psyc3122 lecture 7

Persuasion processes
Education, propaganda, censorship, advertising …

next week: Attitudes and Social Change

Today

- Persuasion
  - Information?
  - Yale
  - ELM & HSM
  - The role of groups
Information Processing

- It’s all about learning information
  - People have a motive for **accuracy** (focus on knowledge and instrumental functions of atts)
  - Ignorance & faulty knowledge -> bad decisions
  - **Persuasion through education / propaganda**
    - Safe sex
    - Money management
    - Tolerance
    - Handling your depression

But, 1) Counter-arguing

- Numerous processes involve biased IP
- In re persuasion, one = counter-arguing
  - “think about a topic” -> generate counter-arguments to opposing viewpoint (Petty & Cacioppo, 1977)
  - People forewarned about a counter-attitudinal persuasion generate counter-arguments, if they have time (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962)
- Similarly, mere thought effect (Tesser, 1978)
  - Even without persuasion attempt, thinking can lead to more extreme attitudes
  - Salient attributes of object (linked nodes) facilitate finding related attributes
  - Push -> consistency - dismissal of contradictory info
  - Likeable / dislikeable target -> “Think about target” vs. distractor task -> more vs. less extreme + and – (Sadler & Tesser, 1973)
Inoculation theory (McGuire, 1964)

- one- vs. two-sided arguments
  - Two-sided argument gives more resistance to counter-persuasion (Lumsdaine & Janis, 1953)
  - In resisting attack, presenting arguments for one side ("supportive defence") is as ineffective as no defence (McGuire, 1964)
  - presenting counter-arguments & rebutting them ("inoculation") produces high resistance to counter-persuasion (McGuire, 1964)
  - Self-generated counterarguments more effective over time (tho' passive more effective if attack = immediate) (McGuire, 1964)

2) Attribution research

- Content of message may be discounted or augmented as infer re why source said it
  - Pro-environmental message -> more P when SOURCE = described as business person vs. Green or AUDIENCE = described as business people vs. Greenies (Eagly, Wood, & Chaiken, 1978)
  - Gay rights message more persuasive from straight person than gay person (Maass, Clark & Haberkorn, 1982)

- Kelley (1967): Att ch depends on making attribution source said it b/c it was true (vs. p’d vested interests)
- Another reason why two-sided message can be more P is if promotes attribution of honesty
3) Defensive strategies

e.g., smoking

- denial: “there is no such evidence”
- bolstering: “I know that it is unhealthy, but it helps me to relax”
- Differentiation: “smoking is only bad when you smoke cigarettes without a filter”

Information Processing: Decline and Fall

- Point: research shows people **actively** look for and respond to information (learning, counter-arguing, making attributions) – not just passive
  - Active engagement with info promotes longer-lasting P and resistance to counter-P
- But often process info in **biased** manner that sustains or strengthens pre-existing views
- Knowledge of persuasive arguments is poorly correlated with attitudes
  - **When will “education” work?**
    - No pre-existing attitudes;
    - good relationship of source with target;
    - enjoyable / useful attitudes & behaviours that are consistent with goals of target;
    - surveillance & coercive power.
“The object of oratory alone is not truth, but persuasion.”
-Thomas Babington Macaulay

The Yale Group
- Social psychologists Hovland, Janis, & Kelley @ Yale in 50s and 60s
- “who says what to whom through what channel with what effect?”
Who: The source of communication
- Credibility, Attractiveness

What: The nature of the communication
- Is the message designed to influence?
- one-sided versus two-sided communication
- Primacy versus recency effects
The Yale Group

To whom: The nature of the audience
- Distraction
- Intelligence and self-esteem
- Age: more susceptible between 18 and 25

Persuasion = 4 processes:
- Attention to message, comprehension of content, rehearsal of arguments, yielding to message position

Problems..
1. Why do these processes work?
2. Very banal
3. Counter predictions just as easily true

Petty (1996) argues that problems 2 & 3 arise because researchers have tended to develop single-effect and single-process models of persuasion.

Petty & Cacioppo (1986: p. 2) [cited B&W p. 125]:
“Existing literature supported the view that nearly every independent variable studied increased persuasion in some circumstances, had no effect in others, and decreased persuasion in still other contexts”
A new organising principle: Degree of effort in processing

- Sometimes people accept or reject P
- Other times they ponder deeply
- “Dual process theories”
  - Elaboration Likelihood Model
    - Central route (scrutinize & evaluate arguments and relevant knowledge)
    - Peripheral route (use of cues such as source characteristics, conditioning, heuristics, social identification)
  - Heuristic Systematic Model
    ➢ Heuristic vs Systematic processing

Low effort processes, e.g.:
- Facial and bodily feedback (“my body is smiling! It must be funny!”)
- Mood heuristic
- Expertise heuristic
- Likeability heuristic
- Subjective ease of retrieving info
  - Even anticipated ease of retrieving info: generate 10 reasons to choose a BMW > Mercedes vs. 1 (Wanke et al., 1997)
Low Effort more likely w/

- Low need for cognition
- High time / situational demands
- Low processing ability
- Low motivation to engage
- Salience of heuristic cues
  - E.g., videotape, audiotape increase effect of source likeability compared to written message (Chaiken & Eagly, 1983)

High effort processes

- The methodological challenge: how can you tell if someone is processing deeply?
  - Develop strong vs weak arguments (pilot)
  - Use thought-listing protocol to see + and – responses
  - If more + and less – to strong argument, compared to weak, THEN processing = central / systematic
  - If respond equally to good and bad arguments, THEN processing = heuristic or peripheral
    - w/out effort, cannot process either strength of good arguments or weakness of bad arguments
  - More motivation / ability to “elaborate” or process “systematically” means bigger differences between strong and weak arguments (less m/a means smaller)
How it works

- Participants listen to strong or weak message, distracted or not. Distraction reduces ability to elaborate.
  - Distraction reduced P from strong message
  - Increased P from weak message
- Or we can look at motivation
  - If charismatic but meaningless lecturer rated > than meaningful, plodding lecturer then …

Four roles for variables -> persuasion:
1. Serve as a cue -> peripheral proc (e.g., hair colour)
2. Serve as a persuasive argument -> systematic proc (e.g., message content)
3. Increase or decrease the likelihood of elaboration
4. Direct bias in elaborative processing

The many effects of mood

- Mood as cue to heuristic processing (it’s sunny – life’s good)
- Mood directs bias in sys proc (primes congruent info, e.g. retrieve negative arguments in bad mood)
- Also: mood can influence amount of sys proc (see next slide)
  - Depends on attribution though
    - If interpret bad mood as response to P attempt, “turn off” message (no elaboration) (Bohner & Weinerth, 200, 2001)
Emotions and attitude change

* Emotions affect the route to persuasion.
(Bless, Bohner, Schwartz, & Strack, 1990)

Consequences of high effort processing

- Long-lasting attitudes, resistant to counter-P and more likely to be expressed in beh
  - Elaboration -> reduction in internal inconsistencies (mere thought effect) so more stable and strong attitude
  - Repeated activation -> accessibility
  - Self-perception of elaboration -> more attitude confidence
  - Practiced counter-arguments -> resist counter-persuasion
“A man who is very busy seldom changes his opinions.”

-- Friedrich Nietzsche

How do low and high effort procs work together?

- ELM: trade-off (as one up, other goes down)
- HSM: four possibilities
  - With ability & motivation, both increase P (additive)
  - With clearly defined attitude object, can get ceiling effect such that positive attitude from sys proc obscures effect of heuristic (attenuation)
  - If message is ambiguous (both strong and weak arguments), heuristic guides elaboration, directs bias
    - Credibility of source x clarity of msg phone study (fig 7.8)
  - If message is clear and opposite in direction to heuristic cue, can get biased elaboration in opposite direction (contrast effect)
    - Weak message from expert -> less positive attitudes than same message from non-expert
Comparing the HSM and the ELM

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HSM</th>
<th>ELM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motives</td>
<td>Accuracy, Defence (self-defining values &amp; beliefs), Impression</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship of low to high effort proc</td>
<td>Can co-occur, interact with high motivation and capacity</td>
<td>Trade-off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of low effort proc studied</td>
<td>Heuristic</td>
<td>Heuristic, conditioning, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When high effort?</td>
<td>Motivation, ability -&gt; “sufficient” confidence</td>
<td>Motivation, ability</td>
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The group approach

- Researchers in the social identity tradition criticise persuasion research that doesn’t take into account **identity**
- A lot of persuasion research treats group membership as a cue in low-effort processing
  - At low effort **discount** what outgroup members say and **augment** what ingroup says
  - At high effort process both equally based on strength of argument
- Group research also shows that discount outgroups routinely
The powerful effects of outsider status

- The difference heuristic (Terry & Hogg, 1996)
  - what outsiders do & want is irrelevant

- The constructiveness heuristic
  - Outsiders’ motives are suspect (Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002)
    - Criticism is dismissed (& disliked)
    - Experience / expertise is dismissed
    - Criticism balanced with praise is liked more but dismissed

- The loyalty heuristic (Hollander, 1964)
  - Insiders who distance themselves from the group are dismissed

- The polarization phenomenon (Louis & Taylor, 2002)
  - Outsider change attempt reinforces current behaviour
  - Rejecting what outsiders want & do affirms us as in control, distinct, & valued

The group approach

- But polarisation and attributions tell us that **systematic processing** should be involved!
- Group researchers argue that relevance of issue to salient identity is what triggers systematic proc / elaboration
  - Under accuracy motives this can produce decisions that reflect strength of argument
  - Under group ‘defence’ or ‘impression’ can get bias in processing
- Group-based trust and credibility mean message strength is differentially perceived from insider
- Salient identity and group norms can guide sys proc / elaboration so that message reinforces group-normative attitudes
Group identification can lead to systematic IP but is it always accurate?

- People asked to test the hypothesis that a student = extrovert vs introvert -> chose biased questions
  - “What do you like about parties?” vs “what factors make it hard for you to open up to people?”
- Groups of people with biased views who debate a topic often make more stereotyped judgements (Blake McKimmie)
  - Everyone brings up the stereotype congruent information b/c of the memory advantage which persuades others in group to stereotype
  - Plus a norm is established, which legitimises the stereotype
- Point: Deep thought – and systematic processing – are not the answer to group biases in response to communication messages
  - group membership and identity influence heuristic and systematic processing.

“Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.”

-- John Maynard Keynes
Five big frameworks in 20th c. persuasion research

- Information processing
  - Understand, process and remember msg \(\rightarrow\) P
- The Yale group
  - Attention, comprehension, rehearsal, yielding
- The ELM and HSM
  - Ability and motivation \(\rightarrow\) degree of effort
  - Variables can serve as cue \(\rightarrow\) low effort proc, argument in high effort proc, trigger for high effort, or bias direction of effortful proc
- The group approach
  - It's all about group identities and norms
  - Identity relevance is what motivates high effort processing
  - Outsider messages are ignored or discounted
  - Insider messages have to be prototypical
  - Going against this \(\rightarrow\) failed P

How does it work?

- Advertising
  - Generally contain only peripheral cues OR both cues and arguments
    - channels with low information processing ability (radio) or low motivation (TV)
    - Vs channels where assume motivation & ability (e.g., product web sites, print)
  - Exploit as many aspects of the research as they can identify
    - Similar demographic models, who are beautiful and happy; explicit info re benefits and social rewards; loud volume, music & colour & humour to manage attention and mood, ETC!
Subliminal messages:

Brean, 1958: at the movies:
   “Eat popcorn” and “Drink Coca Cola”

Results:
18% increase in drink sales and 50% increase in popcorn sale

Most people think subliminal messages are highly effective
1) $50 million subliminal self-help tapes
2) “RATS” by the Bush campaign

But: are subliminal messages really effective?

Resisting PC

Of 3,500 daily messages we see, 99% have no impact

Eye Contact Spectacles
In 90 minutes, the participant saw 250 adverts

From more than 100 brands (in 70 different formats).

The number recalled without prompting was

1
How can I persuade my significant other to accede to my whims?

- **IT DEPENDS**
- Assess ability and motivation of SO
  - picking distracted / focused time
  - introducing/reducing incentives to concentrate
- Assess existing attitudes
  - Nil – use education for ‘useful’ / ‘enjoyable’ atts
  - Pre-existing positive
    - increase self-awareness, induce repeated expression, etc.
    - use one-sided message
  - Pre-existing negative
    - try to change categorisation of attitude object – reframing, foot in the door
    - try to change links between target identity and attitude, identity and context, and attitude and context
    - use two-sided message

How can I persuade my SO?

- **Assess your relationship**
  - Maximise perceived similarity
    - Explicitly using “we” ; assert common interests & values
    - Implicitly (clothes, posture, attitude on irrelevant dimensions)
  - Express liking
  - Affirm shared group membership, relationship
    - If relevant to context & norms = congruent with desired attitude

- **Assess your message strength**
  - Weak messages : 
    - reduce awareness of decision, of vested interest
    - Use channel to maximise peripheral positive cues (e.g. FTF interaction if are liked, bright clothes), music, mood, weather
  - Strong messages : require ability but also motivation
    - reduce focus -> source if problem w/ credibility, liking etc.
    - change contexts to reduce salience of relationship (“neutral turf”)
    - change channels -> reduce cues (e.g. use written letters, notes)
Next week: **Attitudes and social change**  
(From prejudice to protest)  
– Reading: chapters 6-7 of B&W

In the **tutes** this week:  
– Results tute – starting work on Assignment 2