunately, we find antisocial persuasion in many places, including politics, personal relationships, social media, email phishing scams, fake news, and other arenas.

9.2: Antisocial Persuasion

Prosocial Persuasion

Ethical, prosocial persuasion entails a fairly direct appeal to an individual's decision-making power, but still allows the individual to freely decide after having had the opportunity to understand and consider the information presented to them. Ethically speaking, persuasion is acceptable, because it grants an individual the opportunity to think about the presented information, deliberate about available options and, most importantly to consider it against the backdrop of their personal beliefs, desires, and commitments before exercising a decision based on their own reasons, absent from any unknown or unwelcome outside influence. The persuasive technique is thus clearly visible and acknowledged for what it is—an attempt to influence what people decide by changing their understanding of presented information. Full understanding of the information on which decisions are based, and understanding the consequences of decisions, are critical elements of legal and ethical informed consent. While persuasion tries to convince people to make certain decisions, people are still free to consider the information and decide for themselves.

What is Antisocial Persuasion?

Words such as "dangerous", "unprincipled", and "objectionable" are often used as synonyms for antisocial. Unlike ethical, prosocial persuasion, antisocial persuasion may limit free choice or purposely limit one's understanding of choices presented. Antisocial persuasion may hide or downplay potential consequences of a choice. Whereas prosocial persuasion is transparent as to who is persuading and for what purpose, antisocial persuasion limits or hides information, often for someone's personal gain. Types of antisocial persuasion include lying, deception, propaganda, manipulation, and coercion.

9.3: Types of Antisocial Persuasion

Lying

> *"Cigarette smoking is no more 'addictive' than coffee, tea, or Twinkies." –James W. Johnson, CEO, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco*

We all know what lying is and we all know that, most of the time, lying is wrong. Unlike white lies such as social rituals (e.g., saying "fine" when someone asks how you are), lies told to spare someone's feelings, and lies told to shield others from upset or emotional pain, lying for the purpose of deceiving or misleading someone is antisocial and unethical. "A liar has an intention to deceive [the] hearer. Lying has to be deliberate, the result of an intention on the speaker's part" (Raboul).

Full disclosure: the author of this book lies every time she checks the "I have read the terms and conditions" boxes when signing up for things. She has also been known to tell people that she is "on her way" when, in fact, she has not yet left her house. According to numerous websites and various polls, the average person lies 1-2 times per day. Common reasons given for lying are fear of punishment and to avoid shame or embarrassment.

In the context of persuasion and influence, however, the implications of lying are always serious. Lying to others is inherently disrespectful as it denies them full access to the information known by the deceiver. Lying can alter our beliefs. Lying limits or falsely influences the choices of the message recipient. Power dynamics are also at play, as the liar controls what information is given or withheld. In short, lying is an abuse of information power. Whether it involves spreading lies about political opponents, making false claims about a product, altering photographs, making stuff up, or pretending to be something or someone one is not, lying robs the audience of knowledge and decision-making power.

The consequences of lying in persuasive contexts are also very serious. As in the Dieselgate scandal, false advertising, unethical business practices, and lying to regulators can cause incredible damage to a company's credibility, as well as to its bottom line. Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton, and Donald Trump all lost votes, credibility, and respect as a result of being caught telling lies. A consequence of people sharing so many lies on social media has resulted in negative perceptions of social media. Nearly two-thirds of those polled in the U.S. believe social media is bad for democracy (Wike et al.) and 70% of U.S citizens polled view the spread of false information online as a great threat to our country (Pushter et al.). This demonstrates a skepticism for social media likely caused by its spreading of misinformation.

Deception

> *"Deceivers are the most dangerous members of society. They trifle with the best affections of our nature, and violate the most sacred obligations." -George Crabbe*

An image used by the University of Wisconsin for a 2001 admissions brochure considered a crowd shot for its cover but the image did not appear to reflect the desired diversity of students. A Black student was photoshopped in to remedy this problem. The altered image is below on the left (look behind the student in the white sweatshirt). While it may be true that UW-Madison is diverse in the manner portrayed below, it was unethical for the media editors to consent to this practice just because an accurate image did not exist. Paul Barrows, UW-Madison Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at the time of the incident, stated: "This was an error in judgment that shouldn't have happened" (Mikkelson).

"2001-2002 University of Wisconsin-Madison Admissions Brochure" by UW-Madison is licensed under Fair Use.

Deception is very similar to lying. As with lying, the main goal of deception is to purposefully influence people into making certain decisions by providing them with false information or false statements without their knowledge (Botes). Deception, however, can also be more subtle. Whereas both deception and lying share an intent to deceive, lying involves making false assertions (Mahon). Deception does not require that one make a false statement – or any statement, for that matter. According to Sissela Bok, "when we undertake to deceive others intentionally, we communicate messages meant to mislead, meant to make them believe what we ourselves do not believe" (qtd. in Mahon 183).

Deception can be done by exaggerating information, by denying the truth, by remaining silent, or even allowing someone to believe you agree. Deception can involve intentional bias, or the selection of information to support your position while framing negatively any information that might challenge your belief (Kilgannon). In other words, lying is telling someone something false. Deception is leading or allowing others to believe something one knows to be false.

A recent example of deceptive or misleading advertising involves a popular diaper brand that claims that its "blowout barrier" can "help prevent up to 100% of leaks – even blowouts ("Pampers Innovates"). Think about this statement for a moment. "Up to 100%" could mean as little as 0%. Even if the blowout barrier prevents absolutely no part of a blowout from leaking, the claim is technically true. Advertisers know that framing the claim as "this breakout barrier may do absolutely nothing to contain blowouts" simply will not sell diapers.

Propaganda

> *"Of all the words we use to talk about talk, 'propaganda' is perhaps the most mischievous." –Neil Postman*

The printing press was invented in 1440. At that time, most of Europe was Catholic. Within a relatively short period of time, and due in large part to the ability to disseminate inexpensive, printed pamphlets, the Protestant Reformation was in full force, with thousands of pamphlets in circulation across Europe by the early 1500s (Edwards 1). "[The printing press] broadcast the subversive messages with a rapidity that had been impossible before its invention. More than that, it allowed the central ideological leader, Martin Luther, to reach the 'opinion leaders' of the movement quickly, kept them all in touch with each other and with each other's experience and ideas, and allowed them to 'broadcast' their (relatively coordinated) program to a much larger and more geographically diverse audience than had ever been possible before" (Edwards 7).

The Catholic church was a bit slow to counter the Reformation, but did so in the late 1500s when it established the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* – the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Walton 383). The term *propaganda* likely came from this committee. "Because the committee had the purpose of advocating a particular point of view, or taking one side, on an important issue of church doctrine, and because the committee had an interest at stake in doing so, it is easy to see how the modern, negative connotations of the word 'propaganda' developed from this original use of the term" (Walton 384).

"One aspect of propaganda is that, by its very nature, it is designed to reach and influence a mass audience, and as such, it is a kind of technique that must appeal successfully to the emotions, commitments and enthusiasms of the crowd to win acceptance for a conclusion (Walton 388). Another aspect of propaganda is that it often relies upon fallacious arguments. Lastly, propaganda is typically geared toward getting people to act in a way that benefits its proponents.

Whereas the goal of ethical, prosocial persuasion is to "consider this," the goal of propaganda is to "believe this" (Postman 130). What is the difference? The believing response is a "passionate, uncritical acceptance of a point of view" (Postman 133).

Manipulation

> *"Human cognition is tampered with by manipulators." -Sandrine Sorlin*

Let's imagine that we're scrolling through our socials together. I see an ad for a product I've been researching. How convenient! With a single click, I can use my PayPal account to purchase the product! While I'm buying that product, you are getting asked to rate a purchase you recently made – and get roped into a somewhat lengthy survey. As I continue to scroll, I see a lot of cat videos, while you notice lots of concert notifications and car insurance ads. While watching the kitty videos, I get a notification that my screen time is up 6% over last week...

These days, digital technologies are influencing human behavior in ways that were not previously anticipated. "Algorithms were designed with embedded persuasive technology 'tools' for the purpose of changing attitudes or behaviors by means of reduction, tunneling, tailoring, suggestion, surveillance, and conditioning" (Botjes). Those one-click purchasing buttons are reductions; they reduce the time and hassle of making an online purchase That survey? It's a tunnel: easy to get into, but sometimes they are way longer than we anticipated. Anyone paying the least bit of attention recognizes tailoring; click on one cat video and those kitty videos start popping up all over your feed! And yes, social media advertisers know if you're a Swiftie. Screen time notifications provide surveillance; they alert me that someone or something is keeping track.

Many people do not realize how pervasive persuasion is online, and many people do not even realize it is there, which is one of the key components of manipulation. "The essence of manipulation can be found in its goal to influence or persuade, but *without being detected*. The influence exercise by manipulation on the individual is thus *hidden* or entails the *covert* subversion of another person’s decision-making power. Manipulation keeps vital information from people which deprive them from being able to properly consider their options to exercise a decision that aligns with their personal beliefs and values..." (Botes).

The other key component of manipulation is that it "involves the management of facts, ideas or points of view to play upon inherent insecurities or emotional appeals to one’s own advantage" (Kilgannon). "The success of manipulation lays in the ability of this persuasive technique to target and exploit people’s decision-making vulnerabilities" (Botes).

Manipulation is certainly not limited to online experiences. Sandrine Sorlin defines manipulation as "the art of controlling others by having them do something that is not in their interest" (132). Fairclough defines it as a "devious way to control others" (6). Elsewhere in this book, such tactics as the "foot-in-the-door", the "door-in-the-face", lowballing, liking and reciprocity have been explored. All of these tactics are somewhat manipulative in that the persuader's motives and tactics are not transparent, and the communication may not be authentic. Is that salesperson giving a sincere compliment? Possibly; but it's also quite possible that emotional manipulation is taking place.

Coercion

> *"Remember that mindsets can not be changed through force and coercion. No idea can ever be forcibly thrust upon any one." –Pervez Musharraf*

Coercion is the use of power to compel action; it is making someone do something they would not choose to do freely (Kilgannon). Threats of violence or punishment, use of force, blackmail, and deprivation are some forms of coercion. Because coercion violates personal freedom and choice, it is often illegal. Coercion actively seeks to control the outcome of the decision-making processes. Where persuasion leaves the individual in control of the entire decision-making process, coercion deprives the individual of the capacity to exercise a conscious and free decision (Botes). Anytime a person makes or forces another person to do something, or removes choice or autonomy or boxes a person into a corner, persuasion is not occurring, but rather coercion is.

"Coercion tightens an individual’s autonomy by restricting the available and acceptable options from which he or she can choose, and exploits the weaknesses and vulnerabilities found in an individual’s personal beliefs, desires and commitments to steer his or her decision-making ability toward a certain goal."

9.4: Eleven Points for Speaking Ethically

Eleven Points for Speaking Ethically

In his book *Ethics in Human Communication*, Johannesen (1996) offers eleven points to consider when creating persuasive messages. His main points reiterate many of the points across this chapter and should be kept in mind as one creates or consumes persuasive messages.

Do not:

1. Use false, fabricated, misrepresented, distorted or irrelevant evidence to support arguments or claims
2. Intentionally use unsupported, misleading, or illogical reasoning
3. Represent yourself as informed or an “expert” on a subject when you are not
4. Use irrelevant appeals to divert attention from the issue at hand
5. Ask your audience to link your idea or proposal to emotion-laden values, motives, or goals to which it is actually not related
6. Deceive your audience by concealing your real purpose, by concealing self-interest, by concealing the group you represent, or by concealing your position as an advocate of a viewpoint
7. Distort, hide, or misrepresent the number, scope, intensity, or undesirable features of consequences or effects
8. Use “emotional appeals” that lack a supporting basis of evidence or reasoning.
9. Oversimplify complex, gradation-laden situations into simplistic, two-valued, either-or, polar views or choices
10. Pretend certainty where tentativeness and degrees of probability would be more accurate
11. Advocate something which you yourself do not believe in

9.5: Defending Against Unwelcome Persuasion

Defending Against Unwelcome Persuasion

The most commonly used approach to help people defend against unwanted persuasion is known as the "inoculation" method. Research has shown that people who are subjected to weak versions of a persuasive message are less vulnerable to stronger versions later on, in much the same way that being exposed to small doses of a virus immunizes you against full-blown attacks. In a classic study by McGuire, subjects were asked to state their opinion on an issue. They were then mildly attacked for their position and then given an opportunity to refute the attack. When later confronted by a powerful argument against their initial opinion, these subjects were more resistant than were a control group (206). In effect, they developed defenses that rendered them immune.

Sagarin and his colleagues focused on boosting immunity against deceptive or manipulative persuasion tactics (Sagarin et al. 528). Their research demonstrated that, when subjects were taught to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate authority appeals, the subjects were better able to perceive that the ads containing illegitimate authorities as more unduly manipulative and less persuasive (531). Participants' resistance remained intact even four days after the initial experiment (533). Their study also revealed that participants' resistance to illegitimate authority appeals was greatest when participant vulnerability to these kinds of appeals was clearly demonstrated (536) People who are aware of their vulnerability to illegitimate/unethical authority appeals and who have been taught to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate authority appeals demonstrate much greater persuasive resistance to such appeals.

Anti-vulnerability trainings such as these can be helpful. Ultimately, however, the most effective defense against unwanted persuasion is to accept just how vulnerable we are. One must, first, accept that it is normal to be vulnerable and, second, to learn to recognize the danger signs when we are falling prey. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Welcome to Another Writing Class!

10.1: Introduction

Or, Why the &*%# Am I Taking Writing Again?

Let's begin by being real with each other: you're probably in this class because you have to be. It fulfills a gen ed writing requirement you need to graduate or transfer, and you wouldn't be here otherwise. And there is a good chance you're not absolutely thrilled about it.

That's OK. I think I understand, but let me take a stab at some of your potential reactions to finding yourself in this writing class this term:

- You're in kinesiology, business, psychology, dentistry, nursing, and so on, and you're *absolutely* ***positive*** you won't be doing any writing in your future professional life. This class is just one more hoop to jump through in your undergrad career, one more class you have to take through no choice of yours, slowing your progress through your major and toward that sweet j-o-b waiting at the end of it.
- And/or maybe you feel you've already taken a gazillion writing classes since you started school, which has only ever meant writing boring essays about *Romeo and Juliet* or *Animal Farm* or, even worse, poetry. The only thing you *actually* learned about writing in those classes was that your job as a student was to figure out a particular writing teacher's Secret Writing Formula and give it back to them, and you've done that plenty. So why do you have to do it again now, when you should be spending every class and all your time on your major that will lead to that j-o-b? Or worse still, those writing teachers' Secret Writing Formulas never seemed accessible to you, and you long ago threw up your hands in despair.
- Or you truly enjoyed your writing and literature courses—you may even possibly enjoy the act of writing (imagine!)—and, not for nothing, you feel like your writing is pretty darn good already, so you can't help but resent finding yourself in this required course among all these nonwriters because you already know all this stuff and more.

If any of these overlap with your feelings about being in this course, I get it. I also readily acknowledge that you might not fit neatly into any of these categories—one of the best things about community college is that our students come from all different cultures and stages of life and scholastic and socioeconomic backgrounds. So instead of trying to identify all of your individual circumstances, let me state two things everyone reading this shares:

1. You've all made it this far somehow, jumping through hoop after writing-requirement hoop, and
2. Your schooling is much closer to its end than its beginning.

Which means, in your immediate future, there will be no more teachers to please or impress and no more Secret Writing Formulas to decipher and reproduce. For most of you, this class represents your last—and in a tragedy for another day, possibly your first and only—course devoted solely to writing in your undergraduate career. You are spiraling at full tilt toward the moment when you will never again receive any help or advice or instruction on anything you've written, and you obviously won't get a grade on it, either.

You may silently or openly cheer as you read those sentences. Good riddance to writing and the teachers who teach it! But consider that no matter your major or your career, the one thing you'll *still* have to do from time to time in your done-with-school life is try to convince someone to do a thing you want them to do. And I'm sorry to add that sometimes you'll have to do it in writing.

You will, in other words, petition gatekeepers to open their gates for you. And as you may already know, these moments tend to be rather high-stakes in our lives.

So there you are: you *really* need another person to do something for you, to give you something, to let you into something, or to stop doing something, but if you can't apply the elements of strong, clear, and moving argument-making to your writing in those high-stakes moments, this person or organization won't just give you a C− and invite you to revise for a better grade.

They'll simply say *no*.

No, we're not giving you that raise. No, the city council rejects your proposal for a new business, thanks but no thanks for working on it for the last two years. No, we're not bringing you in for an interview for your dream job. Nope, you've failed to convince us that our grad school program is the right fit for you. No, you haven't convinced your uncle on social media to reconsider his stance on that far-out conspiracy theory, and the next family gathering is going to be a nightmare as a result. No, we're sorry to inform you that at this time, we are unable to fund your project; we received 374 more compelling and persuasive applications, and we have limited funds available. And no, I'd prefer not to marry you; I'm going to marry this other person who has proven far better at persuading me they will be a better roommate, partner, and coparent.

10.2: Skillful Persuasion Is Hard

Skillful Persuasion Is Hard

So maybe take a pause on blindly celebrating that in sixteen short weeks, you may be done with your life's writing instruction, and instead consider how little time you've spent in your schooling thinking about how to use your writing to get what you want, to get what you *need*.

Because when your cap and gown are in the rearview and you find yourself faced with a high-stakes writing task demanding that you move some powerful gatekeeper from a *no* to a crucial *yes*—your future, your happiness, your whole *life plan* depend on getting them to *yes*—you'll beg, borrow, and steal any concrete strategies that might work to persuade that powerful entity to open their specific gate to you.

Will you sometimes find yourself in situations that are more subtle and decidedly less "me versus them"? Absolutely and of course. But I find it refreshing and helpful at the outset to set aside academese and focus on stripped-down persuasion in its most basic form, simply getting that important person from no to yes.

The problem? Getting someone, anyone, from no to yes is, well, *hard*. Maybe you're thinking, "Oh, please, it can't be *that* hard. I've written five-page papers in two hours with my eyes closed countless times and still gotten As. I'll be just fine out there." But alas, your past successes at reproducing a teacher's Secret Writing Formula or BSing your way to an A in eleventh grade won't actually help as much as you might think. Believe it or not, real-life human beings can actually see right through that stuff pretty quickly. (And newsflash: your writing teachers saw through it too. They just kept it to themselves in the name of higher-order concerns.)

In fact, I bet you'll find that getting an acceptable grade on an essay is far easier than changing another person's mind in the real world. Why? Human beings don't like changing their minds. We like to think we know what we want and don't want, we believe what we believe, we are quite sure we know what's best for our company, our medical school, our city, our lives, and we don't much listen to folks who want to convince us of something to the contrary.

If you're still viewing this class as just one more course disconnected from the important work you'll be doing once you land that sweet j-o-b, let me be more direct: there is no job, and no life situation, that won't involve persuading folks in all sorts of ways all the time. This course is going to teach you how to perceive and address the needs of those people so that you can have a shot to persuade them successfully.

10.3: Catch 'Em in the Act

Catch 'Em in the Act

To persuade is, technically, to move your audience to action. And to do it well, it pays to notice how you yourself are moved to actions by external forces. Because despite how set we humans are in our ways, we're nonetheless constantly succumbing to the quietly effective arguments that come at us all day every day and implicitly move us to action, most of the time without our awareness.

So in this course and with this text, we'll pay attention. How has this social media platform gotten me back on the app fifteen minutes after I closed it, vowing I wouldn't open it again until morning? Why am I drinking this neon-blue beverage no human should rightly consider drinkable or watching thirty-one women fight for one man to marry in a period of weeks on my TV? Why am I voting for this person instead of that one or not voting at all? Why do I believe this should happen with guns and that should happen with vaccines? Did I just decide about these things of my own free will? (No.) Or did something quietly or not so quietly persuade me to do or think them? (Yes.)

If you enjoy being manipulated into believing and doing things you might not otherwise believe or do, things that are very often not in your best interest, then OK, great—you do you. Someone has to fall for Ponzi schemes and keep the cable news networks on air. But if you want to start spotting the subtle and insidious persuasion tactics bombarding you constantly and shaping your actions and reactions before you catch them in the act (if you ever do), then pay attention, because once again, you've come to the right place.

Learning how to persuade entails understanding how you are persuad**ed**. That means understanding how these implicit forces work, how they necessarily play on your deeply held cultural values, often by merely reinforcing the unexamined assumptions you already hold. We *must* understand how those latent beliefs work, in ourselves and in the audiences we're trying to convince, if we want to learn the art of persuasion.

Which is a fancy way of saying that in this writing class, we're not just trying to recognize those savvy persuasion tactics; we're looking to *steal* them. Well, at least the ethical and sound tactics. Our goal will always be to identify, isolate, and snatch the tools being used to persuade us and turn them back around to persuade *them*.

So the questions you should be asking yourself now, while there's still time to practice, are these: When I am out there in the world trying to get a real person to shift their thinking subtly or simply to say yes instead of no, what works? What doesn't? What is vital? What is a deal breaker? What will kill my request before it's even made? And what brings it home?

I'm so glad you asked, because that's precisely where our writing class comes in: a nice little class focused solely on teaching you to do that very thing and nothing else.

No eight-page analysis of chapter 14 of *The Catcher in the Rye*, no two-thousand-word explication of a single sonnet, just, can you move that gatekeeper to the action you want to move them toward or not? Can you build an ethical, well-supported argument that evokes the necessary emotion at just the right time with just the right tone and style and support and logic to make the thing happen, or will you stay in that dead-end job until you die?

10.4: Skillful Writing Is Hard

Writing Is Hard

I hope I've at least opened the possibility that

- You are in fact going to have to write things in your post-college future,
- The things you'll very often have to write will be attempts to persuade people to change their thinking and do a thing for you, and
- Persuasion is difficult, and we need all the practice we can get before we fly from our undergraduate nest.

You know what else is very difficult? Writing. Even harder? Writing well. And definitely writing well in support of getting that thing you want and need.

For proof that writing is hard, consider that there are few activities we procrastinate more than writing. Most people will use a toothbrush to clean the bathroom they share with six roommates sooner than tackle a high-stakes writing project; they will get two root canals and do their back taxes before they'll sit down to write a persuasive argument.

And that's for good reason. Our brains rebel from the blank page; the higher the stakes, the more our brains rebel. After all, the writing task demands all parts of the brain to kick into overdrive at once. You need logic; you need to consider the audience and the situation; you need to organize your thinking and translate that thinking to black symbols on a white page; you need to attend to the order and sequence of those black symbols in every way, from grammar to the active voice to transitions to openers and closers; you need research and citations and formatting and more. And at the exact same time, you need to activate the creative part of your brain; to write anything, no matter how boring, is truly an act of creation, because the thing (an essay, a cover letter, a please-take-me-back-I'm-so-sorry email) literally doesn't exist until you create it. It's just you and that blank page and your cursor taunting you with every blink. And because none of us are born writers, you have to work at it. You have to *practice*.

And here again, like magic, you find yourself in a class equally devoted to that challenging enterprise. So while our thematic focus in this writing class is persuasion and critical thinking, we're also, of course, focused on your writing itself—voice, tone, style, concision, precision, all of it.

What follows in this text on your screen is about half-and-half: half devoted to analyzing our own and others' persuasion techniques and half to critical thinking and writing strategies—and all about their constant and necessary overlap. We are going to infuse you with tools to take on that blank page with laser-focused, tried-and-true strategies and, crucially, with an added dose of confidence: "I know I have the necessary tools in my bag to move through this prewriting anxiety phase and produce something that will be, after revision, not just well written but also highly persuasive."

We've curated this text for a persuasion, critical thinking, and writing class specifically. And not for nothing, your instructor has devoted their professional life to helping people write well. If you want to get your money's worth this term or if you just want to stick it to the powers that be as you jump through this particular hoop, why not take full advantage of these two resources at your disposal while you still can?

10.5: The Real Rip Off

The Real Rip-Off

So to return to the top and your objections to having to take this writing class, consider that the real rip-off is not that you are forced to take this one semester-long course but rather that this is the *only* course you get to develop these crucial skills you'll need for the rest of your life—at least if you want to get what you want and have a real shot at being happy.

So I invite you to tune in to this text with care and diligence while you can. Because while after this term you will never again have to write an argument of definition (or write a discussion board post about catching rhetorical moves in the wild), you will without question encounter in your future personal and professional life multiple high-stakes writing tasks in which a very big chunk of your potential happiness or misery will depend keenly on your ability to move a crucial audience to action. And in those moments, you'll have to transfer everything you learn in this class to a task that is well outside your comfort zone. When that moment comes (repeatedly and sooner than you think), knowing how to read the rhetorical situation, determining exactly when to inject your plea with a dose of pathos and when to lean hard on logos, and figuring out just exactly how to address that daunting counterargument you can't necessarily defeat—either these skills will be there, in your pocket, ready to roll, or they won't.

And whether you have them at the ready will absolutely mean the difference between a no and the yes you *need*.

So read up. Listen well. Heed all the wisdom that comes out of your instructor's mouth, and maybe even a classmate or two. Practice. Ask questions. Stretch your brain and consider new approaches to drafting and researching. Revisit your good and bad writing habits, become mindful of the ways you procrastinate, make major and minor adjustments to your researching and argument-growing—in short, roll up your sleeves one more time, and soak up every drop of advice you can get.

Your future depends on it.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Backpacks vs. Briefcases: Rhetorical Analysis

11.1: First Impressions

First Impressions

Imagine the first day of class in first year composition at your university.The moment your professor walked in the room, you likely began analyzing her and making assumptions about what kind of teacher she will be. You might have noticed what kind of bag she is carrying—tattered leather satchel? a hot pink polka-dotted backpack? a burgundy brief case? You probably also noticed what she is wearing—trendy slacks and an untucked striped shirt? a skirted suit? jeans and a tee shirt?

It is likely that the above observations were only a few of the observations you made as your professor walked in the room. You might have also noticed her shoes, her jewelry, whether she wears a wedding ring, how her hair is styled, whether she stands tall or slumps, how quickly she walks, or maybe even if her nails are done. If you don't tend to notice any of these things about your professors, you certainly do about the people around you—your friends, students you are assigned to work with in groups, or a prospective date. For most of us, many of the people we encounter in a given day are subject to this kind of quick analysis.

Now as you performed this kind of analysis, you likely didn't walk through each of these questions one by one, write out the answer, and add up the responses to see what kind of person you are interacting with. Instead, you quickly took in the information and made an informed, and likely somewhat accurate, decision about that person. Over the years, as you have interacted with others, you have built a mental database that you can draw on to make conclusions about what a person's looks tell you about their personality. You have become able to analyze quickly what people are saying about themselves through the way they choose to dress, accessorize, or wear their hair.

We have, of course, heard that you "can't judge a book by its cover," but, in fact, we do it all the time. Daily we find ourselves in situations where we are forced to make snap judgments. Each day we meet different people, encounter unfamiliar situations, and see media that asks us to do, think, buy, and act in all sorts of ways. In fact, our saturation in media and its images is one of the reasons why learning to do rhetorical analysis is so important. The more we know about how to analyze situations and draw informed conclusions, the better we can become about making savvy judgments about the people, situations and media we encounter.

11.2: Implications of Rhetorical Analysis

Implications of Rhetorical Analysis

Media is one of the most important places where this kind of analysis needs to happen. Rhetoric—the way we use language and images topersuade—is what makes media work. Think of all the media you see and hear every day: Twitter, television shows, web pages, billboards, text messages, podcasts. Even as you read this chapter, more ways to get those messages to you quickly and in a persuasive manner are being developed. Media is constantly asking you to buy something, act in some way, believe something to be true, or interact with others in a specific manner. Understanding rhetorical messages is essential to help us to become informed consumers, but it also helps evaluate the ethics of messages, how they affect us personally, and how they affect society.

Take, for example, a commercial for men's deodorant that tells you that you'll be irresistible to women if you use their product. This campaign doesn't just ask you to buy the product, though. It also asks you to trust the company's credibility, or ethos, and to believe the messages they send about how men and women interact, about sexuality, and about what constitutes a healthy body. You have to decide whether or not you will choose to buy the product and how you will choose to respond to the messages that the commercial sends.

Or, in another situation, a Facebook group asks you to support health care reform. The rhetoric in this group uses people's stories of their struggles to obtain affordable health care. These stories, which are often heart-wrenching, use emotion to persuade you—also called pathos. You are asked to believe that health care reform is necessary and urgent, and you are asked to act on these beliefs by calling your congresspersons and asking them to support the reforms as well.

Because media rhetoric surrounds us, it is important to understand how rhetoric works. If we refuse to stop and think about how and why it persuades us, we can become mindless consumers who buy into arguments about what makes us value ourselves and what makes us happy. For example, research has shown that only 2% of women consider themselves beautiful ("Campaign"), which has been linked to the way that the fashion industry defines beauty. We are also told by the media that buying more stuff can make us happy, but historical surveys show that US happiness peaked in the 1950s, when people saw as many advertisements in their lifetime as the average American sees in one year (Leonard).

Our worlds are full of these kinds of social influences. As we interact with other people and with media, we are continually creating and interpreting rhetoric. In the same way that you decide how to process, analyze or ignore these messages, you create them. You probably think about what your clothing will communicate as you go to a job interview or get ready for a date. You are also using rhetoric when you try to persuade your parents to send you money or your friends to see the movie that interests you. When you post to your blog or tweet you are using rhetoric. In fact, according to rhetorician Kenneth Burke, rhetoric is everywhere: "wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is 'meaning,' there is 'persuasion.' Food eaten and digested is not rhetoric. But in the meaning of food there is much rhetoric, the meaning being persuasive enough for the idea of food to be used, like the ideas of religion, as a rhetorical device of statesmen" (71–72). In other words, most of our actions are persuasive in nature. What we choose to wear (tennis shoes vs. flip flops), where we shop (Whole Foods Market vs. Wal-Mart), what we eat (organic vs. fast food), or even the way we send information (snail mail vs. text message) can work to persuade others.

Chances are you have grown up learning to interpret and analyze these types of rhetoric. They become so commonplace that we don't realize how often and how quickly we are able to perform this kind of rhetorical analysis. When your teacher walked in on the first day of class, you probably didn't think to yourself, "I think I'll do some rhetorical analysis on her clothing and draw some conclusions about what kind of personality she might have and whether I think I'll like her." And, yet, you probably were able to come up with some conclusions based on the evidence you had.

However, when this same teacher hands you an advertisement, photograph or article and asks you to write a rhetorical analysis of it, you might have been baffled or felt a little overwhelmed. The good news is that many of the analytical processes that you already use to interpret the rhetoric around you are the same ones that you'll use for these assignments

11.3: The Rhetorical Situation; Or, Discerning Context

The Rhetorical Situation, Or Discerning Context

One of the first places to start is context. Rhetorical messages always occur in a specific situation or context. The president's speech might respond to a specific global event, like an economic summit; that's part of the context. You choose your clothing depending on where you are going or what you are doing; that's context. A television commercial comes on during specific programs and at specific points of the day; that's context. A billboard is placed in a specific part of the community; that's context, too.

In an article called "The Rhetorical Situation," Lloyd Bitze argues that there are three parts to understanding the context of a rhetorical moment: exigence, audience and constraints. Exigence is the circumstance or condition that invites a response; "imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (Bitzer 304). In other words, rhetorical discourse is usually responding to some kind of problem.You can begin to understand a piece's exigence by asking, "What is this rhetoric responding to?" "What might have happened to make the rhetor (the person who creates the rhetoric) respond in this way?" The exigence can be extremely complex, like the need for a new Supreme Court justice, or it can be much simpler, like receiving an email that asks you where you and your friends should go for your road trip this weekend. Understanding the exigence is important because it helps you begin to discover the purpose of the rhetoric. It helps you understand what the discourse is trying to accomplish.

Another part of the rhetorical context is audience, those who are the (intended or unintended) recipients of the rhetorical message. The audience should be able to respond to the exigence. In other words, the audience should be able to help address the problem. You might be very frustrated with your campus's requirement that all first-year students purchase a meal plan for on-campus dining. You might even send an email to a good friend back home voicing that frustration.However, if you want to address the exigence of the meal plans, the most appropriate audience would be the person/office on campus that oversees meal plans. Your friend back home cannot solve the problem (though she may be able to offer sympathy or give you some good suggestions), but the person who can change the meal plan requirements is probably on campus. Rhetors make all sorts of choices based on their audience. Audience can determine the type of language used,the formality of the discourse, the medium or delivery of the rhetoric,and even the types of reasons used the make the rhetor's argument. Understanding the audience helps you begin to see and understand the rhetorical moves that the rhetor makes.

The last piece of the rhetorical situation is the constraints. The constraints of the rhetorical situation are those things that have the power to "constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (Bitzer 306). Constraints have a lot to do with how the rhetoric is presented. Constraints can be "beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives" (Bitzer 306). Constraints limit the way the discourse is delivered or communicated. Constraints may be something as simple as your instructor limiting your proposal to one thousand words, or they may be far more complex like the kinds of language you need to use to persuade a certain community.

So how do you apply this to a piece of rhetoric? Let's say you are flipping through a magazine, and you come across an advertisement that has a large headline that reads "Why Some People Say 'D'OH' When You Say 'Homer'" ("Why"). This ad is an Ad Council public service announcement (PSA) to promote arts education and is sponsored by Americans for the Arts and NAMM, the trade association of the international music products industry.

Since you want to understand more about what this ad means and what it wants you to believe or do, you begin to think about the rhetorical situation. You first might ask, "what is the ad responding to? What problem does it hope to address?" That's the exigence. In this case, the exigence is the cutting of arts funding and children's lack of exposure to the arts. According to the Ad Council's website, "the average kid is provided insufficient time to learn and experience the arts. This PSA campaign was created to increase involvement in championing arts education both in and out of school" ("Arts"). The PSA is responding directly to the fact that kids are not getting enough arts education.

Then you might begin to think about to whom the Ad Council targeted the ad. Unless you're a parent, you are probably not the primary audience. If you continued reading the text of the ad, you'd notice that there is information to persuade parents that the arts are helpful to their children and to let them know how to help their children become more involved with the arts. The ad tells parents that "the experience will for sure do more than entertain them. It'll build their capacity to learn more. In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science. And that's reason enough to make a parent say, 'D'oh!,' For Ten Simple Ways to instill art in your kids' lives visit AmericansForTheArts.org" ("Why"). Throughout the text of the ad, parents are told both what to believe about arts education and how to act in response to the belief.

There also might be a secondary audience for this ad—people who are not the main audience of the ad but might also be able to respond to the exigence. For example, philanthropists who could raise money for arts education or legislators who might pass laws for arts funding or to require arts education in public schools could also be intended audiences for this ad.

Finally, you might want to think about the constraints or the limitations on the ad. Sometimes these are harder to get at, but we can guess a few things. One constraint might be the cost of the ad. Different magazines charge differently for ad space as well as placement within the magazine, so the Ad Council could have been constrained by how much money they wanted to spend to circulate the ad. The ad is also only one page long, so there might have been a limitation on the amount of space for the ad. Finally, on the Ad Council's webpage, they list the requirements for organizations seeking the funding and support of the Ad Council. There are twelve criteria, but here are a few:

1. The sponsor organization must be a private non-profit 501(c)3 organization, private foundation, government agency or coalition of such groups.
2. The issue must address the Ad Council's focus on Health & Safety, Education, or Community. Applications which benefit children are viewed with favor—as part of the Ad Council's Commitment to Children.
3. The issue must offer a solution through an individual action.
4. The effort must be national in scope, so that the message has relevance to media audiences in communities throughout the nation. ("Become")

Each of these criteria helps to understand the limitations on both who can participate as rhetor and what can be said.

The exigence, audience and constraints are only one way to understand the context of a piece of rhetoric, and, of course, there are other ways to get at context. Some rhetoricians look at subject, purpose, audience and occasion. Others might look at the "rhetorical triangle" of writer, reader, and purpose.

An analysis using the rhetorical triangle would ask similar questions about audience as one using the rhetorical situation, but it would also ask questions about the writer and the purpose of the document. Asking questions about the writer helps the reader determine whether she or he is credible and knowledgeable. For example, the Ad Council has been creating public service announcements since 1942 ("Loose Lips Sink Ships," anyone?) and is a non-profit agency. They also document their credibility by showing the impact of their campaigns in several ways: "Destruction of our forests by wildfires has been reduced from 22 million acres to less than 8.4 million acres per year, since our Forest Fire Prevention campaign began" and "6,000 Children were paired with a mentor in just the first 18 months of our mentoring campaign" ("About"). Based on this information, we can assume that the Ad Council is a credible rhetor, and whether or not we agree with the rhetoric they produce, we can probably assume it contains reliable information. Asking questions about the next part of the rhetorical triangle, the purpose of a piece of rhetoric, helps you understand what the rhetor is trying to achieve through the discourse. We can discern the purpose by asking questions like "what does the rhetor want me to believe after seeing this message?" or "what does the rhetor want me to do?" In some ways, the purpose takes the exigence to the next step.If the exigence frames the problem, the purpose frames the response to that problem.The rhetorical situation and rhetorical triangle are two ways to begin to understand how the rhetoric functions within the context you find it. The key idea is to understand that no rhetorical performance takes place in a vacuum. One of the first steps to understanding a piece of rhetoric is to look at the context in which it takes place. Whatever terminology you (or your instructor) choose, it is a good idea to start by locating your analysis within a rhetorical situation.

11.4: The Heart of the Matter- The Argument

The Heart of the Matter—The Argument

The rhetorical situation is just the beginning of your analysis, though. What you really want to understand is the argument—what the rhetor wants you to believe or do and how he or she goes about that persuasion. Effective argumentation has been talked about for centuries. In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle was teaching the men of Athens how to persuade different kinds of audiences in different kinds of rhetorical situations. Aristotle articulated three “artistic appeals” that a rhetor could draw on to make a case—logos, pathos, and ethos.

Logos is commonly defined as argument from reason, and it usually appeals to an audience’s intellectual side. As audiences we want to know the “facts of the matter,” and logos helps present these—statistics, data, and logical statements. For example, on our Homer ad for the arts, the text tells parents that the arts will “build their capacity to learn more. In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science” (“Why”). You might notice that there aren’t numbers or charts here, but giving this information appeals to the audience’s intellectual side.

That audience can see a continuation of the argument on the Ad Council’s webpage, and again much of the argument appeals to logos and draws on extensive research that shows that the arts do these things:

- Allow kids to express themselves creatively and bolster their self-confidence.
- Teach kids to be more tolerant and open.
- Improve kids’ overall academic performance.
- Show that kids actively engaged in arts education are likely to have higher SAT scores than those with little to no arts involvement.
- Develop skills needed by the 21st century workforce: critical thinking, creative problem solving, effective communication, teamwork and more.
- Keep students engaged in school and less likely to drop out. (“Arts”)

Each bullet above is meant to intellectually persuade parents that they need to be more intentional in providing arts education for their children.

Few of us are persuaded only with our mind, though. Even if we intellectually agree with something, it is difficult to get us to act unless we are also persuaded in our heart. This kind of appeal to emotion is called pathos. Pathetic appeals (as rhetoric that draws on pathos is called) used alone without logos and ethos can come across as emotionally manipulative or overly sentimental, but are very powerful when used in conjunction with the other two appeals.

Emotional appeals can come in many forms—an anecdote or narrative, an image such as a photograph, or even humor. For example,on their web campaign, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) uses an image of a baby chick and of Ronald McDonald wielding a knife to draw attention to their Chicken McCruely Un-Happy Meal. These images are meant to evoke an emotional response in the viewer and, along with a logos appeal with the statistics about how cruelly chickens are treated, persuade the viewer to boycott McDonalds.

Pathos can also be a very effective appeal if the rhetor has to persuade the audience in a very short amount of time, which is why it is used heavily in print advertisements, billboards, or television commercials. An investment company will fill a 30-second commercial with images of families and couples enjoying each other, seeming happy and surrounded by wealth to persuade you to do business with them. The 30-second time spot does not allow them to give the 15-year growth of each of their funds, and pathetic appeals will often hold our interest much longer than intellectual appeals.

The ad promoting the importance of art uses humor to appeal to the audience’s emotional side. By comparing the epic poet Homer to Homer Simpson and his classic “d’oh!” the ad uses humor to draw people into their argument about the arts. The humor continues as they ask parents if their kids know the difference between the Homers, “The only Homer some kids know is the one who can’t write his own last name” (“Why”). The ad also appeals to emotion through its language use (diction), describing Homer as “one very ancient dude,” and describing The Odyssey as “the sequel” to The Iliad. In this case,the humor of the ad, which occurs in the first few lines, is meant to draw the reader in and help them become interested in the argument before the ad gets to the logos, which is in the last few lines of the ad.

The humor also makes the organization seem real and approachable, contributing to the ethos. The humor might lead you to think that Americans for the Arts is not a stuffy bunch of suits, but an organization you can relate to or one that has a realistic understanding of the world. Ethos refers to the credibility of the rhetor—which can be a person or an organization. A rhetor can develop credibility in many ways. The tone of the writing and whether that tone is appropriate for the context helps build a writer's ethos, as does the accuracy of the in-formation or the visual presentation of the rhetoric.

In the Homer ad, the ethos is built in several ways. The simple, humorous and engaging language, such as "Greek Gods. Achilles Heel. Trojan Horse. All of these icons are brought to us by one very ancient dude—Homer. In The Iliad and its sequel, The Odyssey, he presented Greek mythology in everyday language" ("Why") draws the audience in and helps the tone of the ad seem very approachable. Also, the knowledge of Greek mythology and the information about how the arts help children—which also contribute to the logos appeal—make the ad seem credible and authoritative. However, the fact that the ad does not use too many statistics or overly technical language also contributes to the ethos of the ad because often sounding too intellectual can come across as pompous or stuffy. Aristotle's artistic appeals are not the only way to understand the argument of rhetoric. You might choose to look at the claim or the unstated assumptions of a piece; someone else might consider the visual appeal of the rhetoric, like the font, page layout, types of paper, or images; another person might focus on the language use and the specific word choice and sentence structure of a piece. Logos, pathos, and ethos can provide a nice framework for analysis, but there are numerous ways to understand how a piece of rhetoric persuades (or fails to persuade).

Looking at the context and components of a piece of rhetoric often isn't enough, though, because it is important to draw conclusions about the rhetoric—does it successfully respond to the exigence? Is it an ethical approach? Is it persuasive? These kinds of questions let you begin to create your own claims, your own rhetoric, as you take a stand on what other people say, do, or write.

11.5: Beginning to Analyze

Beginning to Analyze

Once you have established the context for the rhetoric you are analyzing, you can begin to think about how well it fits into that context. You've probably been in a situation where you arrived way under-dressed for an occasion. You thought that the dinner was just a casual get together with friends; it turned out to be a far more formal affair,and you felt very out of place. There are also times when discourse fails to respond to the situation well—it doesn't fit. On the other hand, successful discourses often respond very well to the context. They address the problem, consider the audience's needs, provide accurate information, and have a compelling claim. One of the reasons you work to determine the rhetorical situation for a piece of discourse is to consider whether it works within that context. You can begin this process by asking questions like:

- Does the rhetoric address the problem it claims to address?
- Is the rhetoric targeted at an audience who has the power to make change?
- Are the appeals appropriate to the audience?
- Does the rhetor give enough information to make an informed decision?
- Does the rhetoric attempt to manipulate in any way (by giving incomplete/inaccurate information or abusing the audience's emotions)?
- What other sub-claims do you have to accept to understand the rhetor's main claim? (For example, in order to accept the Ad Council's claim that the arts boost math and science scores, you first have to value the boosting of those scores.)
- What possible negative effects might come from this rhetoric?

Rhetorical analysis asks how discourse functions in the setting in which it is found. In the same way that a commercial for denture cream seems very out of place when aired during a reality television show aimed at teenagers, rhetoric that does not respond well to its context often fails to persuade. In order to perform analysis, you must understand the context and then you must carefully study the ways that the discourse does and does not respond appropriately to that context.

The bottom line is that the same basic principles apply when you look at any piece of rhetoric (your instructor's clothing, an advertisement, the president's speech): you need to consider the context and the argument. As you begin to analyze rhetoric, there are lots of different types of rhetoric you might encounter in a college classroom, such as

- Political cartoon
- Wikipedia entry
- Scholarly article
- Bar Graph
- Op-Ed piece in the newspaper
- Speech
- YouTube video
- Book chapter
- Photograph
- PowerPoint Presentation

All of the above types of discourse try to persuade you. They may ask you to accept a certain kind of knowledge as valid, they may ask you to believe a certain way, or they may ask you to act. It is important to understand what a piece of rhetoric is asking of you, how it tries to persuade you, and whether that persuasion fits within the context you encounter it in. Rhetorical analysis helps you answer those questions.

11.6: Implications of Rhetorical Analysis- Why Do This Stuff, Anyway?

Implications of Rhetorical Analysis, Or Why Do This Stuff Anyway?

So you might be wondering if you know how to do this analysis already—you can tell what kind of person someone is by their clothing, or what a commercial wants you to buy without carefully listening to it—why do you need to know how to do more formal analysis? How does this matter outside a college classroom?

Well, first of all, much of the reading and learning in college requires some level of rhetorical analysis: as you read a textbook chapter to prepare for a quiz, it is helpful to be able to distill the main points quickly; when you read a journal article for a research paper, it is necessary to understand the scholar's thesis; when you watch a video in class, it is useful to be able to understand how the creator is trying to persuade you. But college is not the only place where an understanding of how rhetoric works is important. You will find yourself in many situations—from boardrooms to your children's classrooms or churches to city council meetings where you need to understand the heart of the arguments being presented.

One final example: in November 2000, Campbell's Soup Company launched a campaign to show that many of their soups were low in calories and showed pre-pubescent girls refusing to eat because they were "watching their weight." A very small organization called Dads and Daughters, a group that fights advertising that targets girls with negative body images, contacted Campbell's explaining the problems they saw in an ad that encouraged young girls to be self-conscious about their weight, and asked Campbell's to pull the ad. A few days later, Campbell's Vice President for Marketing and Corporate Communications called. One of the dads says, "the Vice President acknowledged he had received their letter, reviewed the ad again, saw their point, and was pulling the ad," responding to a "couple of guys writing a letter" ("Media"). Individuals who understand rhetorical analysis and act to make change can have a tremendous influence on their world.

11.7: Questions for Discussion and Works Cited

Discussion

1. What are examples of rhetoric that you see or hear on a daily basis?
2. What are some ways that you create rhetoric? What kinds of messages are you trying to communicate?
3. What is an example of a rhetorical situation that you have found yourself in? Discuss exigence, audience, and constraints.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: "Appealing" Essays

12.1: Introduction

"Appealing" Essays

Many students do not view themselves as rhetoricians. Recall that rhetoric is the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing. As college students, chances are that you have experienced success as a writer and/or speaker, therefore you are a rhetorician. We wish to be even more successful rhetoricians!

Although the term "rhetoric" may conjure images of Greek philosophers pontificating on esoteric topics, all who work on improving their speaking and writing are rhetoricians. You are a rhetorician.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* laid the foundation for effective speaking and writing with the creation of the rhetorical triangle: ethos, pathos and logos. You've learned what these appeals are; you've read much about them and, whether you were aware of it or not, you incorporated them into your work.

A well-written essay can–and should–incorporate the rhetorical appeals; a good essay embodies and lives these appeals! Think about the last essay or paper you wrote. Are the appeals inherent in your last essay? Did your essay embody ethos, pathos and logos? And what does that even mean?

12.2: Ethos in the Essay

Ethos in the Essay

Aristotle himself said that "Ethos may be the most effective means of persuasion." What does ethos look like in a college essay? Aristotle often used the term ethos in place of character. Some define ethos as credibility, some define it as goodwill, some as competence, some as authority, and some as charisma. Ethos is all of those things. But what does that look like in an essay?

Some students complain about having to use proper academic style, formatting, and structure. "What's the point of a running header?" "Who cares if I use a hanging indent?"

We know from our forays into rhetorical analysis that a huge part of effective speaking and writing is knowing the audience. In the case of an essay, your audience is typically a professor or a graduate student assistant. Academia is a teacher's world; we teachers have pledged our careers and a big chunk of our lives to the institution of higher learning. Proper style is our wheelhouse. It is a hallmark of competence in academic writing. A properly formatted paper speaks loudly of your attention to detail and boosts your credibility as a student writer. Proper formatting also speaks – perhaps more softly – of your character: you took the time to format your paper properly. You were conscientious. That says something about you as a writer.

Students often wonder why they have to find "academic" or "scholarly" sources for their papers. Although research can feel like cruel or unusual punishment, researching and finding solid sources improves your ethos. Two ways that a writer can establish credibility/authority is to either be an expert on a subject or to cite experts on a subject. Since most students are not yet experts (but seeking to become them!), academic research is needed. Some students think that anything they find on the Internet is a good source. Not true! Not even close to true! Case in point: when writing about various persuasion theories, several of my students have cited un-authored pop psychology websites or various PowerPoint presentations that they've found online. If no person or author is associated with a work, how can we determine that the work was written by an expert? Students will also cite sources authored by journalists and writers. Journalists and writers are experts in journalism and writing, but they may not be subject matter experts. As for those PowerPoint presentations, a lot of those are student assignments that have been submitted for class assignments. Not only are students rarely experts quite yet, but we have no way of determining if that assignment even received a passing grade!

"And why do professors get so worked up about in-text citations?"

Again, Aristotle: "Character may be the most effective means of persuasion." A person of good character will always attribute borrowed words and ideas to their source. It's not enough to list a bunch of sources at the end of your paper; your readers have no idea what words or ideas came from which source. When you quote a source, or paraphrase it, or borrow the gist of it, giving credit where credit is due helps establish your character, your competence, your ethos.

Charisma? In a paper?

Yes! How you come across in your writing definitely speaks to your ethos.; Using appropriate language for the academic context, writing in an interesting and/or compelling manner, and editing your spelling, punctuation, mechanics, etc., all contribute to your style, credibility, and competence as a writer.

This checklist may help guide you in determining if ethos is on-point in your essay:

- Is your paper polished, proofread, and presented in an academic manor?
- Are your sources credible? Are your quotations and paraphrases documented correctly and as they're presented?
- Have you established your own credibility? Do you have experience with the subject? Have you done a lot of research on the subject?
- If your paper includes multiple viewpoints or counterarguments, is respect for those viewpoints present in the paper?
- Is your writing style/tone/word choice authentic yet suitable for your intended audience (usually your professor)?

12.3: The "Pathetic" Essay

The "Pathetic" Essay

When most people hear the word "pathetic," they think of something sad, sorrowful, or incompetent. According to the *Oxford Historical Thesaurus*, in the late 1500's, pathetic meant "expressing or arising from passion or strong emotion." By 1900, the term had come to mean "miserably inadequate; of such a low standard as to be ridiculous or contemptible." Why did the meaning change?

Some believe that, because emotional expression and compassion were historically associated with the female, emotional appeals in patriarchal societies became associated with weakness. (For an interesting time, check out the roots of the word "hysterical.") Others attribute this denigration of emotion to the abuse of emotional appeals; since abuse of emotion can manipulate audiences, some view emotional appeals as suspect or even unethical. Still others believe that logic and rationality are the pinnacle or argument, and since emotional appeals lack reason, they are inherently fallacious.

>Noted USC neuroscientist Antonio Damasio disagrees: "feelings are not just the shady side of reason...they help us to reach decisions as well" (qtd. in Lenzen). He further states: "rather than being a luxury, emotions are a very intelligent way of driving an organism toward certain outcomes" (qtd. in Star). Dale Carnegie once said that "when dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion." Damasio concurred: "We are not logical machines who feel; we are feeling machines who think."

Most students think of academic papers as extremely dry treatises that rely only upon logic and reasoning. Here is where we need to remind ourselves that although persuasion relies heavily upon logic and critical thinking, persuasion is not limited to logic and critical thinking. A ton of research exists that points to the effectiveness of emotional appeals in persuasion. So what does pathos look like in an argumentative paper?

- Do you use expressive descriptions of people, places, or events that help the reader to feel or experience those events?
- Do you include vivid imagery of people, places or events to help the reader to feel like he or she is "seeing" those events?
- Brief personal stories or anecdotes can make the reader feel a connection to, or empathy for, a person being described.
- Emotion-laden vocabulary can put the reader into a specific emotional mindset.
- Do you use information that will evoke an emotional response from the audience?
- Does your writing appeal to the values and beliefs of the audience?

12.4: Logic in the Lines

Logic in the Lines

Every essay is an argument.

Thaddeus Robinson taught us that an argument is a piece of reasoning that contains two things: reasons/premises and a conclusion. Every essay is an argument wherein your thesis (usually stated in your introduction) is the conclusion you want you audience to come to; it's what you want your audience to know or believe.

Wait...the conclusion is in your introduction?

Yes. And no. The conclusion you want your audience to come to – what you want them to believe as a result of reading your paper – is usually stated in the introduction of your paper. Your paper, however, still has a conclusion that gracefully wraps up, restates, and ends your paper.

A lot of students think that a thesis statement is simply what your paper is about. That may be true in some essays. Really good essays, and especially argumentative essays, begin with the end in mind. If I want you to walk away from my essay believing that Lucretia Mott absolutely owned the rhetorical canons in her 1848 "Declaration of Sentiments" speech, the introduction of my paper will clearly assert the conclusion I wish for you to reach: "Lucretia Mott skillfully 'fired the canons' of rhetoric in her 1848 speech, 'The Declaration of Sentiments'." For some reason, many students are fearful of boldly stating their thesis or argumentative conclusion in their introductions. Don't be tentative; be bold. You are making an argument!

The body of the essay will put forth the premises or reasons upon which your desired conclusion depends. How did Ms. Mott own this speech? Why do I believe this? The reasons–and the evidence/support for them–comprise the body of the speech.

Logos is reasoning, rationality, credible evidence and objectivity. Logos is facts and explanations. Whereas pathos appeals to emotion, logos appeals to rationality and intellect.

What does logos look like in a paper?

- Does your essay clearly and specifically state the conclusion you wish your audience to come to as a result of reading your paper?
- Is the thesis (what you want them to conclude) supported by strong reasons and credible evidence throughout your paper?
- Are the supporting arguments clear, well-organized, and easy to follow?
- Is your paper coherent, maintaining a well organized line of reasoning (not repeating ideas or jumping around)?
- Does your paper include exemplification – the use of many examples or a variety of evidence to support a single point?
- Does your paper provide elaboration – moving beyond just including a fact, but explaining the significance or relevance of that fact?
- Does your paper include forms of reasoning, such as:
  - comparison/analogy
  - causation (X leads to Y)
  - inductive reasoning (specific examples add up to support a general conclusion)
  - deductive reasoning (a broad generalization minus a specific premise supports a specific conclusion).

There is a lot of very good stuff going on in an essay which incorporates Aristotle's modes of proof. The mode or modes you favor in your writing should depend upon your audience and your purpose, but never forget that Aristotle recognized that persuasion is different from critical thinking or argumentation. He determined that effective persuasion requires all three modes of proof. Anyone attempting to *persuade* an audience needs ethos, logos, and pathos.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Anatomy of an Argument

13.1: Reasoning and Argument

Reasoning and Argument

By Thaddeus Robinson

We spend a lot of time trying to figure things out, and we do so primarily by means of reason. For example, we try to predict what will happen, explain what has already occurred, generalize from our experiences, and extrapolate from what we know. While we are sometimes interested in abstract questions, most of the time we put our reasoning skills to work on entirely practical matters. We have goals, plans, and interests, and being able to accurately predict, explain, generalize on, and extrapolate from, our experiences are crucial skills for achieving our goals. Indeed, we all know how to reason. We do it all the time, and it is something we are relatively good at doing. Nevertheless, reasoning is also something that we can improve on, and sharpening our skills can have dramatic effects on our beliefs and decisions. In this chapter we will start by defining reasoning and explaining how it relates to arguments. We will then briefly introduce two important skills: argument analysis and argument evaluation. Along the way, we will begin building a vocabulary for thinking about and developing these skills.

13.2: What is Reasoning?

What is Reasoning?

We reason all the time, but what are we doing exactly? This answer might not be immediately obvious, so let's begin with some straightforward cases to see what they have in common:

- Solving a math problem
- Figuring out why your phone won't work correctly
- Deciding who to vote for
- Working out why your friend is angry with you
- Determining whether you can afford to buy a new car

What do these have in common? We could pick out a number of features, but we will focus on two in particular. First, in each case our thinking is driving toward a specific outcome or conclusion (e.g. "my phone won't work because…", or "the answer is…", etc.). Second, in each one of these cases this conclusion will be based on reasons. That is, we will arrive at a specific conclusion because we think we have good reasons for doing so. Let us take a closer look at each of these features.

Reasoning is a mental process that ends with a conclusion. Sometimes this conclusion is a newly formed belief. You might, for example, be asked to find the average of 88, 69, 94, and 77 and arrive at the new belief that the average of these numbers is 82. Alternatively, you might troubleshoot your phone and arrive at the new belief that the operating system wasn't properly installed. While reasoning always leads to a conclusion, that conclusion need not be a new belief. In some cases, these processes lead us to be more (or less) confident in beliefs we already hold.& We can see both kinds of conclusion at work in the following example.

> *Ex. 1:*
>
> *Talia wakes up one morning to discover that her car is missing. As she thinks about it she quickly concludes that her brother has probably borrowed it. Her reasons for drawing this conclusion are that he i) knows where her spare set of keys are, ii) has borrowed it without asking in the past, and iii) is supposed to pick up a cake at a bakery across town today. Just after she has come to this conclusion the phone rings. It is one of Talia's friends who mentions that she saw Talia's car parked at the bakery across town.*

In the first part of Ex. 1 Talia is reasoning to a new belief, namely that her brother has borrowed her car. When her friend calls, she gets a new piece of information. However, this information does not lead her to any new belief; after all, this information is an additional reason for thinking that her brother has borrowed the car, and she already believes that.; Instead, as a result of this news, she is even more confident that her brother has borrowed the car. In light of this distinction, we will say that reasoning is a process that leads to a change in a person's system of belief, and we will understand a person's **system of belief** to include not only their beliefs, but also the relationships between those beliefs, and the confidence with which they are held.

The second defining feature of reasoning is that it is a process whereby we change our system of beliefs because we have *reasons* for doing so. In general, to have reasons for drawing some conclusion is to have some group of existing beliefs that indicate in one way or another that the conclusion in question is true. In the example above, Talia has a variety of existing beliefs about her brother and his circumstances, and she takes this information to point toward the fact that her brother has borrowed the car.

Importantly, our reasons can indicate the truth of the conclusion to different degrees. When we take ourselves to have solved a math problem correctly, for example, we take ourselves to have *shown* that the conclusion is correct. This is a bit different from Talia's reasoning—she probably wouldn't say that her reasons *show* or *prove* that her brother borrowed the car. Nonetheless, she thinks that her reasons are good enough to draw the conclusion. In general, reasons can support conclusions with different degrees of strength, and it should be no surprise that we have many different ways of talking about this support. We can say, for example, that when we reason we take our existing beliefs to *indicate*, *give good reason for*, *offer evidence on behalf of*, *establish*, *warrant*, or *demonstrate* a change to our system of beliefs. These differences will be important later, but for now we will simply say that when we reason, we take our existing beliefs to **justify** a particular change in our system of belief.

Now that we have taken a brief look at the reasoning process, we can return to the question we began with and define reasoning as follows:

> ***Reasoning*** *is the process whereby a person changes their system of belief on the basis of reasons which they take to justify this change.*

13.3: Automatic, Semi-Automatic, and Conscious Reasoning

Automatic, Semi-Automatic, and Conscious Reasoning

We have just arrived at a definition of reasoning, but it is important to note that this definition captures only one kind of reasoning. Over the last 20-30 years, psychologists and cognitive scientists have come to the conclusion that we use a variety of different methods and mechanisms to update our system of beliefs. Some of these methods involve conscious directed attention, but many do not. Here is the basic idea: many of the things that humans do are automatic and do not involve conscious control. We do not, for example, need to tell ourselves to breathe or blink (although we can). Moreover, it is not just physical activity that can be automatic; mental activities can occur automatically as well. Take recognition for example. You do not decide to recognize people—it is something you automatically do. Some associations can become automatic over time; for example, if a celebrity is frequently associated with a product, seeing the product can cause an automatic association with the celebrity (Cornell). Although *learning* to read requires great cognitive effort, once we can read, we no longer have to think about individual letters and words; our brains automatically recognize them and process them. Just as our muscles have memory, so do some of our mental processes, and cognitive scientists and psychologists now think that, in addition, there are a variety of automatic and semi-automatic reasoning processes.* These processes update our systems of belief in ways that are often outside of any conscious effort or awareness.

Conversely, conscious reasoning requires our attention, our conscious awareness, and our intention. In this chapter, we are primarily addressing consciously directed reasoning, since this is the kind of reasoning over which we have the most control. Nonetheless, we cannot ignore other types of reasoning processes. These processes are pervasive features of our thinking and inform our conscious judgments and decisions both positively and negatively. Given this, it is important to know when to be skeptical of the impressions and intuitions that these processes give us. As such, if we want to think more clearly and make better choices, we will have to take these kinds of processes into account. Since we will be primarily discussing directed conscious reasoning, let us simply refer to this as "reasoning" in line with the definition given.

13.4: Arguments and Their Parts

From Reasoning to Argument

As stated previously, **reasoning** is the process whereby a person changes their system of belief on the basis of reasons which they take to justify this change. An *argument* is a series of reasons; a series of statements for or against something. When we reason, we take our belief that our reasons are true to justify our belief that our conclusion is true. That is, we reason by means of arguments.

Arguments and Their Parts

When it comes to arguments, it is important to make two terminological distinctions. First, the term ‘argument’ as it is defined above differs from another common sense of the term. We often use the term ‘an argument’ to refer to a disagreement, dispute, or act of verbal aggression. This is *not* how we will be using the term. Here is an example of a dispute that is not an argument as this book uses the term.

> *Ex. 1:*
>
> *Maria: Eating meat is irresponsible and unnecessary.*
>
> *Jackson: Are you crazy? No it is not.*

Why isn’t this disagreement an example of an argument? The answer, in short, is because neither person has tried to justify what they are saying. Presumably each person has reasons for thinking they are right, but as conversation stands all that has been publicly expressed is a disagreement. Compare Ex. 1 to the following.

> *Ex. 2:*
>
> *I bet the Phillies will win their game tonight since they are on a hot streak.*

Example 2 is an argument since a reason is offered on behalf of a conclusion.

A second terminological note is that all arguments have two parts—the premises and the conclusion. The **premises** of an argument give reasons or evidence on behalf of the conclusion; put otherwise, premises are the pieces of information that back-up or justify the conclusion. (Note: the terms "reasons" and "premises" are often used interchangeably; the academic/technical term for reasons is premises.) The **conclusion**, on the other hand, is the proposition for which reasons or evidence are given, it is that proposition which is backed-up or justified. We can label the parts of the arguments above accordingly:

> *Ex. 3:*
>
> *Premise—The Phillies are on a hot streak*
>
> *Conclusion—The Phillies will win their game tonight.*

This raises a second point. Arguments can be good or bad. When we come to believe a conclusion on the basis of the premises we do so because we have judged that the premises justify or establish the conclusion. But we can be wrong about this. Sometimes arguments that we take to be good, are not. In general terms, good arguments are arguments in which the premises establish their conclusion, whereas bad arguments are those in which the premises do not. Correspondingly, we reason well when our beliefs are based on good arguments and we reason poorly when they are not. Thus, in order to improve our reasoning, we will have to learn how to properly evaluate arguments. Doing so is a two-step process. Most obviously, we will need to learn how to distinguish between good arguments and bad ones. This information is useless, however, if we cannot accurately identify and analyze arguments. Put otherwise, you cannot accurately assess whether an argument is good or bad, if you don’t know what the premises are, and how they are related to the conclusion. Let us take an introductory look at these two steps.

13.5: Spotting Arguments

Spotting Arguments

There are a number of words that authors and speakers use to indicate that they are making an argument. We will call these words *indicator words*, since they typically indicate the presence of an argument. Some words and phrases, like 'since', 'because', 'for', 'on account of', and 'given that…', specifically indicate the presence of a premise.

> *Ex. 4:*
>
> *There is no way the Spartans will make the playoffs this year,* ***since*** *they are 6 games back with less than two weeks to go.*

> *Ex. 5:*
>
> ***Given*** *the suspect's blood/alcohol level at the time of the accident, it is clear that she was driving over the legal limit.*

Other words and phrases specifically indicate the presence of an argument's conclusion: 'thus', 'therefore', 'hence', 'so', 'consequently'.

> *Ex. 6:*
>
> *Malik doesn't have any brothers or sisters;* ***hence*** *he is an only child.*

> *Ex. 7:*
>
> *The number 8 is even;* ***consequently****, it is not a prime number.*

We need to keep two qualifications in mind. First, these brief lists include the most common indicator words, but there are many ways that authors and speakers can indicate the presence of an argument without using these terms.; Thus, we cannot merely memorize the terms above and be done with it. Second, unfortunately indicator words do not *always* indicate the presence of an argument. Consider the following:

> *Ex. 8:*
>
> *The marching band hasn't gotten anything less than a #1 at contest* ***since*** *2015.*

In this case, the term 'since' is being used to refer to time, not to a premise. Given that indicator words are not 100% reliable as indications of argumentation, we cannot infer that we have an argument merely because one of our indicator words shows up. As we will see, we need to pay attention to the contexts in which these words are used.

One obstacle to spotting arguments has to do with opinions. Suppose somebody says "teens really shouldn't be watching R-rated movies, since for the most part they are not mature enough to handle the psychological and emotional effects of mature content." Is this an argument? Many people are tempted to say 'no'—this is just an opinion. Some people conflate items that are controversial, debatable, or uncertain as being outside the realm of logic and reasoning.

We need to be aware, however, that whether a statement is controversial or debatable is not relevant to whether there is an argument present. Recall that anytime a speaker or author gives a reason to believe a conclusion, they have given an argument—regardless whether anything the author has said or written is controversial, uncertain, or debatable. In the example above, the speaker uses the word 'since' to indicate the presence of a premise, and consequently, the presence of an argument. So: whether somebody's claim is an opinion won't tell us anything about whether they have offered an argument. In fact, often controversial, uncertain, and debatable claims are precisely the sort of thing that people offer arguments for!

13.6: Evaluating Arguments

Evaluating Arguments

Last, let us turn to the most important topic this chapter will take up: argument evaluation. To evaluate an argument is to decide whether it is good or bad. We have an intuitive ability to evaluate arguments—we can usually distinguish good arguments from bad ones just by looking at them. This native ability is not, however, infallible; in fact, there are certain contexts and kinds of cases where we tend to make mistakes. Thus it is important to ask: what is the difference between a good argument and a bad one? Put otherwise, we need to know what makes a good argument, good, and a bad argument, bad. Let us start with an example.

> *Ex. 9:*
>
> *Premise: The largest city in the U.S. is located in Nebraska.*
>
> *Premise: New York City is the largest city in the U.S.*
>
> *Conclusion: So, New York City is located in Nebraska.*

Clearly this is a bad argument. The problem is that one of its premises is false—we know that the largest city in the U.S. is not in the state of Nebraska. This example shows one way in which an argument can be bad: when it has false premises. Let us say the following:

An argument is **factually correct** when (and only when) all of its premises are true. It is **factually incorrect** otherwise.

Thus, the argument in Ex. 9 is factually incorrect because not all of its premises are true. In addition, whether an argument is factually correct or not is solely a matter of whether the premises are true—an argument with all true premises but a false conclusion is still factually correct. Factual correctness is not, however, the only feature of an argument relevant to its evaluation. Consider the following case.

> *Ex. 10:*
>
> *Premise: Selena passed her driver's license exam.*
>
> *Conclusion: So, Selena will pass her calculus exam.*

Let us say that it is true that Selena passed her driver's license exam. Even so, clearly this is a bad argument. This is a poor argument because the premise does not support the truth of the conclusion. That is, the premise, though true, does not give us good or sufficient reason to believe the conclusion is true. We will refer to this feature of arguments as logical strength and say:

> *An argument is **logically strong** when (and only when) the premises—if true—provide strong support for the truth of the conclusion. An argument is **logically weak** otherwise.*

It is crucial to see that these features of arguments are independent of one another. An argument may be factually incorrect, but logically strong (see, e.g. Ex. 9), factually correct, but logically weak (Ex. 10), both correct and strong, or both incorrect and weak. In light of these distinctions we can distinguish good arguments from bad ones in the following way. Let us say that:

> *An argument is good, henceforth **sound**, when (and only when) it is both factually correct and logically strong. An argument is **unsound** otherwise.*

Ideally, all of our reasoning would proceed by means of sound arguments. However, we are always working with limited information, and this means that we all sometimes endorse unsound arguments. Nevertheless, we can take steps to limit these kinds of errors.

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*For more information/examples regarding automated processing/unconscious reasoning, see Sun, Fujia. "Automatic Processing in Psychology: Definition and Examples." *Simple Psychology,* 11 Aug 2023, www.simplypsychology.org/automatic-processing.html.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

14: Reasoning: The Logic of Our Arguments

14.1: Introduction

"Argumentation gives priority to logical appeals while recognizing the importance of ethical and emotional appeals; persuasion gives priority to ethical and emotional appeals while recognizing the importance of logical appeals."

-Professor James Sawyer

The Focus of this Chapter

As we learned in previous readings, reasoning is the process of creating or generating conclusions from evidence or premises. Reasoning is what links your evidence to your conclusions. This is the "logical" part of your argument. In this chapter, we look will look at logic and find that:

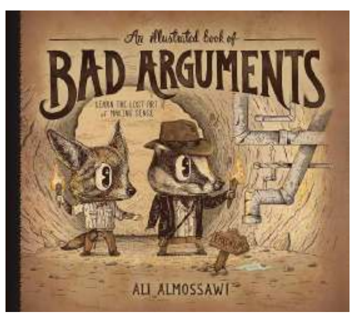
- There are two general categories of reasoning: deductive and inductive.
- Deductive reasoning argues from the general rule to a specific conclusion and follows the rules of syllogisms.
- Inductive reasoning moves from specifics to create a general rule.
- We will examine five types of inductive reasoning. Each type has tests that we can make to insure the reasoning is sound.
- Unsound reasoning is known as fallacies. Recognizing fallacies in an argument allows us to reject an appeal that is illogical.

Overview of Reasoning

Again, reasoning is the process of creating or generating conclusions from evidence or premises. This is the logic of an argument: the consistency between data and conclusion. Reasoning constructs a logical or rational connection between the evidence and the contention. The more reasonable the argument, the more valid is the conclusion.

Checking the validity of your own arguments will allow you to improve the quality of the arguments you use. When you create logically unsound arguments, you are much less likely to convince people to agree with you. If you are trying to convince an employer that you are indeed the person for a promotion, you want to make sure your arguments are as valid as possible. Not only do you give him or her a reason to accept your argument, but also you can better defend your position if it is challenged.

When you understand how arguments are supposed to be constructed and also how they shouldn't be constructed, you will find all sorts of bad arguments vying for your attention. I am guessing that you are not surprised at how many people are swayed by bad argument



"Bad Arguments" by Ali Almossawi is Fair Use

Ali Almossawi has written an entertaining book that introduces logic, *Bad Arguments*. Here, in the final words in the preface of the book, he explains the limits to logic:

"In closing, the rules of logic are not laws of the natural world, nor do they constitute all of human reasoning. As Marvin Minsky asserts, ordinary commonsense reasoning is difficult to explain in terms of logical principles, as are analogies. He adds, 'Logic no more explains how we think than grammar explains how we speak.' Logic does not generate new truths, but rather allows one to evaluate existing chains of thought for consistency and coherence. It is precisely for that reason that it proves an effective tool for the analysis and communication of ideas and arguments." -- A.A., San Francisco, October 2013

As Spock from Star Trek would realize, "Logic is the beginning of wisdom, not the end."

Testing Arguments

Testing an argument to see if it is reasonable or logical is a great first step in deciding if you should accept or reject the claim of the argument. If the argument is not reasonable, then you can feel comfortable rejecting the claim. If the argument appears reasonable, then you can go to the next step and check for the accuracy of the statements contained within the argument. Don’t be fooled by an argument just because it is repeated over and over. Instead, examine the validity and accuracy of that argument. The critical thinker must remember that there is a difference between the reasoning needed to establish the validity of the argument and the level of evidence needed to substantiate the accuracy of an argument. Evaluating arguments involves analyzing both the validity of the type of reasoning used and the accuracy of the evidence presented.

Example: Black cats run the world because they are adorable.

Is the above argument reasonable? No. It isn't. Black cats do not run the world and cannot run the world. This is an invalid assertion.

Is the above argument accurate? Nope. Black cats being adorable is a matter of opinion, and again, there is no evidence - commonsense or otherwise - that black cats run the world (although one does a pretty good job of running my life).

When an argument includes both quality evidence and a valid reasoning foundation, the argument is considered to be sound.

This chapter will focus on three elements of reasoning: inductive reasoning, how we create generalizations; deductive reasoning, and how we apply those generalizations.

14.2: The Limitations of Inductive Arguments

Important conclusion: Since the process of reasoning by induction usually involves arriving at a conclusion based on a limited sampling, **the conclusion to an inductive argument can never be totally certain**. Why? Because no matter which type of inductive reasoning is used, nor how carefully critical thinkers adhere to the tests of each reasoning pattern, critical thinkers can never sample the totality of the population used to infer the generalization about that population. There is almost always an exception to the rule. Thus, conclusions drawn from inductive reasoning are always only probable. To use induction effectively, an advocate must demonstrate that the specifics are compelling, and thus justify the conclusion, but never claim that the conclusion is guaranteed in all situations, as this is an overstatement.

14.3: Inductive Reasoning- Five Methods

Inductive reasoning is the process of reasoning from specifics to a general conclusion related to those specifics. You have a series of facts and/or observations. From all of this data you draw a conclusion (sometimes called a "general rule"). Although not the best analogy, inductive reasoning is a bit like addition in math: a series of facts or observations "add up" to a conclusion. (This is why, when something doesn't make sense, one hears people say, "That doesn't add up!") Inductive reasoning allows humans to create generalizations about people, events, and things in their environment. There are five methods of inductive reasoning:

- example
- cause
- sign
- comparison
- authority

14.3.1: Reasoning by Example

Reasoning by Example

Reasoning by example involves using specific instances as a basis for making a valid conclusion. In this approach, specific instances lead to a generalized conclusion about the whole situation. For example: I have a Sony television, a Sony stereo, a Sony car radio, a Sony video system, and they all work well. It is clear that Sony produces superior electronic products. Or, I have taken four good professors at this college: Professor Siegfried, Professor Pipkin, Professor Conley, and Professor Black; therefore, I can conclude that the professors at this college are good.

Tests for Reasoning by Example:

- There must be a sufficient number of examples to justify the generalized conclusion. How many examples are enough? The answer depends on the significance of the specific instances and the threshold of your target audience. Some audiences may find one enough, while others may need many more. For instance, the Neilson Ratings that are used to measure the television viewing preferences of 300 million Americans are determined by roughly 3,000 homes scattered throughout the United States. Yet, the television industry, which uses them to set advertising rates, accepts the 3,000 examples as enough to validate the conclusions.
- The examples must be typical of the whole. They must be representative of the topic about which the conclusion is reached, not fringe examples. For example, you come to college and take one English class whose instructor you find disappointing. You conclude that all 300 instructors at this particular college are poor teachers from this one class from this one department. The sample might not be representative of the whole population of instructors.
- Important counter examples must be accounted for. If the counter examples mitigate against the examples used, the generalization is threatened. What if a good friend of yours also took another English class and was pleased by the experience. He found that his instructor was an excellent teacher. His example becomes a counter one to the specific instance you used to draw your conclusion, which is now very much in doubt.
- The examples must be relevant to the time period of your argument. If you are dealing with something recent, you need recent examples. If you are trying to prove something in the 1850's, examples from that period are appropriate. If you took the English class 30 years ago, it would be difficult to draw a valid conclusion about the nature of teachers at the college today without using recent examples. Likewise, recent examples may not be reflective of the way the college was 30 years ago.

14.3.2: Causal Reasoning

Causal Reasoning

Causal reasoning is based on the idea that for every action there is a reaction. Stated very simply, a cause is anything that is directly responsible for producing something else, usually termed the effect. There are two forms of causal reasoning:

- Cause to effect: a known cause or causes is capable of producing some unknown effect or effects
- Effect to cause: some known effect(s) has/have been produced by some unknown cause or causes.

The goal of causal reasoning is to figure out how or why something happened. For instance, you did well on a test because you studied two days in advance. I could then predict that if you study two days in advance of the next test, you will do well. In causal reasoning, the critical thinker is trying to establish a predictive function between two directly related variables. If we can figure out how and why things occur, we can then try to predict what will happen in the future.

Tests of Causal Reasoning:

- The cause must be capable of producing the effect described, and vice versa. Has causality really been established or is it just coincidence? Is the cause really capable of producing the effect and vice versa? There must be a direct connection between the cause and the effect that can be demonstrated using empirical evidence. For example, many people mistake superstition for causal reasoning. Is the source of good luck the rubbing of a rabbit's foot? Is the cause of bad luck really the fact that you walked under a ladder or broke the mirror? Did wearing that shirt really cause your team to win five games in a row? The critical thinker must make a clear distinction between a valid causal occurrence and sheer coincidence.
- Cumulative causal reasoning increases the soundness of the conclusion. The more times the causal pattern has happened, the greater the strength given to thecausal reasoning, leading to a more valid conclusion. If this is the first time this association has ever been asserted the advocate will have to use more evidence to support the soundness of the causal reasoning advanced.
- Counter causal factors must also be accounted for. The advocate must be aware of the other inherent causal factors that could disrupt the relationship between the cause and effect presented. A claim was made by a father that his son committed suicide because he was influenced to do so by the songs of a particular rock musician. If we assume that such a causal association exists, we also need to know if there are any other factors that could disrupt the connection: Was the son depressed; had he tried to commit suicide before; were there family problems; did he listen to other artists and other types of music; did he have peer problems; did he have relationship problems; was he having problems in school, etc.? Each one of these, individually, might be enough to destroy the direct causal relationship that is attempting to be established.

14.3.3: Reasoning by Sign

Reasoning by Sign

Reasoning by sign involves inferring a connection between two related situations. The theory is that the presence or absence of one indicates the presence or absence of the other. In other words, the presence of an attribute is a signal that something else, the substance, exists. One doesn't cause the other to exist, but instead is a sign that it exists. Football on television is a sign that Fall has arrived. Football on television does not cause Fall to arrive; they just arrive at the same time. A flag flying at half-staff is a sign that that there has been a tragedy or a significant person has died. The flag flying at half-staff did not cause the death. It is a sign that the situation occurred.

Tests of Sign Reasoning:

- Other substance/attribute relationships must be considered. Is there another substance that might have the same attributes? Could the sending of roses to your sweetie be a sign of something other than love? Can the same signs indicate the presence of a valid second or third substance?
- Cumulative sign reasoning produces a more probable connection. The more often this substance/attribute relationship occurs, the more likely it is to repeat itself. If this is the first time you have noticed the association, you will need a good deal of evidence to demonstrate that it really is a valid sign argument.

14.3.4: Reasoning by Analogy/Comparison

Reasoning by Analogy/Comparison

Comparison reasoning is also known as reasoning by analogy. This type of reasoning involves drawing comparisons between two similar things, and concluding that, because of the similarities involved, what is correct about one is also correct of the other. There was once an ad for alligator meat that presented this comparison; "When you try alligator meat just remember what is considered exotic food today may often become normal fare in the future. This was the case with lobster. About 75 years ago, lobster was thought of as poor man's food; many New Englanders would not even think of eating it. Today, of course, lobster is a delicacy savored by many people." This type of reasoning wants us to conclude that alligator meat is to humans today, as lobster meat was to humans 75 years ago. And since lobster is now a delicacy so will be alligator meat.

There are two types of comparisons: figurative and literal.

Literal comparisons attempt to establish a link between similar classifications; cars to cars, states to states, people to people. For instance, you can compare a Ford compact car with a Toyota compact car; the lottery in one state with the lottery in another state; how your parents treat you with how your best friend is treated by her parents. In these comparisons, similar classifications are being used for the purposes of making the analogy. Literal comparisons can provide logical proof for the point being made and thus can increase the validity of the argument. A literal comparison would be considered an "apples to apples" argument.

Figurative comparisons attempt to link similarities between two cases from different classifications. Jim Baker of the Bush 2000 campaign, argued after the 5-4 Supreme Court decision awarding the state of Florida to Bush, "Saying George W. Bush stole the Presidency from Al Gore is like saying someone tried to steer the Titanic after it had already hit the iceberg." Figurative comparisons carry no weight in terms of providing logical proof for an argument. They can, however, be very effective for the purpose of illustration and persuading an audience. When someone says, "You're comparing apples to oranges," they are really saying that you're making a figurative comparison; that is, you are comparing unlike things.

The line between a literal and figurative analogy is not always clear. Instead of a comparison being totally figurative or totally literal, the comparison can vary by degree. There are few literal comparisons that can be made between a person and a computer, for example. A person to an animal may have some overlapping similarities. The more figurative the comparison or analogy, the less logically valid the argument. The more literal the comparison is, the more logically valid the argument.

Tests of reason by comparison/analogy:

- To be considered as proof, the analogy must be a literal one. The further advocates move away from figurative comparisons and toward the literal comparison end of the continuum, the more validity they secure for their argument. Figurative comparisons carry no logical argumentative influence at all.
- The cases need to contain significant points of similarity. The greater the number of important or major similar points between the cases, the easier it is to establish the comparison as a sound one. However, no matter how many points of similarity can be established between the two cases, major points of differences can destroy the analogy. Children often try to convince a parent to let them do or try something the parent is opposed to by comparing themselves to another child. They point out they are the same age as the other child, they are in the same grade in school, the child lives in the same neighborhood as they do, thus they should be allowed to do what the other child is allowed to do. This seems to be a very effective argument by comparison until the parent says, you are not that child or we are not their parents. To the parents, these points of difference destroy the comparison the child is trying to make.
- Cumulative comparison reasoning will produce a more probable conclusion. The greater the number of cases a person can use for the purpose of comparison, the more valid the comparison. If a student has been to more than one college or has had many instructors, he or she can evaluate the quality of the teachers by comparing them. The validity of his or her conclusion is increased as the number of teachers compared increases.

Bad Analogy in Real Life

May 23, 2016
(CNN) Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald downplayed the time it takes for veterans to receive medical treatment by comparing the "experience" of waiting for health care to Disneyland guests waiting for a ride. "When you go to Disney, do they

measure the number of hours you wait in line? Or what's important?" McDonald told reporters at a Christian Science Monitor breakfast in Washington. "What's important is what's your satisfaction with the experience?" American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett excoriated McDonald: "The American Legion agrees that the VA secretary's analogy between Disneyland and VA wait times was an unfortunate comparison because people don't die while waiting to go on Space Mountain."

14.3.5: Reasoning From Authority

Reasoning from Authority

Reasoning from authority is used when a person argues that a particular claim is justified because it is held or advocated by a credible source. That credible source can be a person or organization. Basically, the authority possesses some credentials that qualify the source as an authority. Thus, you accept the argument because someone you feel is an authority tells you so. You can use this type of argument in two ways. First, you can ask that an argument be accepted simply because someone you consider an authority advocates it. People grant authority status to other people they think have more knowledge than they do: students to teachers, patients to doctors, and clients to lawyers. Children often argue this way when they justify a position by saying "because my mommy or daddy said so." Second, you can support your arguments with the credibility of another person. Here you are attempting to transfer the positive ethos from the credible source to the position you are advocating. Advertisers do this when they get popular athletes and entertainers to promote their products. The advertisers are hoping that your positive view of these people will transfer to their product, thus producing higher sales for the products. You may be persuaded to see a particular movie, attend a certain play, or eat at a restaurant because it was advocated by a well-known critic.

Tests for reasoning from authority:

- The authority must be credible. That is, the authority must possess the necessary qualifications for the target audience in order for the source to be used as justification for a point of view. If challenged, the advocate must be prepared to defend the expertise and ethos of his or her authority.
- Views of counter authorities must be taken into account. The advocate must be aware of the other "experts" or highly credible sources who take an opposite position from the one being advocated. If he or she fails to do this, the argument breaks down into a battle over whose expert or authority should be accepted as being the most accurate.
- Cumulative views of authorities increase the validity of the reasoning. Citing more than one expert or authority will increase the likelihood that your position will be viewed as the most valid one being argued.

14.4: Deductive Reasoning

Deductive reasoning is the process of reasoning from general statements, or rules, to a certain, specific, and logical conclusion. Deductive arguments begin with a general statement that has already been arrived at inductively. Unlike inductive reasoning, where the conclusion may be very valid, but is always only probable, the conclusion reached by deductive reasoning is logically certain. Whereas inductive reasoning "adds up" specific instances to form a general conclusion, deductive reasoning is more like subtraction in math: deductive reasoning is based on deduction (subtraction) from accepted premises.

A deductive argument has three parts: a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. This form is called a **syllogism**. The major premise is a general statement. This is how/why deductive arguments go from general to specific.

A deductive argument offers two or more premises that lead to a conclusion directly related to those premises. As long as the two premises are sound, there can be no doubt that the final, specific statement is correct. The final statement is a matter of logical certainty. The following is the classic example of deductive syllogism:

Major premise: All men are mortal.

Minor premise: Socrates is a man.

Conclusion: Socrates is mortal.

Another example:

Major premise: Community college transfers have a better chance of getting into the public four-year university of their choice than seniors graduating from high school.

Minor premise: I am a community college student earning a transfer degree.

Conclusion: I have a better chance of attending the public university of my choice than a senior graduating from high school.

Deductive arguments are not spoken of as “true” or “false,” but as “sound” or “unsound.” A **sound argument** is one in which the premises guarantee the conclusion, and an **unsound argument** is one in which the premises do not guarantee the conclusion. An advocate who uses deduction to frame an argument must be certain that the general statement is accepted as correct and then must demonstrate the relationship between this general statement and the specific claim, thus proving beyond a doubt the conclusion.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

15: Logical Fallacies

15.1: What Is a Fallacy?

Fallacies

The final step in checking the strength of reasoning is to make sure there are no fallacies in our reasoning. Often, correcting for fallacies is the missing piece to creating and evaluating logical arguments. A fallacy is an error in reasoning. A fallacy indicates there is a problem with the logic of deductive or inductive reasoning. This differs from a factual error, which is simply being wrong about the facts. To be more specific, a fallacy is an “argument” in which the premises given for the conclusion do not provide the needed degree of support. A fallacy is a mistake in the way that the final conclusion of the argument, or any intermediate conclusions, are logically related to their supporting premises. When there is a fallacy in an argument, the argument is said to be unsound or invalid

The presence of a logical fallacy in an argument does not necessarily imply anything about the argument’s premises or its conclusion. Both may actually be correct, but the argument is still invalid because the conclusion does not follow from the premises using the inference principles of the argument. Recognizing fallacies is often difficult, and indeed fallacious arguments often persuade their intended audience. Detecting and avoiding fallacious reasoning will at least prevent adoption of some erroneous conclusions.

15.2: Common Fallacies

Common Fallacies

Fallacies are usually recognized in isolation, but woven into the context of an argument they may pass unnoticed, unless the critical thinker is on guard against them. Some advocates openly use fallacies in order to exploit an unknowing audience, but many times we use fallacies unintentionally. Many fallacies exist. Here is a few of the most common ones used in everyday argumentation.

False Dilemma

The false dilemma fallacy occurs when an argument offers a false range of choices and requires that you pick one of them. Usually, the false dilemma

fallacy takes this form: Either A or B is true. If A is not true, then B is true. “Either you love me or hate me.” The range is false because there may be other, unstated choices which would only serve to undermine the original argument. If you agree to pick one of those choices, you accept the premise that those choices are indeed the only ones possible. Seeing something as "black and white” is an example of a false dilemma.

Appeal to Emotion

This fallacy is committed when someone manipulates peoples’ emotions in order to get them to accept a claim. More formally, this sort of “reasoning” involves the substitution of various means of producing strong emotions in place of evidence for a claim. Here the attempt is to transfer a positive emotion you have on one thing to the object or belief that is being argued. This sort of “reasoning” is very common in politics and it serves as the basis for a large portion of modern advertising. Most political speeches are aimed at generating feelings in people, so that these feelings will get them to vote or act a certain way. How many times will you see pictures of American flags in a political commercial? The flag and other traditional images are aimed at getting the audience emotionally involved. In the case of advertising, the commercials are aimed at evoking emotions that will influence people to buy certain products. Beer commercials frequently include people at parties to get the potential consumers excited about the product. In many cases, such speeches and commercials are notoriously free of real evidence.

Non-sequitur

The phrase “non-sequitur” is Latin for “it does not follow.” If an inference is made that does not logically follow from the premises of the preceding argument, then the inference is a non-sequitur. For example, “I am wearing my lucky hat today, nothing can go wrong.” Though the term “non-sequitur” can be used broadly as an informal fallacy to describe any unwarranted conclusion, it is most often used when a statement openly contradicts itself and just makes no sense.

Slippery Slope

This fallacy reduces an argument to absurdity by extending it beyond its reasonable limits. This is an abuse of causal reasoning by trying to link events that normally have very little to do with each other. For example: legalizing marijuana will lead to the legalization of cocaine. If you legalize cocaine, you’ll be able to buy crack and every other drug at your local 7-11. In this argument, it is asserted that the legalization of marijuana will eventually lead to purchasing crack at local 7-11’s. Once one accepts the legalization of marijuana, then one is assumed to be on the slippery slope towards the legalization and availability of every other drug. In a Slippery Slope argument, you suggest that a series of events will occur leading to an undesirable conclusion instead of just one step as in causal reasoning.

Ad Hominem

Translated from Latin to English, “Ad Hominem” means “against the man” or “against the person.” An ad hominem fallacy consists of saying that someone’s argument is wrong purely because of something about the person rather than about the argument itself. You will hear people on the radio and television dismiss comments by people they label as a conservative or a liberal, just because of how they label that person. Merely insulting another person or questioning the credibility of someone does not necessarily constitute an ad hominem fallacy. For this fallacy to exist it must be clear that the purpose of the characterization is to discredit the person offering the argument, in an attempt to invite others to then discount his or her arguments. The Ad Hominem fallacy was employed by those who wanted to silence 16-year-oldclimate change activist Greta Thunberg. Those who disagreed with her argued that she should be ignored as she is just a child.

Hasty Generalization

This fallacy occurs when an arguer bases a conclusion on too few examples that are not necessarily typical of the conclusion being made. For instance, “My two boyfriends have never shown any concern for my feelings. Therefore, all men are insensitive, selfish, and emotionally uncaring.” Or, “I read about this man who got worms from eating sushi. I always knew that sushi was not good to eat." Without more examples, these arguments can be considered fallacies. It's illogical to draw a conclusion on too few or irrelevant examples.

Circular Reasoning

The fallacy of circular reasoning is the assertion or repeated assertion of a conclusion, without giving reasons in its support. In other words, supporting a premise with a premise, instead of a conclusion. It may imply that the conclusion is self-evident or rephrase the conclusion to sound like a reason. Circular reasoning creates an illusion of support by simply asserting its conclusion as though it were a reason, or by reasserting the same claim in different words. For example, “The biggest contributor to the great pacific garbage patch is bottled water. We know this because bottled water accounts for a large amount of the pollution in the garbage patch.” Or, “George Clooney is the best actor we have ever had, because he is the greatest actor of all time.”

Appeal to Ignorance

In this fallacy, the arguer claims that something is valid only because it hasn’t been proven false. The argument mistakes lack of evidence for evidence to the contrary. In effect, the argument says, “No one knows it is accurate. Therefore, it is false.” For example, “There is no proof that hand gun legislation will reduce crime. Therefore, outlawing handguns would be a futile gesture." Or, "We have no evidence that God doesn’t exist, therefore, God must exist." Ignorance about something says nothing about its existence or non-existence.

Bandwagon

The name “bandwagon fallacy” comes from the phrase “jump on the bandwagon” or “climb on the bandwagon,” a bandwagon being a wagon big enough to hold a band of musicians. In past political campaigns, candidates would ride a bandwagon through town, and people would show support for the candidate by climbing aboard the wagon. The phrase has come to refer to joining a cause because of its popularity. For example, trying to convince you that you should do something because everyone else is doing it is a bandwagon fallacy. "Everybody is buying a Tesla car, so should you."

Post hoc ergo propter hoc

The post hoc ergo propter hoc, “after this, therefore because of this,” fallacy is based upon the mistaken notion that simply because one thing happens after another, the first event was a cause of the second event. Post hoc reasoning is the basis for many superstitions and erroneous beliefs. For example, California earthquakes always happen after unusual weather patterns. Or, Allison always scores a goal when she wears her red and white soccer shoes. Or, I wore my Packers shirt and my Packers team won. I now wear my Packers shirt for every game. These are all, post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacies. Nearly every inmate on death row ate bread the day before they committed their capital crime. That does not mean that eating bread causes crime.

Appeal to Pity

With this fallacy, the arguer tries to get people to agree with his or her conclusion by evoking pity and sympathy either with the situation or with the situation of some third party. By appealing to people's ability to sympathize with others, a powerful emotive force can be created. Unfortunately, however serious another person's problems are, that does not automatically make their claims any more logical. My sympathy for that situation does not create a reasonable basis for believing his or her claims. For example, "I really need this job since my grandmother is sick" or "I should receive an 'A' in this class. After all, if I don't get an 'A' I won't get the scholarship that I need." These appeals evoke emotions, but are not necessarily logical.

Straw-Man Fallacy

The arguer attacks an argument that is different from, and usually weaker than, the opposition’s best argument. To distort or misrepresent an argument one is trying to refute is called the straw man fallacy. In a straw man fallacy, the opponents argument is distorted, misquoted, exaggerated, misrepresented or simply made up. This makes the argument easier to defeat, and can also be used to make opponents look like ignorant extremists. The refutation may appear to be a good one to someone unfamiliar with the original argument.

Logical fallacies are errors of reasoning, errors which may be recognized and corrected by critical thinkers. Fallacies may be created unintentionally, or they may be created intentionally in order to deceive other people. The vast majority of the commonly identified fallacies involve arguments, although some involve explanations, or definitions, or other products of reasoning. Sometimes the term fallacy is used even more broadly to indicate any false belief or cause of a false belief. A fallacy is an argument that sometimes fools human reasoning, but is not logically valid.In his book, *Persuasion*: *Theory and Practice*, Kenneth Anderson writes,

"Logical appeals are powerful forces in persuasion. However, logic alone is rarely sufficient to yield persuasion. Desires and needs of receivers affect and determine what they will accept as logical demonstration. Thus, it is possible for one person to report that he or she is convinced by the logic used while another person remains horrified at the lack of logic presented."

You can have high quality evidence, but lead to incorrect conclusions because your argument has poor reasoning. You always want to create the "soundest" or most logical argument possible. And you also want to examine the logic of others to determine what fallacies might be evident.

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