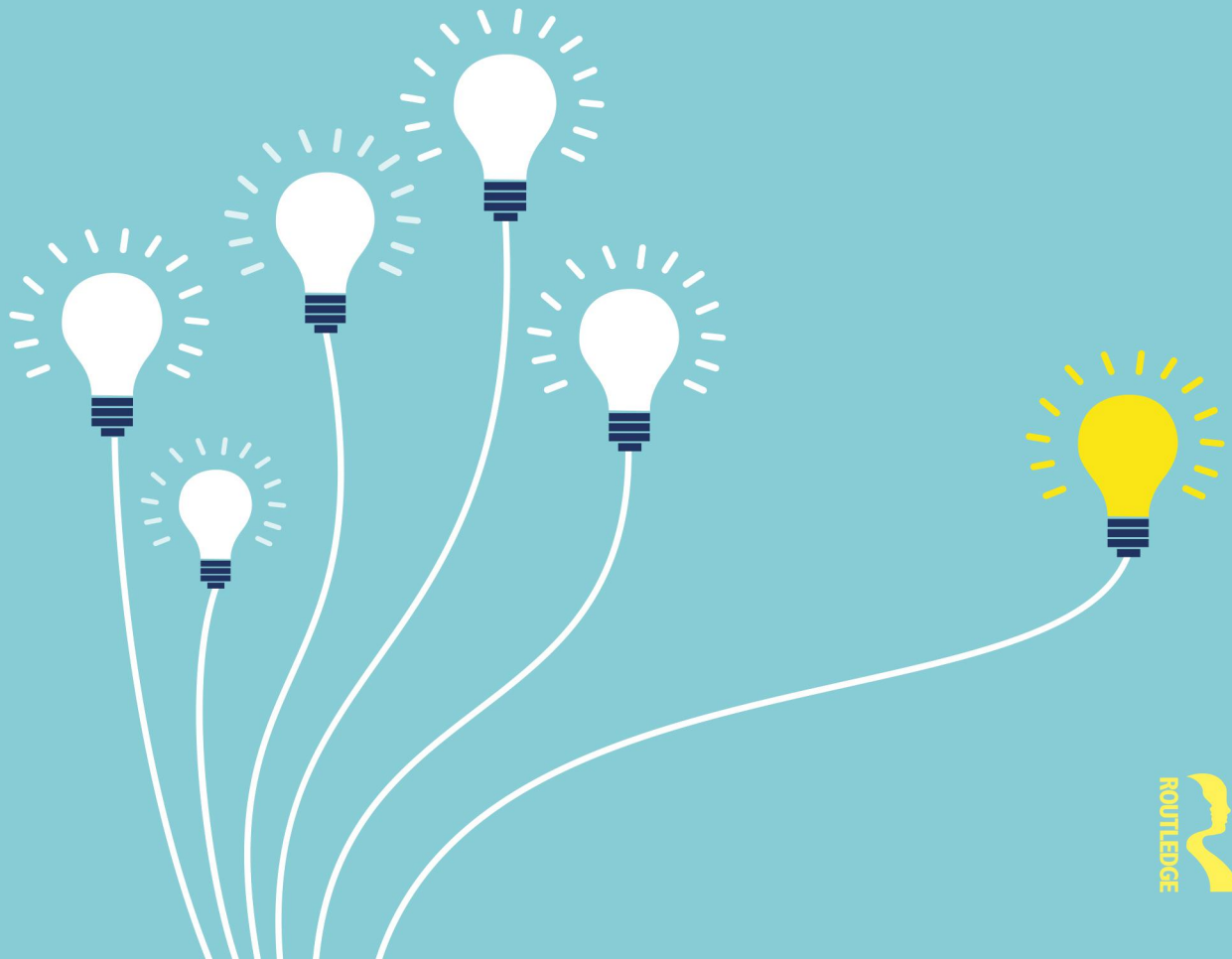
JEAN G. JONES, ANDI MCCLANAHAN
AND JOSEPH SERY

PERSUASION IN SOCIETY

Fourth Edition



ROUTLEDGE

PERSUASION IN SOCIETY

This fully updated fourth edition introduces readers to the rich tapestry of persuasive technique and scholarship, interweaving perspectives from rhetoric, critical theory, and social science and applying their insights to practical political, social, and business contexts.

This text examines current and classical theory through the lens of contemporary culture, encouraging readers to explore the nature of persuasion and to understand its impact in their lives. Employing a contemporary approach, it draws from popular culture, mass media, social media, advertising, political campaigns, and social movements to help readers become informed creators and consumers of persuasive messages. Case studies show how and why people fall for persuasive messages, demonstrating how persuasion works at a cognitive level. This new edition includes extended treatment of the ethics of persuasion, including opposing views on handling controversial issues in the college classroom, a new chapter on propaganda and ideology, and a greater focus on digital contexts and social media. Discussion questions, exercises, and key terms are provided for each chapter.

This textbook will be a valuable tool for students of communication, media studies, politics, psychology, and business and advertising.

Online resources for instructors include PowerPoint slides and a test bank.

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PREFACE

This book is the fourth in a series of textbooks on persuasion, each one building on the last, incorporating new knowledge and new theory about persuasion, while adapting to social and cultural changes in our increasingly globalized world. The book originated with Herbert Simons, Joanne Morreale, and Bruce Gronbeck in 2001. For the second edition published in 2011, Simons invited Jean G. Jones on board to continue the series, and then the third edition, published in 2017, saw a slight shift with Jones taking the helm. This edition—where Andi McClanahan and Joseph Sery were brought on to continue the series as Jones enjoys retirement—would not have been possible without the hard work and persistence of Simons and Jones.

The core ideas from *Persuasion in Society* (first, second, and third editions) by Simons, Jones, Morreale, and Gronbeck remain, with McClanahan and Sery moving the book forward in the fourth edition by updating examples, combining and rewriting chapters as needed, expanding on previous areas of research, and making it more reader friendly for instructors and students. Even with the addition of new authors, some key things have not changed, including its core convictions: that persuasion is about winning beliefs, not arguments; that communicators who seek to win belief need to communicate with their audiences, not at them; and that persuasion at its best is a matter of giving and not just getting, recognizing that they are most likely to give you what you want if they are convinced that what you propose also gives them what they want.

PART ONE

Understanding Persuasion

1 The Study of Persuasion

Today's **practice** of persuasion is mired in controversies that mirror those in ancient Greece almost 2,500 years ago, and they are unlikely to go away any time soon. At issue still are questions of truth, justice, ethics, and power. One of the earliest groups to study and teach the persuasive arts were known as the **sophists**. As their name continues to suggest, the sophists tended to be seen as sophisticated or worldly wise, but also, in some quarters, as "sophistic" in the negative sense of putting rhetorical power and effectiveness above truth and justice. The sophists made considerable fortunes for the coaching they offered to Athenians in the arts of oratory, but they got mixed reviews for their ethics. No Athenian was more scathing in his criticism than Plato, a student of Socrates who has earned a reputation in his own right as the "father" of Western philosophy.

Plato's primary way of sharing his views was through his Socratic dialogues, a series of scripted conversations in which the respected Socrates is cast as the questioner. In the dialogue on persuasion bearing the sophist Gorgias's name, the conversation centers upon the issue of whether **rhetoric**, the art of persuasion, is corrupt (Plato, 2006). Gorgias evokes Socrates' ire when he observes that the ability to impress an audience is the surest path to power:

> By the exercise of the ability [to persuade], you will have the doctor and the trainer as your slaves, and your man of business will turn out to be making money for another; for you, in fact, who have the ability to speak and convince the masses.
>
> *(2006)*

Gorgias's student, Polus, adds that power is the greatest good. Socrates affects surprise at these seemingly superficial claims. Is there not, he asks, a difference between true knowledge and mere belief? Socrates does get Gorgias to concede that power can be used for both good and ill, but Gorgias and his fellow sophists continue to argue that ultimate success comes through knowledge of persuasion. They even boast at one point that knowledge of anything else is unnecessary, arguing for the position that it is a worthy goal to simply create the appearance of knowing more than the experts.

The discussion continues, and Socrates will have none of it. Sophistic rhetoric, he maintains, is an art of hoodwinking the ignorant about the justice or injustice of a matter, without imparting any real knowledge. This kind of rhetoric does great damage in the law tribunal by making the worse appear the better argument and allowing the guilty to go free (Plato, 2006).

Years later, Plato's student, Aristotle, would offer a defense of rhetoric (Aristotle, 2004). Aristotle's response to Plato (and to Socrates) concedes the dangers of rhetoric but rejects

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their alleged inevitability. His arguments can be summarizes as follows: Rhetoric can be—indeed, often is—an instrument for giving effectiveness to truth. And truth is not always easy to come by. Still, those debating about issues of policy need eventually to come to a conclusion, and those brought before the court of law have the right to defend themselves. While philosophers like Socrates and Plato have the luxury of suspending judgment until they have arrived at universal principles, ordinary citizens will need help in their roles as decision makers in assessing alternative courses of action. In addition, as persuaders ordinary citizens will benefit from guidance in determining the best available means of persuasion for a particular audience or occasion. A solid understanding of rhetoric is therefore useful.

Both Plato's critique of rhetoric and Aristotle's defense of it contain a good deal of wisdom. Plato's analysis paved the way for critiques of today's sophistic practices in our corporate, legal, and political world that Plato himself could not have possibly imagined. Still, as you might have anticipated, this book gives Aristotle the edge in the debate with Plato. To be sure, persuasive speech can be used to deceive, mislead, exploit, and oppress. Clever persuaders can exploit what Aristotle called the "defects of their hearers." Unwise actions can be made to appear wise by use of sham arguments, known as *fallacies*, which appear reasonable on first impression but fall apart on close examination. All this is possible, as Plato claimed in the *Gorgias*, but it is not inevitable. Persuaders can serve the interests of their audiences at the same time as they serve their own interests; they can achieve power *with* others and not simply power *over* others (Burke, 1969; Grunig et al., 2002).

Insufficiently appreciated by Plato was Aristotle's key insight: Persuasion deals in matters of judgment, rather than matters of certainty. Matters of judgment cannot be settled by fact alone or by sheer calculation. On controversial issues, we expect honest differences of opinion. Even experts can legitimately disagree on what the facts are, which facts are most relevant, and, most important, what should be made of them.

For example, when researching the effect of sun exposure on humans, scientific studies often take diametrically opposed positions. One concludes that due to the links between sun exposure and skin cancer, we should not to leave the house without sunscreen on. At the same time, other studies show that we need to be exposed to the sun to be able to allow our bodies to absorb vitamin D (Jio, 2014). Or consider calcium in our diets. On the one hand, scientific studies proclaim that calcium is considered essential for maintaining strong bones and avoiding fractures, especially for older people. On the other hand, new studies are finding that calcium supplements may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease deaths (Kim, 2013). As these examples demonstrate, the scientists offer judgments, and in these cases, conflicting judgments. There are at least two sides to most stories, a point repeatedly emphasized by the sophists. This is surely true of the sophist–Platonist controversy and it is no less true today than in ancient Greece. Now as then, say public relations experts L'Etang and Pieczka, "There is no simple way of providing moral and intellectual comfort to practitioners. Consequently, the fundamental ethical questions have to be confronted daily in routine practice" (2006).

But just because persuasion deals in matters of judgment rather than certainty, Aristotle did not view this as an invitation to impulsive or random decision making or to perpetual indecision. Nor was Aristotle of the opinion that any decision was as good as any other, any argument as good as any other. As much as audiences might be taken in by clever deceivers, for Aristotle truth still had a natural advantage over falsehood, and logic a natural advantage over illogic—all other things being equal. The power of truth and logic is best appreciated when we agree to them reluctantly, as in the following case:

> At an inner-city junior high school for troubled students who had been booted out of other schools, an eighth-grade English class came to life when a student proposed that the school be put on trial for unfair rules. But the student who proposed the mock trial found himself in the role of the defense attorney for the administration, and he could not resist doing a convincing job in its behalf. Witness 1 for the prosecution was destroyed on cross-examination as he was caught over-generalizing. No, he admitted, the milk at the school is not always spoiled. In fact, it rarely is. Witness 2 was forced to concede that the school doesn't really enforce its rule against bringing candy to class. Then the defense attorney caught the prosecution off guard by pressing an objection: The prosecution had been leading the witness. And so it went. When the deliberations were concluded, the seven student judges voted 6 to 1 for the administration.
>
> *(Michie, 1998)*

Why Study Persuasion?

The study of persuasion has grown exponentially since Aristotle's day—from oral communication to written communication, from the verbal to the nonverbal, from the unmediated to the mediated, from the obviously intended to the non-obvious, and from the public arena to the study of all or virtually all symbolic action or interaction, including the study of persuasion about persuasion. Persuasion's increased scope places increased demands on practicing, analyzing, and understanding of persuasion. Let us consider each in turn.

Practice

Effective persuasion is a crucial component of personal and career success. But, complains business and political consultant, Frank Luntz:

> The average CEO cannot communicate their way out of a paper bag. The average CEO only knows facts, figures, statistics and what to say on a balance sheet. And so there's no resonance. There's no empathy. There's no understanding of the anger and frustration that some Americans feel towards corporate America … The CEOs, they just speak from their head and it's not coming from their heart.
>
> *(Luntz, 2004)*

And how important is persuasion in business? As Allied Signal's CEO recently explained,

> The day when you could yell and scream and beat people into good performance is over. Today you have to appeal to them by helping them to see how they can get from here to there, by establishing some credibility, and by giving them some reason and help to get there. Do all those things, and they'll knock down doors.
>
> *(Conger, 1999)*

Now, more than ever, persuasion is "the language of business leadership" (Conger, 1999).

The same is true of the professions. The "people professions"—law, sales, social work, etc.—could just as well be called "persuasion professions." Moreover, virtually all professional

associations require persuasion consultants. Within colleges and universities, the interdisciplinary nature of the subject is reflected by the variety of courses in different academic departments that bear upon it: "Public Opinion and Propaganda," "Argumentation and Debate," "Rhetoric and Composition," "Media Literacy," "Rules of Evidence in Criminal Law," "Strategic Communication," "Homiletics," "Perception Management," "Community Organizing," and many others.

Beyond the private and professional levels, you may be interested in working for social and political betterment. Alone or in groups, you may be seeking more funding for environmental issues, intervention in areas where famine and genocide are occurring, racial and gender equality, or greater participation by students in university governance.

Having a solid understanding of how persuasion functions helps you determine the means that are most appropriate for achieving your goals. It helps you evaluate situations and weigh options. For example, if you are seeking donations for Doctors Without Borders, you are confronted with a dilemma. Should you ask potential donors for much more than you expect them to give in the hopes of getting what you bargain for? Or, conversely, if you ask for a larger donation than you need, would you be risking outright rejection? And what if it is societal change you are after? Should you be a moderate who signs petitions or a militant who stages confrontations? Too often, these decisions are made purely on a gut level, without sober analysis of their consequences, and the study of persuasion aids you as you seek to make the better judgments.

Figure 1.1 Lawyers are an example of a "persuasion profession"—that is, employment that requires the use of persuasion. Credit: RichLegg / Getty Images

Analysis

Persuading others is one side of the persuasion equation; the other is responding intelligently and discerningly to the litany of message makers who compete for your attention, your agreement, your involvement, and your money. Much as we may practice persuasion, most of us spend more time on the receiving end of persuasive messages throughout the entire day.

Think about the last time you visited a department store or even a supermarket. Virtually every object there was market tested, advertised, and merchandized to get you to buy it. The objects in these stores do more than service your material needs; they're also symbols, especially for new generations of consumption communities in the United States and abroad. How often do we define ourselves and our friends by what we wear and what music we listen to and what shows we watch on television? (Barber, 1996; Law & Barber, 2007).

Persuasion is the engine of our market-driven global economy. In 1995, Deirdre McCloskey co-authored an influential study in the *American Economic Review* estimating that persuasion—by salespeople, teachers, politicians, lobbyists, lawyers, and others—made up a quarter of America's gross domestic product (McCloskey & Klamer, 1995). Since the publication of that influential study, that percentage has grown, as demonstrated when the same analysis was updated in 2013 by an Australian economist and showed that persuasion now makes up 30% of U.S. GDP (Antioch, 2013). In McCloskey's mind, this is a fact not to be feared, but to be faced, in that "a free society is a 'rhetorical society' where speech is used to persuade people about what to buy or whom to vote for, rather than violence" (McCloskey as cited in Wade, 2013). "People always say advertising is manipulation," says McCloskey. "But if the only alternative to persuasion is violence, how else are we going to decide what car to buy except by people trying to charm us?" (McCloskey as cited in Wade, 2013).

In our increasingly smaller but more complicated world, being an intelligent consumer of persuasive messages is not easy. Part of the problem is what psychologists call the "not me" phenomenon—otherwise known as the "third person" effect (Golan, 2008). Here is what the author of *The Power of Persuasion* has to say about "not me":

> People tend to have a curious illusion of invulnerability to manipulation—a belief that we're not as vulnerable as others around us. In part this illusion derives from the subtlety of clever operators who make it hard to see that you're being manipulated. In part, it feeds off another "normal" illusion—that we're more capable and, so, better defended than other people. The illusion of invulnerability is a comforting notion for moving forward in an unpredictable and dangerous world. Unfortunately, however, the more immune we feel, the less likely we are to take precautions and, as a result, the more susceptible than ever we become.
>
> *(Levine, 2003)*

When we combine the "not me" phenomenon with the contemporary problem of message density, we see that the problem is compounded. Today, persuasive messages are presented to us at dizzying speeds. Terabytes of information are available at the click of a mouse. If we believe we are invulnerable to the persuasive impact of the messages we receive, and combine that with the number of messages we take in each day, we see that without a solid understanding of how persuasion functions, we are vulnerable indeed.

Under the best of circumstances, persuasive messages present us with a dilemma. On the one side is the need for human connection, as we don't want to go through life cynically distrusting every communicative act we encounter. On the other hand, there is quite obviously a need for vigilance in the face of unscrupulous persuaders; there is every reason to weigh and evaluate controversial assertions even when they emanate from those we trust. The study of persuasion provides us with the analytic tools we need to find a balance.

Understanding

We humans are both the creators and products of our societies in a never-ending cycle. The movements and campaigns of persuasion that our forebears once waged helped produce the very institutions, belief systems, and cultural norms that now govern or at least guide our thoughts and behaviors. To be sure, historical change does not occur through persuasion alone, and in fact, a recent study of presidential influence brought news of how often American presidents have ruled by decree (Howell, 2003). Most often it is by a combination of forms of influence that major change occurs, not least the power of the "carrot" (**inducements**) and the "stick" (**coercion**) (Simons, 1972). Still, it is primarily by persuasion that ideas are introduced and hearts and minds changed.

Among the cultural truisms that people take for granted are those which at one time or other were the subject of considerable controversy. Americans are no longer British colonists. What's more, as much as they would like to think of themselves as members of the world community, they find it difficult if not impossible to transcend their American identities. Their economic system, republican form of government, commitments to freedom of speech, conceptions of themselves as a special people, and even their idea of nationhood can be traced to efforts of persuasion from centuries past.

We can begin to understand how discourse functions to create new and accepted ways of viewing the world by examining our own era, noticing the political and social issues that we confront, the means we employ to deal with them, and the language used to frame them. Looking back over the recent history of American politics, we can recall some of the rhetorical catchwords that persuaded us to create new realities:

- "change we can believe in" that led us to "hope" that the ouster of one political party would transform our world,
- "compassionate conservatism" that persuaded us to implement sweeping educational change so that "no child will be left behind,"
- the "war on terror" from which we did not "cut and run," because we wanted to have a "Mission Accomplished,"
- "global warming" fears that persuaded some of us to "go green," while others resisted the notion of "man-made climate change," and
- concerns about "illegal aliens," or should we say "undocumented workers," that persuaded us to change our attitudes toward immigration policy.

In all of these instances, the rhetoric is richly metaphorical, and each example takes on a reality as social truth. Each persuasive construction had real-world policy ramifications for the citizenry: the first African American president was elected, soldiers were sent to fight in wars, our public schools were transformed as they incorporated regular testing to measure student

progress, car manufacturers thrived or declined as buyers sought cars that made lesser impacts on the environment, and we constructed walls on our borders to manage issues of immigration.

But it is not just in issues of public policy that rhetoric has had an influence. Rhetorical constructions also helped us understand the changes in our day-to-day lives. Americans have become far more cosmopolitan, and increasingly dependent on the new information technologies. "Spanglish" is now a de facto American language, social networks are flourishing on the Internet, the "blogosphere" has proliferated, and nearly everyone has "friended" somebody else. Then, as if unnoticed, "predatory lenders" have caused various "bubbles" to burst, leading to a worldwide "meltdown," with calls for a "bailout," antagonism between "Wall Street" and "Main Street," prompting most Americans to vote for "change."

In addition to knowledge of the role of persuasion in society, there is considerable benefit in coming to grips with the psychological dynamics of persuasion. From an examination of persuasion at work, one gets a better understanding of how human beings attend to stimuli, how they order their environment, how thought and emotion interact. Psychological theories of attention, perception, learning, motivation, emotion, etc., have in turn contributed greatly to our understanding of persuasion. Several chapters in this book bring psychological theories to bear upon the subject.

Synthesis: Putting Together Rhetorical Practice, Analysis, and Understanding

Understanding, practice, and analysis are closely interrelated. In order to become a discriminating consumer of persuasive messages, you need to be aware of the techniques that others may use to influence you. In order to persuade effectively, you need to anticipate how consumers of persuasive messages are likely to respond. And in order to respond perceptively or persuade effectively, you need to have a general understanding of the nature of the persuasive process and the role of persuasion in society. By the same token, our experiences as persuaders and persuadees may help us to understand in small ways how persuasion has shaped human choices and destinies during the major events of history, and we may also come to a better understanding of the contemporary political process.

In some respects this text is a handbook. It provides principles by which you may better persuade or more critically react to persuasive communication by others. In addition, it is designed to provide insights about persuasion as it functions to shape your world, independent of whether these insights lead you to change your rhetorical practices or not. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this book is designed to help you understand the ways in which you can make an impact on your world. Ultimately, to seek to correct injustice or improve the lives of others requires the ability to analyze rhetoric, to understand how persuasion works to create new socially constructed "truths," and to create ethically appropriate persuasive messages.

Methods of Studying Persuasion

Depending on individual goals, the student of persuasion may choose among a wide variety of research methods. Although scholars these days rely heavily on social-scientific methodologies, for almost all of its long history, the field of persuasion has been the province of the humanities. The ancient Athenians' initial method of instruction remains helpful to this day; it involved learning from role models and practice, practice, practice. Every Athenian citizen knew Pericles' funeral oration by heart. They also knew the legend of Demosthenes' struggle to

overcome a stuttering affliction by practicing aloud with pebbles in his mouth. Out of practice came theory, the systematizing of lessons learned into generalized concepts and principles. Drawing on the experiences of those who practiced the art, and on the critical judgments of trained observers, Aristotle and others fashioned rhetorical principles that have withstood the test of time remarkably well.

Method One: Rhetorical Criticism

Contemporary **rhetorical criticism** grew out of classical rhetorical theory, but has moved well beyond it to include studies of forms and genres unimagined by the ancients. Consider these sample research questions about rhetorical artifacts:

What made Lincoln's Gettysburg Address so memorable? Why is one commentator so much more persuasive than another? If I were to give a speech all over again, how would I do it differently? If I could have my choice, which celebrity would I most like to have representing my anti-bullying campaign?

Or consider these questions concerning the words individuals speak: Since stylistic simplicity is so highly valued in our culture, how is it that Martin Luther King, Jr. is considered such a memorable speaker while having used a highly ornate style? Why is being a "liberal" viewed by most Americans as an elite lifestyle whereas being "conservative" is associated with small-town values? What are the discursive dilemmas presidents face in trying to instill public confidence in a shaky economy and which of their strategic alternatives is likely to work best in a recession?

Each of these questions and thousands more like them constitute legitimate starting points for critical analyses of rhetorical happenings. Critics or analysts (we use the terms interchangeably) may be motivated by outrage at an apparent misuse of language or logic or a pretension to objectivity that is belied by the facts. Their critical impulse may spring from a pragmatic interest in persuading others or in determining how others attempt to persuade them. They may have an irreverent streak and thus be inclined to debunk claims and claimants to universal truth. They may appreciate a rhetorical effort and want to know why it was so admirable. Or they may simply be puzzle-solvers by temperament who enjoy unraveling some of the mysteries of persuasion. In each case, they will attempt to make sense of the rhetorical act or event, either as an object of interest in its own right or because it helps illuminate some larger issue, problem, or theoretical question. Criticism serves consummatory functions when it stops at evaluation or explanation of a rhetorical effort. It performs instrumental functions when it focuses on persuasive discourse as case-study material in service of a larger end such as theory building or theory testing. Like the objects of their analyses, critics are themselves persuaders with cases to present and defend. We may not entirely agree with the analysis, but we must respect it if the case has been well argued.

This book provides numerous examples of rhetorical criticism. Today, analysis of persuasion often is incorporated within a more inclusive term, critical studies, to refer to criticism of all kinds bearing on persuasion. Studies of recurrent forms or patterns of discourse by linguists and sociologists, semiotic analyses of language-like objects and symbolic actions, studies in nonverbal communication, analysis by feminist theorists and scholars examining the intersections of race and culture, and more all contribute to our understanding of persuasion. Here we provide two examples of rhetorical criticism, the first of a course catalog description, the second an illustration of dilemma-centered analysis focused on the task of sounding confident about a shaky economy but not overconfident.

Case #1: A Rhetorical Analysis of the College Catalog

> **Catalog Description**
>
> COM 390R Seminar in Contemporary Rhetorical Criticism. May be repeated for credit when topics vary. Semester topics have included dramatistic criticism, content analysis, and methodologies for movement studies. Prerequisite: Upper-Division Standing.

Hart (1997) analyzed this seemingly ordinary message to make two points. First, we are all experts of a sort on persuasion, having been exposed each day to a sea of rhetoric. As voracious consumers of messages, we develop *implicit* knowledge of their hidden meanings, undisclosed motives, and subtle strategies. We know, says Hart, that this is a catalog description; we would recognize it anywhere and be able to distinguish it from a chili recipe or a love letter or the lyrics to a rock song. We know, too, that descriptions such as these are not always trustworthy. The prose bears the marks of having been funneled through a bureaucracy. Before signing up for COM 390R, perhaps we ought to check with peers or with the instructor who will actually teach the course.

Hart's (1997) second point is that even so simple a message repays close examination. For example, a good deal about persuasion can be learned by attending to its style. For one thing, the course description is telegraphic: Incomplete sentences and abnormal punctuation patterns suggest a hurried, business-like tone, a message totally uninterested in wooing its reader. So, too, are its reasoning patterns telegraphic. Concepts such as "seminar," "credit," and "prerequisite" are never explained. The language is also formidable: excessive use of jargon, polysyllabic words, and opaque phrases (e.g., COM 390R).

Also revealing is what is not found in the text. Nobody runs or jumps here. No *doing* has been done. The absence of verbs suggests institutionalization, hardly what one would expect from what is essentially a piece of advertising. But this is a special sort of advertising, advertising without adjectives. And much else is missing. There are no extended examples to help the reader see what the course will be like, no powerful imagery to sustain the student's visions of wonder while standing in the registration line, no personal disclosure by the author to build identification with the reader. It is almost as if this message did not care about its reader, or, for that matter, even care about itself. It does nothing to invite or entice or intrigue (Hart, 2004).

As Hart's analysis demonstrates, rhetorical criticism is not simply about studying great speeches or persuasive essays, and the humanistic study of persuasive discourse is no longer the exclusive province of self-styled rhetoricians.

Case #2: A Rhetorical Analysis of Discourse: Shaky Economy

Introduced here is a dilemma-centered framework for rhetorical criticism called the **Requirements-Problems-Strategies (RPS) approach** (Lu & Simons, 2006; Simons, 2007, 2000, 1996, 1994, 1970). These in brief are its basic concepts and principles:

Requirements (R)

By dint of their roles and of the situations they confront, persuaders are rarely free agents. The "demands" or "pressures" on persuaders constitute rhetorical *requirements*.

Problems (P)

Oftentimes these requirements come in the form of cross-pressures, necessitating difficult rhetorical choices. To the extent that these conflicting requirements are recurrent and predictable, they can assist the critic in understanding the persuader's rhetorical *problems*.

Strategies (S)

In response to problems, and in an effort to fulfill requirements, political actors devise rhetorical *strategies*. Not uncommonly, the strategies they devise create new problems even as they ameliorate others. Besides posing problems, situations may present political actors with *opportunities*. Strategizing involves calculations about how to realize goals, minimize problems, and exploit opportunities.

Particularly as persuaders seek to thread their way through difficult dilemmas, they must be practiced at what Lyne (1990) calls the "art of the sayable." Consider, for example, the difficulties the Obama administration faced when it inherited a recession that threatened to become a full-fledged depression. No one in the administration wanted to fuel the pessimism that comes with loss of jobs, homes, and credit, because optimism about the future is key to lending and spending; it is essential in getting a market economy back on track. Neither did they want to paint too rosy a picture out of fear of a boomerang effect, as President Bush had done with Iraq in declaring "Mission Accomplished." So, as repairs were gradually introduced into the economy, the administration sought ways to bolster confidence incrementally. "Glimmers of hope" were upgraded to "signs of recovery." Warning that "real recovery is months, if not years, ahead," Obama reported that "the gears of our economic engine do appear to be slowly turning once again" (Sanger, 2009).

> "There's a kind of artistry to this, isn't there?" said Robert Dallek, the presidential historian best known for chronicling how Lyndon Johnson, the consummate politician, never led the public out of its view that everything was falling apart. "You don't want to come out and say the recession is over. You want to do a version of Churchill's line about how this isn't the end, or the beginning of the end, but rather the end of the beginning."
>
> *(Sanger, 2009)*

Rhetorical criticism, ultimately, seeks to examine how symbols are used to shape the audience. As these two cases display, the scope of artifacts worthy of study is vast: A critic can study a political speech, but might just as likely study a billboard, a song, a work of art, or a film. For example, the rhetorical critic would find it worthwhile to study what is communicated to girls and boys in the Disney film *The Little Mermaid*, where the star is a beautiful female who cannot walk, one who can only find love and mobility by giving up her voice. Given all of the possibilities, we strongly urge that you try your hand at doing rhetorical criticism, if for no other reason than that the act of applying principles covered in this book will help you to better assimilate them.

Method Two: Social-Scientific Approach

While the humanities in general and rhetorical analysis in particular contribute a great deal to our understanding of rhetoric, the more dominant approach to scholarly research on

persuasion today involves the use of social-scientific methods. Although the contributions of **humanists** and social scientists are in many ways complementary, important differences may also be noted. First, many of the issues of concern to humanists are outside the pale of scientific inquiry. Questions of ethics, beauty, rhetorical artistry, etc., may be deemed important by social scientists, but they recognize also that such questions are not answerable by scientific methods. Second, whereas humanists retain faith in the subjective impressions of sensitive observers, social scientists attempt to replace personal judgments with impersonal, objective methods. Using what is sometimes referred to as the behavioral approach, social scientists subject theories and hypotheses to rigorous empirical tests. Third, humanists tend to regard persuasion as a highly individualized art and tend to be suspicious of extrapolations from scientific research to judgments about how human beings ought to persuade. Social scientists, by contrast, insist that their methods yield reliable generalizations which can be used by would-be persuaders.

Social scientists have developed an array of methodologies useful in the study of persuasion, including focus group interviews, surveys, polls, and quantitative content analysis. Campaign decisions are often made based on focus group research and then tested for their effectiveness based on polls and surveys. These days, participants in the test-marketing of a newly designed campaign advertisement may be hooked up to a brain scanner the better to trace reactions to the ad through the brain's predominantly cognitive and emotional neural pathways (Heath & Heath 2007; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Westen, 2007).

For example, in one study, a group of 38 military veterans or active duty military who were now students at two different Nevada colleges participated in focus groups that have been

Figure 1.2 Focus groups are used to get immediate feedback based on participant experience and feedback. Credit: SDI Productions / Getty Images

designed to examine the college experiences and the attitudes of this population, with a goal toward creating a college climate that would enhance the success rates for military students. The groups were held over a number of sessions, with no more than eight participants per group, and the results brought varied perspectives that would likely not have come up through other forms of feedback-seeking activities such as surveys. While some of the results were to be expected (e.g., the older veteran students felt they had less in common with traditional, non-military students), there were some unexpected findings. Perhaps most interesting was that the veterans expressed a preference for anonymity, not wearing their uniforms on campus or identifying themselves as being part of the military. In fact, they did not want special attention:

> Several students reported that they were often singled out by faculty (once they knew of their military background) to speak for veterans in general or that they were called upon to make comments or be used as an example. The majority of student veterans said these in-class experiences made them very uncomfortable and made a bad impression on their non-veteran student counterparts by making them appear to be seeking attention and by highlighting how different they were from other students.
>
> *(Gonzales, 2013)*

Thanks to the military focus groups, the colleges were able to develop policies that were cost effective and useful, including things such as special training for faculty and special orientations that did not cause military members to spend time considering things that are useful to 18-year-olds, but not to experienced soldiers (Gonzales, 2013). In developing generalizations about the effectiveness of various types of persuasion, social scientists rely for the most part on research experiments conducted under carefully controlled conditions. This approach is *behavioral* in the sense of treating human judgments and actions as in some sense akin to the predictable, controllable behavior of lower-order animals in the laboratory. Social scientists systematically investigate variations in source (that is, the persuader), message, medium, audience, and context—in who says what to whom, when, where, and how. These communication factors are known as ***independent variables***.

Determining their effects on **dependent variables** is the object of research. As McGuire has put it,

> The independent variables have to do with the communication process; these are the variables we can manipulate in order to see what happens … The dependent variables … are the variables that we expect will change when we manipulate the independent variables. Taken together, the independent and dependent variables define what we might call the "communication-persuasion matrix."
>
> *(McGuire, 1978)*

Consider, by way of illustration, the following generalizations about the psychology of persuasion. Which do you think are true? Which are false? Which are so muddled or so simplistic that you simply cannot judge their veracity?

1. The best way to persuade people to stop a practice harmful to their health is to combine strong fear appeals with concrete and convincing recommendations.
2. It is generally effective to present both sides of an issue, making sure to indicate why you

think the weight of the evidence supports your position.

3 Because opposites attract, it is generally best when using testimonials in advertisements to present sources as unlike the intended audience as possible.
4 The more you pay people to argue publicly for a position contrary to their own values, the more likely they are to change their values.
5 Very intelligent people are more likely to be persuaded upon hearing an argument than are people of very low or moderate intelligence.
6 Vivid descriptions of a single problem are nearly always more impressive than comprehensive statistics.
7 The only rule about how to persuade is that there are no rules.

Not all the generalizations can be true, for if Rule 7 is correct, the others are not, and if any of the others are true, then Rule 7 is not.

There is something to be said for Rule 7. It could be argued that persuasion is too much an individual thing. It is too subject to variations in goals, media, contexts, audiences, and subject matter. Although persuasion may be fun to speculate about, it is impossible to generalize about with any degree of reliability. Many humanists subscribe to Rule 7. Rule 7 is probably wrong, however, or at least in need of modification.

Although there are no ironclad rules that apply to all individuals in all situations, it is possible to formulate general guidelines for persuaders that typically apply. Often, it is necessary to factor in variations in goals, media, audiences, and the like in formulating generalizations. For example, Rule 1 is generally on target, except that people with low self-esteem tend to become overwhelmed by strong fear appeals—at least until they are repeatedly assured that help for their problem is truly available. Especially for them, clear, specific, and optimistic instruction on how, when, and where to take action is essential (Leventhal et al., 2005).

For reasons that will be discussed in subsequent chapters, Rule 2 is generally accurate, at least as applied to intelligent, well-educated audiences, especially those who are undecided or in disagreement with your position. Rule 3 should probably be marked false. Sources perceived as similar to their audiences tend to be regarded as far more attractive (e.g., likable, friendly, and warm) than sources seen as dissimilar. Rule 4 is generally false, and for reasons that may seem counterintuitive (see Chapter 2). Rule 5 is generally false as well; moderately intelligent people tend to be most persuadable. As for Rule 6, the generalization tends to hold for most message recipients, although the combination of vivid examples and comprehensive statistics tends to be even more powerful (Brock & Green, 2005).

But experiments testing for the effects of the independent variables in Rules 1 through 6 do not always yield the same results. Life is complicated, and persuasion is especially so. Fortunately, a statistical technique called ***meta-analysis*** can be used to compare studies of the same or similar variables and to reconcile apparent inconsistencies (Cooper et al., 2009). Ensuing chapters summarize findings from a number of these meta-analyses and report on social-scientific theories that attempt to make sense of behavioral research findings and guide the search for new knowledge. From research of this kind, scholars have become better able to understand the dynamics of persuasion and to provide useful advice to persuaders. Still, we would caution readers not to apply behavioral research findings formulaically, the way a cook uses a recipe. Our hope is not only that you will familiarize yourselves with these findings, but that you will also benefit from personal practice and observation, from analysis of the communication of others, from reading humanistic studies of rhetorically significant public events, and

from an examination of other social science research that may apply more specifically to the particular rhetorical problems you face. (There is, for example, an extensive body of sociological literature on techniques of community organizing, a body of political science research on electoral campaign strategies, and so on.)

Moreover, as you become more familiar with the procedures used in behavioral research on persuasion, we urge that you interpret findings critically. From time to time we have offered our own criticisms, especially of the tendency of behavioral researchers to ignore situational factors.

Finally, we urge once again that you immerse yourselves in the details of the unique situation confronting you, carefully analyzing your own goals, your audience, your subject matter, and the context in which you will be communicating. Behavioral research provides a rough guide to practice, but it is only one means for acquiring rhetorical sensitivity—and a limited one at that.

Toward a Definition of Persuasion

How might we define persuasion and distinguish it from "non-persuasion"? A useful way to construct a definition is to look for common characteristics in what language specialists refer to as *paradigm cases*—examples from ordinary discourse that almost everyone would agree are instances of persuasion. Probably all of us would agree that the following are paradigm cases:

- a politician presenting a campaign speech to attract votes;
- an advertiser preparing a commercial for presentation on television;
- a legislator urging support for a bill;
- peaceful picketers displaying placards to passers-by;
- a trial lawyer's summing up a case to a jury;
- a parent advising a child to dress more neatly;
- a college representative recruiting student applicants;
- a newspaper editorial complaining about anti-inflationary measures;
- a minister imploring parishioners to respect human dignity;
- an essayist decrying American materialism;
- a student appealing to a professor for a makeup exam.

From the foregoing cases it is possible to identify common elements that constitute defining characteristics of persuasion.

Human Communication

Each of the above cases involves acts of human communication, whether verbal or nonverbal, oral or written, explicit or implicit, face-to-face or mediated through contemporary technology. Occasionally, "persuasion" is used metaphorically to refer to nonhuman acts, as when we say, "The severity of the blizzard persuaded me to go indoors." For the most part, however, the term is restricted to exchanges of messages between human beings.

Attempted Influence

To influence others is to make a difference in the way they think, feel, or act. All of the paradigm cases given above involved attempted influence. The politician attempted to attract votes; the legislator sought passage of a bill; the student sought permission to take a makeup exam. In

some contexts it may be appropriate to refer to "persuasion" as an effect already produced by messages, whether intended or not. For example, we might say, "She persuaded me without even trying." So long as the context is made clear, this deviation from dominant usage need not bother us greatly. Our conception of persuasion remains virtually the same.

Modifying Judgments

Message recipients—otherwise referred to here as receivers, audiences, or persuadees— are invited to make a judgment of some sort. Is this politician trustworthy? Does that legislator's proposal warrant public support? Whom should I believe: the prosecution or the defense? Is it really so bad to want material comforts?

The cases of persuasion noted above involve no complex mixture of motives, no masking of persuasive intent, and no questions about whether they are attempts at persuasion or some other form of influence. If persuasive intent is not apparent from the context, it is made obvious by what is said and how it is said. These paradigmatic examples of persuasion rely, at least in part, on linguistic or paralinguistic (language-like) messages to promote an image, a point of view, or a proposed action of some sort.

In general, when the term *persuasion* is used in this book, it is with the paradigm cases in mind. Persuasion is defined as *human communication designed to influence the judgments and actions of others*. In these respects it differs from other forms of influence. It is *not* the iron hand of torture, the stick-up, or other such forms of *coercion*. Nor, in its purest sense, is it the exchange of money or other such *material inducements* for actions performed by the person being influenced. Nor is it pressure to conform to the group or to the authority of the powerful.

Addressed as it is to choice-making individuals, persuasion *predisposes others but does not impose*. It affects their sense of what is true or false, probable or improbable; their evaluations of people, events, ideas, or proposals; their private and public commitments to take this or that action; and perhaps even their basic values and ideologies. All this is done by way of communication. According to St. Augustine more than 1,500 years ago, the fully influenced persuadee

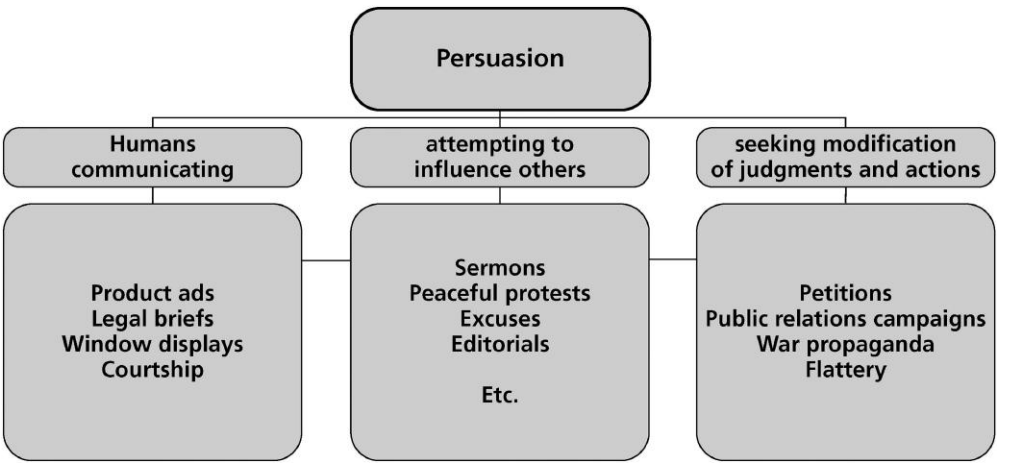

Figure 1.3 Defining features of persuasion.

> likes what you promise, fears what you say is imminent, hates what you censure, embraces what you command, regrets whatever you build up as regrettable, rejoices at whatever you say is cause for rejoicing, sympathizes with those whose wretchedness your words bring before his very eyes, shuns those whom you admonish him to shun … and in whatever other ways your high eloquence can affect the minds of your hearers, bringing them not merely to know what should be done, but to do what they know should be done.
>
> *(Quoted in Burke, 1950/1969, p. 50)*

As the above indicates, not all attempts at persuasion fall inside a neatly delineated core. There are many gray areas of persuasion, the so-called borderline cases in which the intent to persuade is not so clear. Seldom are persuaders fully aware of everything they are saying or doing when communicating a message, and what they communicate may have effects—welcomed or unwelcomed—beyond those they intended. Moreover, the intent to influence another person's judgments is often masked, played down, or combined with other communication motives.

We should note that persuasion is not always aimed directly at modifying attitudes or altering overt behavior. On any one occasion, in fact, its aim may be to modify a single belief or value. Thus, the trial lawyer in our example had only one goal, and that was to modify the jury's beliefs about the defendant's guilt or innocence; the minister focused solely on the value of human dignity.

For the most part, our use of the term "persuasion" is confined in this book to paradigm cases. That being so, few should question our use of the term or the definition we assigned to it. But paradigm cases do not constitute the whole of persuasion. Persuasion is practiced by advertisers, lawyers, politicians, religious leaders, and their ilk, but also practiced by others who might not ordinarily be thought of as persuaders. Is it appropriate, for example, to refer to the activities of scientists addressing other scientists as "persuasion"? Can our definition be applied to newscasters and educators or to poets and dramatists? And if representatives of professions such as these are labeled as "persuaders," should this demean their status?

Summary

Rhetoric, the study of persuasion, has had an uneven past. Conceived by the ancient Greeks as the prime instrument of democracy, it has at other times been fashioned for ignoble purposes. Few people are unambivalent in their feelings about persuasion; none can do without it.

The study of persuasion serves three vital functions. First, it informs persuasive practice, enabling would-be persuaders to maximize their opportunities for social control. Second, it enables us to become more intelligent and discriminating consumers of persuasive communications. Third, and most important, it adds to our understanding about human psychology and the individual's place in society and culture. A communication practice, persuasion is intended to influence the judgments and actions of others but always by giving them the power of decision. Thus, persuasion predisposes but does not impose.

In paradigm cases, the intent to persuade is clear-cut; in the gray areas of persuasion, it is not. Although in this text, persuasion may sometimes be treated as an effect, whether intended or not, for the most part, it is referred to as a practice. Thus, persuasion is defined as *human communication designed to influence the judgments and actions of others.*

Persuasion is of vital importance in any society but especially in a democratic, market-driven society. In an age of global economics, increasing democratization, and digital platforms that grant users unprecedented access to enormous audiences, it may be only a slight exaggeration

to say that one fourth of the world's GDP is persuasion. Your most immediate interests in persuasion are probably in mastering the art and science of persuading and also in becoming a more savvy persuadee. For these purposes, *Persuasion in Society* shifts back and forth between the two perspectives. It also seeks to prompt us to thoughtful consideration of the ethics of persuasion no matter which side of the persuasion equation we are on. It asks this question: Should we be forgiving ourselves as persuaders for practices we would condemn as persuadees?

The study of persuasion benefits from its being a branch of the humanities (here known as *rhetoric*) and also from its being an area of research in the social sciences. The former brings together rhetorical scholars (rhetoricians), media analysts, and other close "readers" of persuasive acts and artifacts in a **critical studies approach** to the study of persuasion. From these critical analyses may come assessments of a persuader's rhetorical artistry, logic, or ethics. Criticism is also tied to theory building and theory testing.

In addition, behavioral research contributes a great deal to what is known about how to persuade. Using experiments, social scientists test hypotheses about what works under controlled conditions. Subjected to systematic investigation are variations in source, message, medium, audience, and context—in "who says what to whom, when, where, and how." Determining the effects of these independent variables on message recipients' judgments and actions is the object of the research. Behavioral research of this type is linked to social-scientific theory in the same way that criticism both informs, and is guided by, rhetorical theory.

From the time of Socrates, and maybe even before, thoughtful people have debated about rhetoric and persuasion, some decrying it as inherently tainted, others seeing that it can serve purposes both good and ill. *Persuasion in Society* takes a middle road and features a *coactive* approach to the practice of persuasion. The central image is one of bridging differences, where persuaders move toward persuadees psychologically in hopes that persuadees will be moved toward acceptance of their ideas or proposals for action.

Further Considerations

1 How, if at all, would you distinguish persuasion from coercion? From the use of force? From pressures toward conformity? From harassment? From teaching? From information giving? From spontaneous expression? What makes persuasion distinct from other forms of communication?
2 Think back to a situation in which you were turned down for a request that you thought should have been granted, considering it an instance where your attempts at persuasion failed. In your opinion, what factors may have influenced the negative outcome?
3 Recalling Aristotle's distinction between issues of judgment and issues of certainty, identify one issue of judgment on which you think reasonable individuals might legitimately differ and another for which you believe the arguments on one side clearly outweigh the arguments on the other. Defend your view.
4 Select an example of persuasion in action. How would the different approaches to studying persuasion examine the same phenomenon? What sort of questions would each ask and how would they go about answering them? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach for the selected example?
5 How do twenty-first century marketing and advertising affect you? Are you a part of any consumption communities? What name-brand items do you have in your home, and what name-brand clothing do you wear? Why?

Key Terms

- Coercion
- Critical studies approach to persuasion
- Dependent variables
- Humanists
- Independent variables
- Inducements
- Meta-analysis
- Persuasion
- Rhetoric
- Rhetorical criticism
- Rhetorical approach to persuasion
- RPS model
- Social-scientific approach to persuasion
- Sophists

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2 Globalized View of Persuasion

The Globalized Rhetorical Hypothesis

Persuasion occupies a curious place in contemporary society. Criticized by some for being too manipulative, it is assailed by others for not being manipulative enough.

The big question is: What exactly counts as persuasion? No one doubts that paradigm cases such as when a salesperson is using rhetoric to get a customer to make a purchase is an instance of persuasion, nor do we question that advertisements are intended to persuade us. At issue is whether to limit our scope to a **restricted view** of persuasion, focused exclusively on paradigm cases such as these, or to consider a **globalized view**, which at its most extreme holds that there is no escape from rhetoric—not even in our seemingly most authentic encounters with others (Leff, 1987; Schiappa, 2001; Simons, 1990; Vitanza, 2013). Sometimes calling it "**Big Rhetoric**," the globalist view encourages us to look under the rug for evidence of non-obvious rhetorical motives, meanings, and methods. At the very least, it proposes we entertain the "hypothesis" of a rhetorical presence or dimension in all that we humans say and do (Schiappa, 2001; Simons, 1990; Vitanza, 2013). This chapter offers several core concepts and principles that entertain the **globalized rhetoric hypothesis**. This hypothesis suggests that distinctions between persuasion and "non-persuasion" tend to be overblown, and argues that there are many gray areas where persuasion is present but not explicit, and these instances are both interesting and worthy of study.

This is not to say that communication functions *only* to persuade. Instead, when considered via this globalized view, persuasion becomes a dimension of all human activity, manifested in such things as how the news is reported, in how entertainment is presented, in how "high culture" is defined, and even in what counts as the "fine arts." The globalized view of rhetoric posits that it is no accident that we tend not to notice the persuasion all around us, because habits of inattention are themselves rhetorical and culturally ingrained. Moreover, we don't notice the rhetoric in our midst because persuaders of all kinds attempt to pass themselves off as non-persuaders as a way of overcoming our defenses. That they do so is part of what makes persuasion suspect in contemporary society.

One reason we don't notice the persuasion all around us comes from a set of popular but mistaken beliefs about communication. For example, when most of us think about communication, we commonly think that each message contains a single meaning serving a single purpose. In contrast, this chapter offers a series of claims, chief among them that communication is often multi-motivated, operating on multiple levels and serving multiple functions.

Also inadequately understood are the cumulative effects of messages. When messages are repeated again and again, they can become taken for granted as "true." What happens in a

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society likes ours, for example, when consumers are repeatedly bombarded with the message that their happiness depends on what they own? How are we persuaded to shape our personal lives, ones that are lived out when no one is looking, based upon the persuasive messages of a consumer society?

Of special interest here is how multiple messages and their cumulative effects shape **dominant cultural ideologies** (DCIs), the systems of beliefs and values that tend to go unquestioned in a society. Imagine, for example, how strange you would find it if someone were to question your DCI about private property by challenging the belief that the shoes you are wearing aren't your own. You'd likely respond with stunned silence, not even able to conceptualize what the comment meant. Over your lifetime, you'd been persuaded, subtly and directly, through multiple messages presented again and again, to conceive of the world in a particular fashion, and it would be very difficult to step outside of your strongly ingrained ideological framework to entertain other perspectives.

Ultimately, this chapter is about the gray areas of persuasion, those spots where persuasion is subtle and veiled. By way of preview, the chapter seeks to accomplish three goals. First, it will review those principles of communication upon which a discussion of the gray areas of persuasion can be built, including god and devil terms and five key principles of communication that are central to the topic. Second, it will discuss some of the ways in which individuals engage in the gray areas of persuasion themselves, examining such things as impression management and deception. And, third, it will apply the globalized rhetoric hypothesis, demonstrating how "Big Rhetoric" functions in supposedly objective areas and how it works to shape ideology.

Language: God Terms and Devil Terms

The words used to persuade define the messages as well as provide the possibility of identification. In any culture, certain symbols function as **god words** or **devil words**—symbols of approval or derision, of group identification or dis-identification (Burke, 1969a, 1969b; Weaver, 1995). This is readily apparent for such *god words* as "freedom," "democracy," and "capitalism" and for such *devil words* as "slavery," "totalitarianism," and "terrorism." Words of this kind tend to be defined, illustrated, and differentiated from their supposed opposites in ironclad ways.

Distinctions between terms tend to become rockbound and rigid, and there is no middle ground. When a society strongly identifies with its *god words* and strongly "dis-identifies" with its *devil words*, its values become highly resistant to change because they are no longer even regarded as values. They become as real and as solid as the ground beneath our feet.

God terms and devil terms abound, and the reality is in the eye of the beholder. For example, the conventional wisdom holds that good friends express themselves authentically to us, while false friends manipulate appearances to persuade us and use us. Our nation exports "documentary" films abroad while our enemies distribute "propaganda" films. Our schools are said to "educate," but school teachers rarely claim to "indoctrinate." Employers "orient" or "train" but never "brainwash" their employees. Poets and dramatists "express" themselves or create "art" but never purport to indulge in "mere rhetoric" or "persuasion." Scientists "describe," "explain," "reason," or "prove" but have little need for "persuasive appeals."

The result is that, when the words "persuasion," "propaganda," and "rhetoric" are used in references to educators, artists, scientists, and newscasters, they are frequently terms of derision. To label scientists or newscasters as "rhetorical" or as engaging in "propaganda" is to suggest that they have somehow violated principles held in high esteem by their professions.

Figure 2.1 God terms and devil terms are often used for headline news, such as in the newspapers the day after a terrorist attack in Westminster, London on March 23, 2017. Credit: Lenscap Photography / Shutterstock.com

In these contexts, the terms have come to mean "deception" or "impurity," something that the language user wishes to avoid.

Only in relation to such words as "coercion," "force," and "power" does "persuasion" tend to function as a god term, and there it seems to depend on whether we are opposed to particular users of force or supportive of them. For example, we say, "I wish the demonstrators would try to persuade us rather than try to shove their program down our throats." But we also say, "I wish the President would stop talking about the economy (e.g., giving persuasive speeches) and start doing something about it (forcing change)." Generally speaking, "persuasion" is contrasted favorably with "coercion" in our culture, and we tend to associate it in relation to coercion with acts and persons we approve.

It should be clear by now that in a great many contexts "persuasion" and its near synonyms are emotionally loaded terms. There is a range of cases in which our culture regards "persuasion" neutrally or as a necessary evil, but that range is limited. Largely, the range is restricted to paradigm cases of persuasion, such as a politician presenting a campaign speech, a trial lawyer's summation to a jury, or a legislator urging passage of a bill. But even there, it should be noted, we often attach a negative attitude to the activities of such prototypical persuaders as the politician, the salesperson, the advertiser, and the public relations consultant. This may be one reason why friends, news reporters, teachers, poets, dramatists, entertainers, and scientists, resist thinking of themselves as persuaders and don't want to be thought of as persuaders by others.

In contrast to such polarized thinking, a broader view of communication argues that thinking in "either–or" fashion robs us of its richness and complexity. It denies us the opportunity of glimpsing non-obvious rhetorical motives, methods, meanings, and effects in talk and symbolic

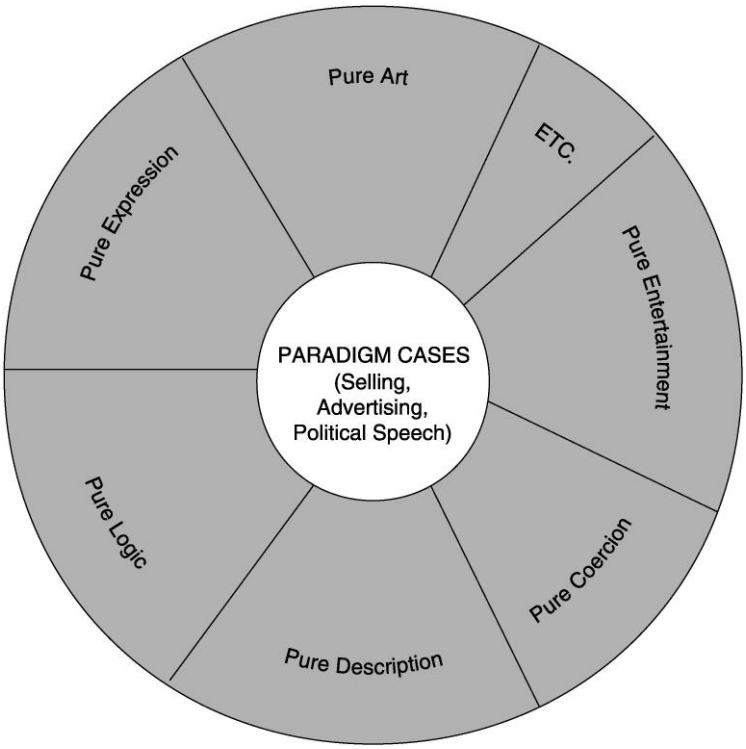

Figure 2.2 Compares two views of persuasion (updated from the 1976 edition of Simons' *Persuasion in Society*). In a "conventional map," areas are solid or white, designating persuasion vs. non-persuasion. There is pure logic, pure expression, pure art, pure entertainment, pure description, etc. that count as "non-persuasion." And then, there are the paradigm cases of clearly identifiable persuasion, including selling, advertising, political oration, etc. In our map, all elements of the conventional map are included, but in addition, gray areas are added to show that things are not as tidy as conventional wisdom suggests.

action that may seem on the surface to be purely expressive, purely informative, or purely aesthetic. Figures 2.2 and 2.3 present two "maps" of persuasion's domain: (1) the conventional map with a restricted view of persuasion, and (2) an expansive map with a globalized view of rhetoric. Our case for the map in Figure 2.2 is developed further in the remainder of the chapter.

Globalized View of Persuasion: Five Key Communication Principles

The ability to communicate is a wonder. By way of sounds in the air, bytes on the screen, or marks on the page, we can express our love for another, share our deepest longings, display our emotions, and explain new ideas that can change the world. And, even though communication seems to be one of the most natural of activities, there is so much happening every time we seek to share a message or communicate an idea.

The argument of this chapter builds on some rather profound yet seemingly simple communication principles; taken together, these principles provide an undergirding through which we can understand better the globalized rhetoric hypothesis. This globalized view posits

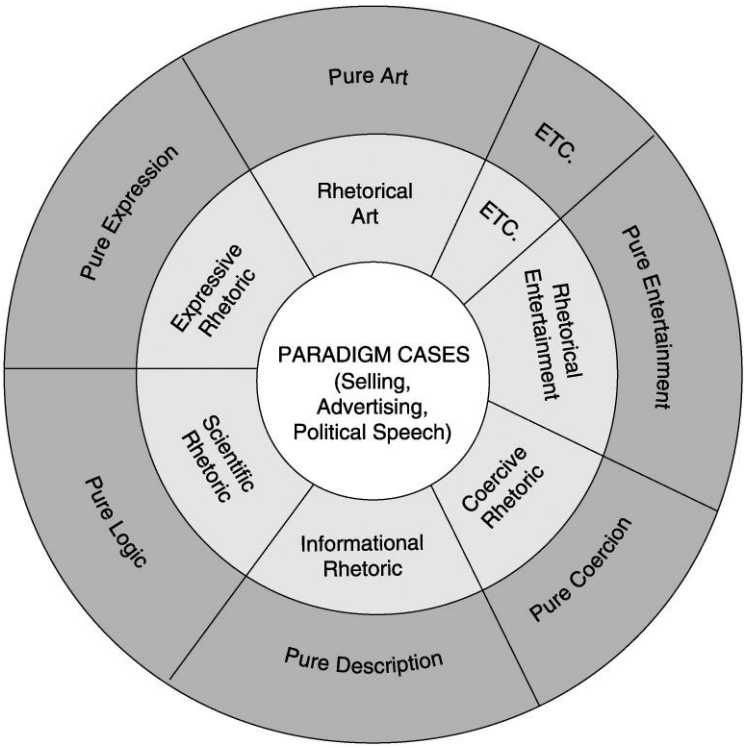

Figure 2.3 Companion to Figure 2.2 (the second view of persuasion).

that communication in general and persuasion in particular are generally more complex and sophisticated than they often appear on first glance, and, often, the most powerful persuasion is also the most subtle. In order to understand how such subtleties come into being, we need to think for a moment about the way communication functions. Our discourse is much more than a sender encoding a message that will be decoded by a receiver. In reality, it is (1) **multi-motivated**, (2) **multi-layered**, (3) **multi-dimensional**, (4) **multi-directional**, and (5) **multi-faceted**. Let us consider each of these communication principles in turn.

Communication Is Multi-Motivated

Viewing communication as multi-motivated means that it may operate on multiple levels and may serve multiple functions. Communication is rarely as simple as it first appears, and it can do more than one thing at once. Consider a simple example: You turn on your television news to check on the day's football scores, and you hear your local newscaster (1) "objectively" giving the report, while (2) signaling convincingly her identification with your home town football team. She's reporting, but she's also communicating that you and she are on the same side, which is a good thing for ratings and for her job security. In this instance, we see that her communication is multi-motivated: There is more going on than appears at first glance.

The same concern for combining accurate information giving with persuasion can be found in the advertisements for products we buy and in the images of ourselves that we share with others. Persuasion coexists comfortably with the transmission of data, and there is no "either–or" to separate it from non-persuasion.

Other examples abound. Television docudramas combine fact and fiction in an informative, entertaining, and persuasive manner. News websites specialize in news that informs and entertains, all the while pulling in potential customers for the websites' advertisers. Many YouTube videos and social media live feeds are designed to sell a product or service, but they do so in the guise of a personal narrative or a product demonstration.

Communication Is Multi-Layered

When we believe communication is multi-layered, we are embracing the perspective that communication does not just include what is said verbally but also all of the additional components such as the source, medium, context, receiver, and nonverbal behaviors. In early communication models, "the message" was what was said, as transmitted by a *source* (e.g., a speaker) to a *receiver* (e.g., a listener or reader) via a *channel* or *medium* (e.g., a telephone) (Berlo, 1960). Presupposed in some models was an additional element: a *context* or *contexts*. These days we recognize that source, receiver, medium, and context can have message value in their own right and that nonverbal elements can have as much as or more influence than a message's verbal components. This holds true for communication of every kind, not just paradigm cases of persuasion.

The myth of the self-contained *message* (nearly always viewed as verbal in the early theorizing) remains useful for some purposes, as in descriptions of experiments that test for the effects of variations in message content. But the mythic content of this principle becomes self-evident once we begin to vary the other components of the transmission model while holding the verbal message constant. Consider the differences between "I love you" stated flatly or earnestly, communicated via text message or face-to-face, in a bar on first meeting or after 25 years of marriage. The context of the message constrains the sender while providing the receiver with cues as to how the "I love you" should be interpreted. As if to underscore this point, mass communication scholar Marshall McLuhan entitled one of his books *The Medium Is the Message* (McLuhan, 1967).

To be sure, not all of this has been news to persuasion scholars. It had long been known, for example, that the **ethos** of the orator—his or her personal credibility—could be no less important than the speaker's logical arguments (**logos**) and emotional appeals (**pathos**), and could be the dominant factor. Almost as if he were speaking on behalf of rhetoricians, Ralph Waldo Emerson made this case when he famously proclaimed: "Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying." But it was the work of social psychologists that confirmed the importance of perceived competence and trustworthiness while evidencing the significance of previously underestimated source factors, such as physical attractiveness. Likewise, critical studies have illustrated the importance of credibility factors outside the traditional realm of rhetoric.

For example, work in critical studies has shown that the believability of a scientific claim can be affected by the reputation of the authors, the prestige of the journal in which their work appears, the choice of language, and the number of eminent authorities they cite in support of their thesis (Latour, 1986, 1987; Sokal, 1999; Van Noorden, 2014). These too are source credibility factors. The same article on ESP would stand a greater chance of being accepted by scientists if it appeared in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, for example, than if it appeared in a popular magazine. Scientists may also gain credibility by the language they use. The style of scientific and academic reports is marked by the appearance of impersonal detachment and passivity, as if to convey the impression that scientific procedures and data have an "out-there" existence (Blair et al., 1994; Ceccarelli, 2011; Gusfield, 1976).

The point here is that there is more to the message than just the words said. Context, medium, source, verbals, and nonverbals all matter, and each of the components of the transmission model can influence the meaning(s) given to the message by the receiver, who is also one of the variables. In an important sense, persuasion takes place on the message recipient's terms.

Communication Is Multi-Dimensional

The ancient Greeks and Romans devoted an entire division of rhetoric to *style* and another to the *delivery* of the message. Meticulous attention was given to forms of address, including figures of speech, things such as metaphor and simile. They instructed orators in the arts of emphasis and de-emphasis, of abbreviation and elaboration, and of presentational styles both plain and ornate. They underscored the importance of how things were said and, significantly for our purposes, many of their examples came from the arts, including poetry and drama. They set the stage for viewing communication as multi-dimensional or the understanding that what is communicated can happen in a variety of forms.

Yet over time there came a hardening of the oppositions between rhetoric and the creative arts, as though oratorical eloquence, such as Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, was not aesthetic, and as though poetry and music and painting and sculpture and all the other creative arts were in no way rhetorical. "True" artists, it was said, were "above" persuasion. Their job was not to preach to us but to express their feelings aesthetically. In textbook terms, their acts of artistic creation were **consummatory**: They were ends in themselves. And in return, if we were responsive to the poet or painter or composer, we were reacting by evincing consummatory interest, but not by modifying our attitudes and behavior. The latter, which is the realm of rhetoric, was considered to be unnecessary and perhaps accidental byproducts of our experience.

Once again, though, we find ourselves drawn to the views of the ancients, sharing their opinion that it is impossible to draw hard and fast distinctions between art and rhetoric. Moreover, we are not always inclined to think less of an artist just because he or she has persuasive intent. Doing so would require, for example, that we dismiss the poetry, painting, music, and theater of protest: Picasso's *Guernica*, Springsteen's "Born in the USA," Ibsen's *Enemy of the People*, Cameron's *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, and the satire of Jonathan Swift.

Old myths die hard, but this one seems on the verge of being laid to rest. Rhetorician Wayne Booth put the matter well many years ago:

> If all good art has no rhetorical dimension, as so many have argued, then rhetoric is left to those who will use it for the devil's purposes … How much better it would be if we could develop an understanding of how great literature and drama does in fact work rhetorically to build and strengthen communities.
>
> *(Booth, 2000)*

Communication Is Multi-Directional

Understanding that messages have unintended effects on unintended audiences, not the least of all on the message sender themselves is seeing communication as multi-directional. Messages are not just aimed at receivers who are "out there." Through communication, we also persuade ourselves. This happens in at least three ways. First, when we communicate

Figure 2.4 Many people enjoy Bruce Springsteen's music and are unaware of the persuasive messages within the lyrics. His song, "Born in the USA," lyrically depicts a "Vietnam War veteran who returns home to desperate circumstances" (Tyler-Ameen, 2019). Credit: Jack Fordyce / Shutterstock.com

a persuasive message to another, we often reinforce and intensify the opinion we hold; we persuade ourselves to recommit to our view. Second, we can engage in self-persuasion, using self-talk to debate positions and persuade ourselves of the best course of action. And third, we use rationalization to persuade ourselves that the course we've chosen makes sense. First, how does it reinforce our own beliefs when we seek to persuade another? Isn't it contradictory to argue for a position to which we are not fully committed? Perhaps it's not as uncommon as it seems, as the following example will demonstrate.

It is likely that we all can remember describing to a third party a situation in which we felt we were slighted—say, for example, a situation in which we received an evaluation or a grade lower than we would have liked. If we were honest, we'd admit that a decent case could be made to justify the evaluation based on the work we'd put into the project, but, as we describe the situation to our friend, we can feel our indignation rise. As we seek to persuade our friend to accept our side of the story and to sympathize, at the same time we persuade ourselves of the rightness of our case, intensifying our own belief in our shaky cause. It is through situations such as this that we see an unintended effect of persuasion.

But it is not just in our personal lives that such reinforcing self-persuasion occurs. As Simons has argued in his rhetorical history of the period from 9/11 to the occupation of Iraq, the second Bush administration engaged in similar efforts. As it sought to persuade the American public that the war in Iraq was the appropriate policy position, it likewise persuaded itself, reinforcing the belief within the White House to stay the course. As Simons (2007) notes, the Bush administration

> increasingly fell victim to its own desperate efforts to prop up the case for war, offering, for example, overly optimistic projections for success in Iraq based on spurious statistics,

> denying high-level authorization for the use of torture while at the same time calling for exemptions to the Geneva Convention's strictures against torture, and [engaging in] efforts to discredit former acting ambassador to Iraq, Joseph Wilson, who had been a vociferous critic of some of the administration's earlier intelligence claims.

The voices of the Bush administration were united as one in arguing on behalf of the war, and the efforts bolstered the team, helping them to deflect serious questions about events on the ground, torture, and intelligence, and persuading them to hold firm to their position that the war was the right course for America.

Moreover, it is not just that we reinforce our own views as we seek to persuade others. Billig (1996) has argued that we regularly persuade ourselves even when no one else is being addressed. Thinking, he says, is a form of argument and counter-argument. He notes that we learn how to think from attending to others' arguments, but he adds that we also learn from comparing the arguments we have with ourselves against our subsequent experiences (Billig, 1996).

For instance, you may know that you need to get up early in the morning to finish an assignment. However, when the alarm goes off, you bargain with yourself for just "five more minutes." Even though you know you need to get out of bed, those five minutes may turn into an hour (or more) as you persuade yourself the assignment won't take *that* long to complete. Once you do get up and start working, you probably realize that you needed more time to complete the task. Yet, the next time you find yourself in this position again, you probably will bargain for those "five more minutes" one more time. Clearly, the process of interpersonal persuasion is ongoing.

And so, we see that through interpersonal and intrapersonal communication, self-persuasion occurs. Finally, there is a third way that we persuade ourselves, and that is through Freudian defense mechanisms, most notably rationalizations. Rationalizations are the excuses and justifications we provide to ourselves after the event when we need to make judgments about the choices we've made. When we've checked our cell phone while driving, or read a text message and did not respond, we need to work to persuade ourselves that our actions are not as irresponsible as we know they are. And so, we engage in rationalization: We tell ourselves that we needed to check the time on our phone while driving to make sure we are not late, or that our friend probably wouldn't expect an immediate response to their message anyway. We persuade ourselves that we are okay.

Communication Is Multi-Faceted

When we communicate about a topic, at the same time we project an image of ourselves, and these image projections, in turn, "comment" on the substantive component of the message. Thus, Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) speak of "levels" of communication. Messages at the relationship level *metacommunicate*: They communicate about communication. Every utterance about substantive matters is also an interpersonal encounter that projects an image of the communicator thus communication can be viewed as multi-faceted.

Take the substantive message "Two eggs over easy." A simple "please" at the end of that sentence may transform an order to a waiter into a request. Also, at the relationship level, it tells the waiter something about the customer: "See, I'm not the type of person who orders other people around."

But this is not the only thing that gets metacommunicated, because the customer also transmits relationally by way of gestures, inflections, facial expressions, timing, distance, dress, and grooming. Thus, a smile may reinforce the "please," but the customer's hurried manner may suggest that both the smile and the "please" were perfunctory.

People cannot *not* project relational images of themselves as they communicate about substantive matters. As Paul Watzlawick famously noted, **one cannot *not* communicate** (Watzlawick et al., 1967). Those who try to *not* present an image to others—who instead try to be natural, and express their thoughts or feelings directly—often wind up communicating the image of not appearing to project an image. This is one of the many paradoxes of communication we will have to confront.

The distinction between substantive messages and image projections is important for the study of persuasion. Whether or not we are functioning as persuaders at the content level, we may still be persuading at the relationship level. In long-term relationships, as those between friends or relatives, such relational image projections are often more important than what gets said at the content level. Rarely, for example, is a dispute between romantic partners about who should make the bed in the morning only about bed-making. Images about self and other invariably get communicated, including images of power, trust, and affection.

Although substantive messages are carried largely by verbal means, messages at the relationship level are transmitted mostly by nonverbal means. Nonverbal stimuli range from clearly intentional winks to innocent-appearing blinks. But even the blink scan be contrived.

Applying the Principles: Globalized Rhetoric in Practice

The foregoing communication principles provide the groundwork from which to explore some of the ways that we seek to persuade others via indirect means. In such instances, we are not engaged in obvious black-and-white persuasive efforts—we aren't directly setting out to advocate a position, or change someone's mind. Instead, we are quietly seeking to shape thinking, both our own and that of others. While not an exhaustive list, what follows examines some of the communicative devices and techniques employed in less obvious forms of persuasion: (1) **Impression Management**, (2) **Denial of Persuasive Intent**, (3) **Expression Games**, and (4) **Persuasion in the Guise of Objectivity**.

Impression Management as Persuasion

Just how much of our life is occupied with concerns about the images we project is a matter of some debate. The issue is a sensitive one, particularly for those who pride themselves on their individuality or who regard manipulation of any type as intrinsically immoral (Johannesen, 1996). Nevertheless, it appears that sensitivity to how others perceive us develops early in life and leads to a rhetorical sophistication at impression management in adulthood (Dillard et al., 2000; Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). Psychologist Erving Goffman has linked impression management to an actor's performance in the theater, noting that we all have a sense of front stage, where the "audience" can see us, and backstage, where we are hidden away from view and able to discontinue our act (Goffman, 1959). This sense of performing front stage grows from the recognition that we communicate images of ourselves whether we want to or not; we therefore work at doing something about how we are perceived—at *promoting* an image and not just projecting one.

Yet this does not mean that most people care *only* about how others see them. Rather, their efforts at impression management may be paired with or balanced against other concerns, including some that they ordinarily view as exclusively non-rhetorical. Some of their acts may be *multi-motivated*. They may wear blue jeans, for example, because jeans are comfortable and relatively inexpensive, because they like the way they look, and because wearing the jeans may please or impress valued others. Similarly, they may attempt to inform or entertain or please others aesthetically *and* seek to impress them.

Ultimately, impression management is applied persuasion, as we seek to influence the way others perceive us. It is sometimes goal-specific: For example, it can be a means of gaining the trust we need to win over audience support for a controversial proposal. Yet much of the "imaging" we do is not designed for any particular or immediate purpose. It is more general, as we seek to persuade others to see us as we'd like to be seen. It is like putting money in the bank and trading on it when we need it. We literally bank on our images, building up an account of impressions about ourselves upon which we can depend (Rogers, 2007; Smith, 2006).

Denial of Persuasive Intent: "I'm Not Being Persuasive Here …"

From the recognition that we cannot *not* communicate, it is a short step to the realization that it is often impossible *not* to function as persuaders. Persuasion is all around us. Consider, for example, a generic box of tissues. Ordinarily, branded boxes of tissues are instances of attempted persuasion. They are attractively adorned. They prominently display a brand name made famous by expensive advertising.

That is not the case with this generic package. It seeks to present a surface image of "the real" as opposed to the rhetorical. No name (not just the absence of a brand name) appears on the box. The lettering announcing its contents is plain black on white. Perhaps the packagers, while providing a reduction in price, are also trying to persuade us that the box is in some sense "virtuous" for being non-rhetorical. Yet, while it may appear non-rhetorical on the surface, the persuasive message of a generic product still exists through the price point or by simply being unbranded. No-frills packages are by no means the only things made to seem non-rhetorical. Persuaders often go to great lengths to persuade us that they are not persuaders, and they often succeed as persuaders by disarming us in precisely this way. "I'm not trying to change your mind," says the clever parent. "I just want to ask you a question." Of course, the forthcoming advice aimed at changing your mind is couched as a question.

Planting a thought in a message recipient's mind can be accomplished even by declaring a rumor about an electoral candidate to be untrue—for example, a headline stating mayoral candidate "Andrew Winters *Not* Connected to Bank Embezzlement." The effects of *innuendo* in newspaper headlines have been well illustrated in studies by Wegner, Wenzlaff, Kerker, and Beattie (1981) and reconsidered in computer-mediated communication by Lai and Farbrot (2014). They compared the success of headlines aimed at fictitious candidates such as Andrew Winters that took the form of questions ("Is Karen Downing Associated With a Fraudulent Charity?") with directly incriminating statements about a candidate ("Bob Talbert Linked With Mafia"). All these headlines resulted in negative perceptions of the candidate; the form that they took made little difference (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001).

Once a thought is planted in the consciousness it can be extremely difficult to dislodge. For example, during the 2008 presidential election, a rumor floated suggesting that Barack Obama was Muslim. FactCheck.org, as well as the mainstream news media, corrected the rumors, and

Figure 2.5 Walmart brand, "Great Value," is considered a generic brand yet being generic does not necessarily mean that it is not persuading people to purchase the product. Credit: Sheila Fitzgerald / Shutterstock.com

Obama himself repeatedly discounted the falsehoods. Yet at a Republican rally only weeks before the election, a supporter of John McCain, Gayle Quinnell, went to the microphone and told the audience that "Obama is an Arab."

McCain quickly took the microphone from Quinnell and corrected her, proclaiming "No ma'am; he's a decent family man, citizen, that I just happen to have disagreements with on fundamental issues" ("McCain," 2008). But despite being corrected by McCain on national television in front of a large crowd, Quinnell retained her original opinion, as evidenced by a news interview she gave after the rally. Her candidate's words failed to persuade her, and she suggested that she planned to keep spreading the false rumor, as the transcript below shows:

Gayle Quinnell	I went to the library in Shakopee and I got lots of … three pages of information about Obama …
Adam Aigner of NBC News	So even though Senator McCain told you that he didn't feel that was true and you ought to be more respectful, you still fear that [Obama is a Muslim]?
Quinnell	I still do. Yeah. I'm not alone. I go to Burnsville, the main Republican headquarters and I do a lot of work over there. A lot of sending out mail and talking to people. And all the people agree with what I'm saying to you about Obama.
Aigner	Then do you feel there are a lot of volunteers for McCain who feel that way?

Quinnell	Yes. A lot of them. In fact I got a letter from another woman that goes over there to Burnsville and she sent me more things about Obama.
Aigner	What was on the letter?
Quinnell	Oh all kinds of bad things about him and how, I mean I have to tell you to call me. It's all bad.
Reporter	Are a lot of people getting this letter and are a lot of people believing it and is that turning a lot of votes or support for McCain?
Quinnell	Yeah I sent out 400 letters. I went to Kinkos and I got them all printed out. And I sent about 400 letters. I went in the telephone book and sent them out to people. So they can decide if they would want Obama.

("McCain," 2008)

Quinnell was not alone in her beliefs. In July 2012, a Pew Research Center poll showed that 17% of registered voters polled still believed Obama was a Muslim, and that 65% of those holding that view are uncomfortable with Obama's religious stance as they understand it. ("Little," 2012). In 2016, a Public Policy Polling survey found that 65% of individuals with a favorable opinion of then candidate Donald J. Trump for president believed that Obama was a Muslim (Jenson, 2016).

There is a clear reason to explain why masked persuasive intent works, and one that is well known to communication researchers—when people are forewarned that a communicator intends to persuade them, they will usually mount a psychological defense. Perhaps they'll tune out, or perhaps they'll recite counter-arguments to themselves even in advance of exposure to the communicator's message (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). This defensive reaction is especially likely if the issue is of some importance to the persuadees or if they suspect that the communicator is up to no good—that he or she is manipulative, exploitative, and perhaps deliberately deceptive (Benoit, 1998; Fukada, 1986; Papageorgis, 1968; Petty & Cacioppo, 1977). Knowing this, persuaders often present themselves as innocent of any persuasive designs on the recipients of their messages. Rather, they try to suggest, they are just out to inform, to entertain, to ask a few questions, or perhaps to express their innermost feelings.

This happens even in television ads when, for example, a professional actor completes a commercial pitch and, with the cameras still on him, turns in obvious relief from his task to take real pleasure in consuming the product he has been advertising (Goffman, 1974). This is just one way in which the appearance of naturalness is used by advertisers in an attempt to dispel audience suspicions. Radio and TV ads have used children's voices, presumably because these seem unschooled. Street noises and other effects give the impression of interviews with unpaid respondents. False starts, filled pauses, and overlapping speech simulate actual conversation. But is seeming unrehearsed a sign of non-persuasion? Sometimes it is, but often it is not. As Axelrod (2007) argues, "It is possible—and essential—to prepare for spontaneity." For example, the makers of campaign commercials often stage scenes to look unstaged, and encourage candidates to "act natural."

Consider how this might impact your life. Imagine you are at a job interview and you are asked a serious question. You respond by pausing, looking away from the interviewer, and acting as if you are in deep thought, mulling over the question and your response. Only you know what is in your mind at that moment, and you might be thinking about nothing deeper

than last night's football game that you watched on television, but your goal is to persuade the interviewer that you are an intelligent and wise applicant who thinks through issues with care. Here is the question: Is looking away from the job interviewer a sign of non-persuasion? Clearly, that is not the case. Yet, some persuaders deliberately shift their gaze away from the job interviewer from time to time to create the appearance of being sincere, and honest, and the interviewer works to sort out sincere thoughtfulness from deception. Similarly, at work and at school we have all probably encountered "yes-men" and "yes-women," those people who learn to disagree with their superiors just enough to negate the impression of being panderers while still playing up to them.

Deception about Persuasive Intent: Expression Games

Another gray area of communication involves expression games; these are contests over the control, and detection of control, of our expressive behaviors. As Goffman notes, in "every social situation we can find a sense in which one participant will be an observer with something to gain from assessing expressions, and another will be a subject with something to gain from manipulating this process" (Goffman, 1969). With expression games, a persuader seeks to sell a particular message via, in part, nonverbal control, while the persuadee seeks to decipher the levels of messages that are being shared and arrive at a fair judgment about the situation at hand.

Expression games can get extremely complicated, particularly in military conflicts. Rival nations may go to great lengths to stage deceptions or to conceal their detection from those who staged them. During World War II, for example, the British arranged for the Germans to discover false secrets on the corpse of a high-ranking but fictitious military officer. They constructed dummy airfields to camouflage real air-war preparations and to persuade the Germans to expend effort and ammunition on false targets. Vials of chemicals were dropped behind enemy lines with instructions to German troops on how to foil their medical officers by creating the impression that they had succumbed to major diseases. When German spies were detected, they were allowed to remain in the field and generally fed innocuous or false information. Sometimes, however, they were fed true and important information as a way of persuading them and their superiors that they had not been detected.

To deceive the enemy about manipulative intent, it was often necessary to mislead the communicator of the deceptive message as well. Rather than instructing French resistance workers not to warn the Germans about Allied invasion plans, the British gave them false information, instructed them to keep it secret, and assumed that, as a matter of course, some would be captured by the Germans and would reveal the false information very credibly under torture.

Such expression games operate at a very high level, involving matters of life and death. That being said, it is not just during war time or in moments of global crisis that expression games come to the fore. At other times, they are mundane. For example, a cheating spouse may deliberately show signs of guilt or embarrassment over a relatively minor concealment, such as neglecting to mention that he shared a beer after work with a co-worker rather than coming straight home, in the hope that his wife will not investigate the more serious issue of his ongoing infidelity. In fact, expression games can even be rationalized as being in the best interest of the person being subjected to the game. For instance, your doctor can converse with you and show apparently sincere interest in your self-diagnosis about your health concerns, but then frame your problems as symptoms, that are medically manageable phenomena that the doctor has the specific expertise to treat (McLean, 2007). The key to knowing you have entered the

arena of expression games is when a persuader is manipulating the communicative process for some sort of gain, and engaged in deception about persuasive intent.

Persuasion in the Guise of Objectivity

Impression management and deception are gray areas that are rooted in interpersonal interaction, whether they are face-to-face with our close associates or mediated contacts between ourselves and people like politicians who are seeking our votes. We shift now to another category where persuasion exists, but is veiled: persuasion in the guise of objectivity. With this, we move from interpersonal to public communication, and examine the rhetoric therein contained. Accounting statements and cost-benefit analyses, news reports, scientific articles, and reported discoveries of social problems, among other things, fall into this gray area.

Some may wish to argue that such items as those just listed are in fact forms of non-persuasion. But, employing a globalized view of persuasion, we suggest that these messages, which are generally classified as "objective," make serious claims on the human psyche. Each purports to provide "truth" or "knowledge" of some sort, arrived at disinterestedly. Yet because the appearance of objectivity can be a powerful form of persuasion, it is wise to view claims to pure objectivity with suspicion.

News Reporting

News reports, unlike commentaries and editorials, are supposed to be devoid of persuasion; they are supposedly objective, and sometimes they approach that ideal. But journalists are aware that their choice of what news to cover and what not to cover, as well as their decisions about how to cover it, has enormous consequences (Bennett & Entman, 2000). Decisions of this kind have priming, agenda-setting and framing effects.

Media priming is the process in which the media attend to some issues and not others, and thereby alter the standards by which people evaluate situations (Severin & Tankard, 1997). **Agenda setting** involves the order of importance given in the media to issues, and the subsequent order of significance attached to the same issues by the public and politicians (McQuail, 1994). And **framing** structures our perspectives on an issue: The media focus attention on certain events and then place them within a field of meaning (Iyengar, 1991; Jamieson & Cappella, 2008; Johnson-Cartee, 2005; Kurtz, 1998; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Price et al., 1997).

First, there is media priming, which influences our judgments of where to best focus our attention. For example, when Fox News's or MSNBC's reporters lead off a program with a focus on a politician's lifestyle instead of the politician's policy positions, that influences us to see the lifestyle issues as better or more relevant areas of focus than policy concerns (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008). This influences not just our evaluations: It also has an indirect effect on policy making. For example, in the ongoing controversies over national security versus the protection of civil liberties, reminders in the news of the devastation caused by the 9/11 terrorist attacks primes citizens and policy makers to focus on national security; on the other hand, stories about brave whistleblowers who share secret documents so that citizens can become informed of what their government is actually doing serve to prime us for a focus on civil liberties.

A second way "objective" news reporting can become persuasive is through agenda setting. In its classic formulation, agenda setting doesn't tell us what to think; instead, it tells us what

to think about. Price, Tewksbury, and Powers (1997) view agenda setting as a kind of media priming that is concerned with presenting to us what is important (or unimportant) among the many issues that might come our way.

The third way supposedly objective reporting becomes rhetorical is through framing. The basic idea of framing is that the media focus attention on certain events and then present those events in a way that gives them meaning. Framing is unavoidable, and even taught in schools of journalism. For instance, introductory textbooks on news reporting suggest that there can be many "right" ways to present the same issue or event. A murder trial can be framed and viewed: (a) through the eyes of the victim reliving the crime; (b) through the anguish of the suspect's family; (c) through the talk in the neighborhood where the crime was committed; (d) by reading the face and questions of the jurors; (e) by capturing the drama of the dueling lawyers; (f) from the perspective of those who analyze evidence under a microscope; (g) from the carnival of media coverage.

Given that every news story is enclosed in a frame, some theorists have argued that objectivity in news reporting is virtually impossible. Storytelling of every kind requires selection. Not everything can be said about an object, and not everything can be given equal emphasis. Thus, selections deflect even as they reflect; in calling attention to some things, they prompt inattention to others (Burke, 1966).

Others object that viewing framing as merely rhetorical misses the point of journalistic framing at its most consequential—when it identifies the most relevant competing news frames in a story and then determines which of them best captures its essence (e.g., Kent, 2006; Mander, 1999) When Hong Kong was turned over to China in 1997, was this the result of a "handover" or a "takeover" (Lee et al., 2001)? Was Edward Snowden, who gave American government documents to *The Guardian*, better labeled a "whistleblower," which is defined by the Associated Press as "a person who exposes wrongdoing"? Or was he really just a "leaker," which the AP defines as "a person who *simply asserts* that what he has uncovered is illegal or immoral" (Press, 2013, italics ours)? What comment does it make about the value of American privacy when most journalists and editors end up labeling him a "leaker" (Press, 2013)? Such issues are vitally important, and reporters honestly struggle to try to understand and then report what "really happened" in these cases.

Even as reporters take great effort to frame stories appropriately, the process of selection-deflection is by no means random. Institutional pressures force editors and reporters to play up the dramatic, the sensational, and to play down news that doesn't sell newspapers or ad time. What's more, candidates, campaign managers, celebrities, and other professional persuaders attempt to *spin* the news that will be reported, so as to influence, for example, reports on who "won" last night's televised campaign debate. And so, when we put it all together, it seems clear that journalism's claims of objectivity are more guise than reality.

The increased pressure to present news in ways that generate media profit has come under strong critique and has led to successful popular programs like *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* that openly proclaim they are presenting "the fake news." Under the comic frame of tongue-in-cheek staunch objectivity, these programs offer biting social commentary of contemporary news practices. Through metacommunicative reversal upon reversal, Stewart critiques what passes for objectivity in the news, while Stephen Colbert proclaimed that "**truthiness**" is now the standard by which news is presented, consumed, and judged. Within a comic *frame*, they *set an agenda* of critique and *prime* us to approach corporate American journalistic practices with a critical eye. Playing on our doubts about the claims of neutrality in the news, they persuade

Figure 2.6 While protesters at a rally in Washington, DC on October 26, 2013, held signs thanking Edward Snowden for his actions—embracing him as a whistleblower–others question whether he was just a "leaker" of information. Credit: Rena Schild / Shutterstock.com

us to consume news with care and urge us to be more analytical persuadees. Not only that, but they do so with success, as displayed by a study from the Annenberg Public Policy Center showing that, in particular, Colbert is doing a better job of teaching people about campaign finance than CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News ("Study," 2014).

Scientific Writing

Scientific writing, like news journalism, purports to give information rather than persuade, but the trappings of science can be used as tools of advertising and public relations (Jackall, 1995; Williams & Gajevic, 2013). Not uncommonly, for example, industries set up seemingly disinterested scientific institutes whose professed purpose is to serve the public good but whose real aim is to discredit their opponents' charges that the industry's product, whether it be cosmetics, explosives, paints, leathers, furs, or medicines, is a threat to the public good.

As the Union of Concerned Scientists reports,

> Corporations that stand to lose from the results of independent scientific inquiry have gone to great lengths to manipulate and control science and scientists by:
>
> **Terminating and suppressing research**. Companies have controlled the dissemination of scientific information by ending or withholding results of research that they sponsor that would threaten their bottom line.
>
> **Intimidating or coercing scientists**. Corporations bury scientific information by harassing scientists and their institutions into silence. Scientists have been threatened with

litigation and the loss of their jobs, have had their research defunded, have been refused promotion or tenure, and have been transferred to non-research positions, leading to self-censorship and changes in research direction.

Manipulating study designs and research protocols. Corporations have employed flawed methodologies in testing and research—such as by changing the questions scientists are asking—that are biased toward predetermined results.

Ghostwriting scientific articles. Corporations corrupt the integrity of scientific journals by planting ghostwritten articles about their products. Rather than submitting articles directly, companies recruit scientists or contract with research organizations to publish articles that obscure the sponsors' involvement.

Publication bias. Corporations selectively publish positive results while underreporting negative results. While not directly corrupting science itself, these publishing and reporting biases skew the body of evidence.

(Union of Concerned Scientists, 2012)

Of course, science at its most objective is a far cry from such crass corporate manipulation and attempted public persuasion. But to speak of the scientific report as fully objective is to ignore too much evidence to the contrary, and the tradition of writing persuasively in the sciences has a long and rich history. For example, in a series of articles, John A. Campbell (1970, 1974, 1975, 1986) showed that Charles Darwin relied on much more than simply "presenting the facts" to persuade his readers to accept his evolutionary theory.

Darwin began his work *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* by telling the reader how, after returning from his voyage on the *Beagle*, he spent five years "patiently accumulating and reflecting on all sorts of facts" before beginning to develop his theory. This was consistent with the prevailing approach to science at the time, where it was understood that generalizations were developed only after gathering lots of data.

The problem here is that Darwin's notebooks don't match his rhetoric. In fact, they show that he began to engage in highly speculative theorizing while still on the *Beagle*. A few years after the publication of the *Origin*, in a letter to a younger scientist, Darwin recommended that one should "let theory guide your observations," but he also suggested minimizing the role of theory in publication, because too much theory leads others to doubt one's observations (Campbell, 1975). Clearly, Darwin realized that the most persuasive approach to presenting scientific work to the public didn't need to be a description of the actual processes the scientist went through in developing his or her ideas.

In the *Origin*, Darwin also made abundant use of the language of natural theology, language with which his readers would have been familiar. Natural theology relies on the complexity and design found in nature as offering scientific support for the existence of an intelligent deity. Darwin, however, cleverly turned the argument on its head.

Animal breeders, he noted, are very effective at producing breeds that are useful or interesting to humans; they do this through selective breeding. And natural selection, the process by which the most fit organisms of a species survive and reproduce in nature, must be infinitely more effective than that, because natural selection works continuously on characteristics that humans might not even be aware of. With this artful argument, the intelligence of the deity was subtly replaced by the power of natural selection, and not only that—the persuasive language of natural theology was turned to support Darwin's theory of evolution.

Even if we were to assume that scientific inquiry is simply a matter of fact gathering and logical inference, it would be hard to deny persuasion's role in scientific reporting. To cite a contemporary example, the AIDS researcher who prepares a scientific report for an AIDS research conference must decide how to title the report, how to frame the issues, how to write the report stylistically, how to make interpretations of the research data appear convincing, and how to deliver the report orally and visually with maximum clarity and believability. Even so seemingly straightforward a process as citing past work on the AIDS researcher's topic becomes an opportunity to impress research foundations with the importance of the work, to forge alliances with respected colleagues, and to attack rivals (Latour, 1987).

Societal Naming of Social Problems

Another gray area of persuasion under the guise of objectivity arises around the topic of the societal naming of social problems. The question is this: Do societies discover social problems objectively, or do they construct them rhetorically? Seventy years ago, for example, the terms *child abuse*, *date rape*, and *sexual harassment* did not exist. Clearly, though, that does not mean that the problems designated by the terms also did not exist, right?

There are at least three schools of thought on the matter:

1. *Mundane realists* argue that problems such as child abuse are every bit as real as skin cancer or infant mortality; putting a name to them only assists in talking about conditions that have long existed.
2. *Strict constructionists* argue that language is constitutive of reality, rather than merely reflective of it. Who we are as individuals and as groups, how we understand ourselves to be joined together in time and space, and what we consider to be problems or non-problems all depend on the language we select to "create," as it were, the worlds we inhabit. A strict constructionist would say, for example, that in cultures past "infant mortality" was not labeled as a problem because it was seen rather as a routine occurrence.
3. *Contextual constructionists* argue that social problems are neither entirely discovered nor entirely fabricated. They point to widely varying statistics on alleged problems (Best, 2004, 2008) such as child abuse to show that these problems do not simply exist "out there." For example, estimates of the magnitude of child abuse in the United States have ranged from the minuscule to the all-inclusive, depending on how the term was defined. At the same time, contextual constructionists reject the "anti-realism" of their strict constructionist colleagues. Child abuse may be a social construction, they concede, but the problem would not have been categorized, named, quantified, and the like, had there not been a basis in fact for multiple injuries to children, documented by pediatric radiologists and shown by investigators to be the work of parents or parent substitutes. Like strict constructionists, contextual constructionists assign persuasion a significant role in explaining what estimates of the nature and magnitude of a social problem any given society takes to be real. Still, they believe that some estimates are better than others (Best, 1989; Hacking, 1991; Miller & Holstein, 1993).

We do not seek to tell you where you should come down on these three schools of thought, but we do note that all three agree that social problems come to be recognized as such only after we have *named* them. Prior to being named, these problems likely existed in the world, but they were not seen as "social problems" until we identified them as such and persuaded

others to agree with our identification. Once they have been named, categorized, ranked, and identified, they are transformed.

How Multiple Messages Shape Ideologies

As this chapter has attempted to demonstrate, defining the boundaries of persuasion's domain is not as easy a task as many might think. There are gray areas, things that sometimes are persuasive and other times are not. And then, there are cases where persuasion may seem pronounced on one day but muted the next. There are things that are thought to be objective, but in fact are infused with persuasive elements. To confuse things even more, we are confronted with the fact that people are complex: Their motives for communicating are varied and sometimes they do not even know how much persuasion exists in their discourse. One communicative act may stem from many motivations, operate on many levels, and have many effects via multiple forms of influence, some of them unintended. And now, returning to where this chapter began, it is worth considering how these gray areas and multiple messages create cumulative effects and shape our dominant cultural ideologies (DCIs), those systems of belief and value that generally go unquestioned.

We don't have to look to lofty tomes to consider such issues. Any given episode of a television program will do. Television shows often have unintended effects, including ideological effects. When young adults turn on Disney Plus to view its wholesome content, they are being persuaded to see the world in a particular fashion: perfectly manicured homes that are filled with attractive families that are always able to resolve issues by the end of the program. The children are creative, clean, and respectful; they value education, sports, and the arts. The parents are wise, attractive, and involved, and finances are never an issue as the children are always perfectly dressed in the latest teen fashions. Watching Disney's programming, elementary school children and their junior high siblings are persuaded to embrace Disney's capitalistic/democratic/consumeristic ideology and imitate it.

The same is true of adult contemporary television programming such as a crime drama like *NCIS* or an animated comedy program like *South Park*. From programs like *NCIS,* we are persuaded to believe that science provides rapid speed answers, even to vicious murders. From *South Park*, we hear animated children saying vulgar yet interesting things, and our American ideology that places high value on freedom of speech is reinforced.

If any given television or advertising segment may affect a viewer's ideology, what are the effects of a daily dose of television? The difference that multiple messages can make is well illustrated by product advertising. An ad may be both informational and transformational—that is, it tells you about a product and, if effective, makes a customer out of you (Leiss et al., 2005). But the combined effect of multiple advertisements is truly transformational. As consumers, we generally assume that the arguments and slogans and pictures used to advocate for a product are merely means to an end. We fail to recognize that these means are being reinforced even as the product is being promoted.

Consider television ads for medicinal products such as pain relievers and nutritional supplements. An underlying and oft-repeated premise of these advertisements is this: Got a problem? Take a pill! We watch the ads and hope that the pharmaceutical advertisers are not deliberately striving to turn America into a nation dependent on pharmaceuticals. We know that no single advertisement has that effect, but still, if we reflect for a moment, we realize that the combined effect of these multiple messages creates an attitude, an ideology, and one that impacts how we conceive of our health, our bodies, and our lives.

Figure 2.7 Television programming often projects to people what we are "supposed" to desire. This photo of a family of four outside of their large home with a perfectly manicured lawn attempts to make this lifestyle desirable. Credit: Ursula Page / Shutterstock

These messages combine with yet others—for one-stop shopping, for dinner in a box, or even education in a box—that mold and reinforce the values not just of material acquisition but of a certain type of acquisition: of purchased passivity, of being served, of life made unthinkingly, unblinkingly easy, where every problem has a quick and easy solution: All we need to do is make the purchase (Barber, 2007). A thousand or more ads for "a sexier you" sell not just the hair thickener or breath freshener but also the assumption—learned from childhood on—that sexuality needs to be purchased; what we bring to relationships on our own is not good enough.

This is not to say that product advertising's version of the good life is monolithic and unchanging. Together with news and entertainment programming over the Internet or via traditional media outlets, advertising reflects current trends in the culture—some of them conflicting—even as it molds and reinforces them. Some components of the culture's dominant ideology have remained in place through the years—for example, its celebration of "family values." Others have changed to reflect America's increased diversity, including a greater diversity of family lifestyles. But either way, the multiple messages work together to create, sustain, and reinforce our cultural ideology, portraying "appropriate" and "inappropriate" social relations, defining norms and conventions, providing "common sense" understandings, and articulating our central preoccupations and concerns. In so doing, they confirm, reinforce, and often help create our sense of ourselves and our place in the world (Fiske, 1987). Together with other mass media of communication, they are remaking the world itself.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to use the globalized rhetoric hypothesis to expand what might be called the "conventional view" of persuasion. This conventional view is the one that

confines "persuasion" to paradigm cases: it is only about political speeches, product advertisements, sales pitches, public relations, newspaper editorials, and the like. Further, the conventional view tends to draw black-and-white divisions between what is "persuasion" and what is not. By that definition, this textbook is not persuasive; to quote the very old television show *Dragnet*, it is "just the facts and nothing but the facts."

But as the globalized rhetorical hypothesis suggests, there are instances of communication where the intent to persuade is not so clear-cut or where persuasive intent is commingled with other motives for communicating; those who adopt the rhetorical hypothesis are generally convinced that, when it comes to persuasion, there is a lot of "gray area" mixed in with the black and white.

Therefore, even though the "gray area" cases explored in this chapter fall outside what might be called the "core" of persuasion, they are still crucially important. Appreciating their influence on society requires a perspective on any given communicative act as multi-motivated and multi-leveled. What's more, communication often has persuasive effects beyond those that were clearly intended. Moreover, in some contexts, persuasion is simply unavoidable.

Table 2.1 charts these gray areas, identifying four that have been the focus of the chapter. What constitutes the gray areas of persuasion are those that are masked as—or mixed with—information giving, scientific demonstration, entertainment, and seemingly authentic, spontaneous expression.

The key principles of the chapter are:

1 Human beings project images of themselves as they communicate about substantive matters.
2 Communicators are not entirely in control of the effects they produce.
3 Messages make connections between things—between, say, the car being advertised and the life of luxury with which it is linked. As the ad sells the car, it also reinforces desire for a life of luxury.
4 Message recipients are co-creators of meaning. In so doing, they often self-persuade in ways unintended by communicators.
5 Generally, the message is mostly thought of as what is said by the communicator, whether verbally or nonverbally. But broadly speaking, the message is anything to which the message recipient attends and assigns meaning. It may include the context of the message, not just the text; it will probably include the source of the message, not just what is said.

Table 2.1 The Gray Areas of Persuasion

Some Concepts	*And Their Relevance to This Chapter's Discussion*
Communication	is defined in the *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* as "mutually understood symbolic exchange" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).
Persuasion	is defined in this textbook as "human communication designed to influence the judgments and actions of others."
Restricted view of rhetoric	focuses primarily on paradigm cases of persuasion, making clear black–white distinctions between persuasion and non-persuasive communication.
Globalized view of rhetoric	argues that the distinction between persuasion and non-persuasion is overblown, suggesting that there are many gray areas where persuasion is present, but subtle and veiled.
Dominant cultural ideologies (DCIs)	are the systems of belief that tend to go unquestioned in a society. Based in culture, DCIs influence us at an individual level. Because of their unquestioned status, DCIs are of interest when considering the globalized view of rhetoric.

Further Considerations

1 Do you actively seek to promote an image of yourself to others, or do you merely project one? What is the image you seek to cultivate?
2 Consider the case of Gayle Quinnell, the woman who expressed her concerns about Barack Obama at a rally for John McCain. Even after being presented with contrary evidence from her chosen candidate, Quinnell still said that she was going to work to share information that even McCain said was false. Why could McCain not persuade her?
3 Is there a dominant, widely shared ideology in this country, or are there many competing ideologies with no single dominant ideology? How would you describe your own ideology?
4 What is objectivity? As a communicator, is it possible to be fully objective? Discuss in relation to news, textbooks, tax statements, scientific reports, and so forth.
5 Find a YouTube clip of a "regular" non-celebrity person who is engaging in some form of rationalization. How can you tell they are engaging in rationalization?

Key Terms

- Big rhetoric
- Communication is
  - multi-motivated
  - multi-layered
  - multi-dimensional
  - multi-directional
  - multi-faceted
- Consummatory
- Denial of persuasive intent
- Dominant cultural ideologies (DCIs)
- Ethos, pathos, logos
- Expression games
- Globalized rhetoric hypothesis
- Globalized view (of persuasion)
- God words, devil words
- Impression management
- One cannot *not* communicate
- Persuasion in the guise of objectivity
- Priming, agenda setting, and framing
- Restricted view (of persuasion)
- Truthiness

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