

Persuasion

Persuasion: The Peripheral Route

- Example: Native American jewelry store
- Robert Cialdini: Influence: Science and Practice

Heuristic

- Short cut: Expensive=good
- Advantage: Saves time, energy, mental capacity
- Disadvantage: Can make costly mistakes.

Two routes to persuasion Petty & Cacioppo (1981)

- Peripheral route: automatic responses based on superficial cues (e.g., heuristics, moods)
- Central route: Requires thoughtful, effortful processing. Receiver must have the ability and motivation to take this route.

Central route to persuasion

- Attend to message
- Comprehend message
- Mentally rehearse message arguments and conclusions (establish a link between the issue and recommended responses)
- Leads to retention.

Yale Attitude Change Approach (Hovland): This view assumed that people are attentive, active, critical, thoughtful recipients of messages.

Most likely when people are motivated, involved w/issue

Peripheral route

- More common when people are not involved, not motivated to attend to the message, tired, distracted, etc.

- We'll focus on the peripheral route
 - Communicator
 - Message

Communicator

- Several characteristics make a communicator more persuasive
- Finding: National Enquirer or New England Journal of Medicine
- Credibility
 - Cues to expertise, competence (dress, milieu, title)
 - E.g., type of speech

Erickson et al., 1978

- Evaluate courtroom testimony
- IV: Witness speaks in straightforward or hesitating manner
- DV: Evaluations of the competence and credibility of the witness
- Results: Witnesses who used straightforward speech were rated as more credible and competent than those who used hesitant speech.

Communicator

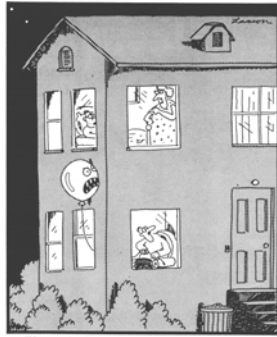
- Physical attractiveness
 - Halo effect: If attractive also viewed as more honest, talented, kind, intelligent, etc.
 - Handsome men on trial for criminal offenses received lighter sentences than those who were less handsome.
 - Attractive people are more likely to receive help.

Communicator

- Similarity
 - We like people who are similar to us.
 - IV: hippie or conservative dress
 - DV: Give dime to make a phone call
 - Results: Students more likely to give the dime when the experimenter was dressed in a style similar to their own.
 - Salespeople use this strategy. Examples?

Message

- Appeals to emotion
 - Fear or scare tactics
 - Religious groups
 - Drugs and AIDS
 - Dandruff, or bad breath, or ring around the collar.
 - Parents may use fear tactics



"Now go to sleep, Kevin — or once again I'll have to knock three times and summon the Flooding Head of Death."

Leventhal studies

- High fear-arousing messages lead to attitude change IF they also include specific instructions about how to avoid the danger.
- Driving safety films that recommend seatbelts are most effective when they show close-ups of broken bones and bloody accident victims than when they show controlled collisions involving dummies and then show person buckling up.

Positive emotions → persuasion

- Positive emotions also can influence our views. "luncheon technique"
- Razran: Studies found that subjects showed a greater preference for people and things they experienced while they were eating.

Positive emotions

- Razran "luncheon technique"
- IV : Presented some political statements while subjects were eating and other political statements while subjects were not eating.
- DV: Attitude change from Time 1 to Time 2
- Results: Subjects changed to agree more with the statements only if they had been presented while they were eating. (Pavlov, classical conditioning)

Case study: Jim Jones' and the Peoples Temple

- Extreme case of persuasion
- Convinced 911 followers to drink cups of a strawberry drink laced with tranquilizers, painkillers, and a lethal dose of cyanide.
- Why?

Background

- People's Temple: Cult based in the San Francisco area in the 70's and most of its recruits were poor and uneducated.
- Led by Jim Jones --who was seen as an all-knowing spiritual leader. Moved group to Guyana, South America.
- 1978 when a congressman (Leo J. Ryan) went to investigate the cult
- Ryan and 3 members of his fact finding team were killed by a Jonestown member as they tried to leave Jonestown by plane.
- Some had tried to leave w/Ryan. Jones paranoid (as was Koreshe). Commit revolutionary suicide. Die rather than participate in what felt was politically wrong. Refuse capitalism in support of socialism

Social psychological principles at work?

- Consistency and commitment
 - Make public commitment
 - Recruitment strategy



"You go on home without me, Irene. I'm going to join this man's cult."

- Foot-in-the-door technique: A two-step compliance technique in which an influencer prefaces the real request by first getting a person to comply with a much smaller request.

- Freedman & Fraser (1966)
- IV : First asked or did not ask to put a 3 inch square sign reading "Be a safe driver" in their window.
- DV: Whether agreed to place a large ugly billboard ("Drive Carefully) on their front lawn.
- Results: Only 17% agreed when the large request had not been prefaced by the smaller one, but 76% agreed when they had first complied with the smaller request.

- Jones used with followers
 - 10% tithe
 - Practice suicide drills

Communicator

- Charismatic
 - "psychic readings"

Emotional, vivid message

- Trust the all-knowing leader
- Be a part of the family

Audience

- Most susceptible include young (< 25 yrs.) and people facing a crisis/turning point

Group isolation

- Group isolation: The cult is isolated from other support systems; other members define reality.
- Principle of Social Proof (Cialdini) : People use the behavior of similar others as guidelines for what to do, especially in novel or ambiguous situations.

Nature of Persuasion

- Not inherently good or bad. Can be used in many ways – for positive, negative, or neutral ends.