

## Comm 2367 Chapter 1 Notes

\*Persuasion - Just about anything that involves molding or shaping attitudes; the study of attitudes and how to change them.

### Persuasion: Constancies and Changes

- \* Sophists- Paraded through ancient Greece, charging money for lectures on public speaking and the art of political eloquence.
- \* Contemporary persuasion differs from the past in the following five ways:
  - \* The Sheer Number of Persuasive Communications has Grown Exponentially
  - \* Persuasive Messages Travel Faster Than Ever Before
  - \* Persuasion Has Become Institutionalized
  - \* Persuasive Communications Has Become More Subtle and Devious- Advertising no longer relies only on hard-sell appeals, but also on soft-sell messages that play on emotions.
  - \* Persuasive Communications is More Complex and Impersonal- Contemporary technologies make it possible for people to alter the content of persuasive messages, giving messages meanings they did not have and that the original communicator did not intend.

### Foundations of Persuasion

- \* Persuasion involves the persuader's awareness that he or she is trying to influence someone else; it also requires that the persuadee make a conscious or unconscious decision to change his mind about something.
- \* There is no evidence that animals have beliefs or attitudes.
- \* Persuasion has moral components; individuals choose to engage in morally beneficent or morally reprehensible actions.

### Defining Persuasion

- \* Persuasion- A symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviors regarding an issue through the transmission of a message in an atmosphere of free choice. There are five components of the definition:

- \* Persuasion is a symbolic process; takes time, consists of a number of steps, and actively involves the recipient of the message.
  - \* Involves the use of symbols; with messages transmitted primarily through language with its rich, cultural meanings.
- \* Persuasion involves an attempt to influence
  - \* Social Influence- The broad process in which the behavior of one person alters the thoughts or actions of another.
- \* People persuade themselves
- \* Persuasion involves transmission of a message whether it be verbal or nonverbal
- \* Persuasion requires free choice

### Persuasion Versus Coercion

- \* Persuasion deals with reason and verbal appeals, while coercion employs force
- \* Coercion- A technique for forcing people to act as the coercer wants them to act-presumably contrary to their preferences; usually employing a threat of some dire consequence.
- \* Persuasion and coercion are not polar opposites, but rather overlapping concepts.
- \* Terrorism is unquestionably a coercive act.
- \* Coercion occurs when the influence agent:
  - \* Delivers a threat of some consequence
  - \* Attempts to induce the individual to act contrary to her preferences
  - \* Deprives the individual of some measure of freedom or autonomy
- \* Persuasion occurs in an atmosphere of free choice.

### The Bad Boys of Persuasion

- \* Propaganda and manipulation are invoked to describe powerful instances of social influence
- \* Propaganda- A persuasive communication with which one disagrees and to which the individual attributes hostile intent.
  - \* Invoked to describe mass influence through mass media (persuasion is in mediated settings.)
  - \* Covert
  - \* Refers to instances in which a group has total control over the

transmission of information.

- \* Negative connotation

- \* Manipulation- A persuasion technique that occurs when a communicator disguises his or her true persuasive goals, hoping to mislead the recipient by delivering an overt message that belies its true intent.

### Understanding Persuasive Communication Effects

- \* Communications exert three different persuasive effects:
  - \* Shaping - Modeling a product towards a certain world view
  - \* Reinforcing - Reinforcing a position already held
  - \* Changing- Changing attitudes.

### Historical Review of Persuasion Scholarship

- \* Sophists- A group of teachers who decided to offer courses in rhetoric, as well as in other academic areas; persuasive communication is important.
- \* Plato- Truth is important
- \* There are dual approaches to thinking about persuasion:
  - \* One that emphasizes platonic thinking and cogent arguments
  - \* Focuses on style, oratory, and simpler persuasive appeals that date back to some of the Sophist writers.
- \* Aristotle- Wrote "Rhetoric" which is regarded as the most significant work on persuasion ever written. Discovered the rhetoric could be explained with scientific principles of persuasion. Proposed that persuasion had three main ingredients:
  - \* Ethos - The nature of the communicator
  - \* Pathos - Emotional state of the audience
  - \* Logos- Message arguments

### Origins of the Social Scientific Approach

- \* Began in the 1930's with research on attitudes
- \* Credible sources influence attitudes.
- \* Hovland and colleagues devised hypotheses, developed elaborate procedures to test predictions, employed statistical procedures to determine whether predictions held true, and reported findings in scientific journals that could be