



Lecture 3_ Theories of Persuasion

To understand “Effect Models”



Definition of Persuasion

- **“*Being persuaded*”** applied to situations where behavior has been modified by symbolic transactions that could be sometimes indirectly coercive and that appeal to the reason and emotions of the person(s)
- **Attitude shaping**
- **Attitude conversion**
- **Attitude reinforcement**



Related Terms

- **Attitudes**: A person's general evaluation of an object or one's predispositions toward things
- **Beliefs**: Statements that people assume to be true
- **3 components of attitudes**:
 - **Affective**: feeling about an object
 - **Cognitive**: beliefs about an object
 - **Behavioral**: actions toward the object



Cognitive Consistency Theories

■ Basic Assumptions

- Humans have motivations to keep consistency among different cognitive elements regarding the same object.
- Individuals make a decision or form an attitude in the direction to maintain or recover psychological consistency
- Selective exposure, selective perception, selective retention

Heider's Balance Theory

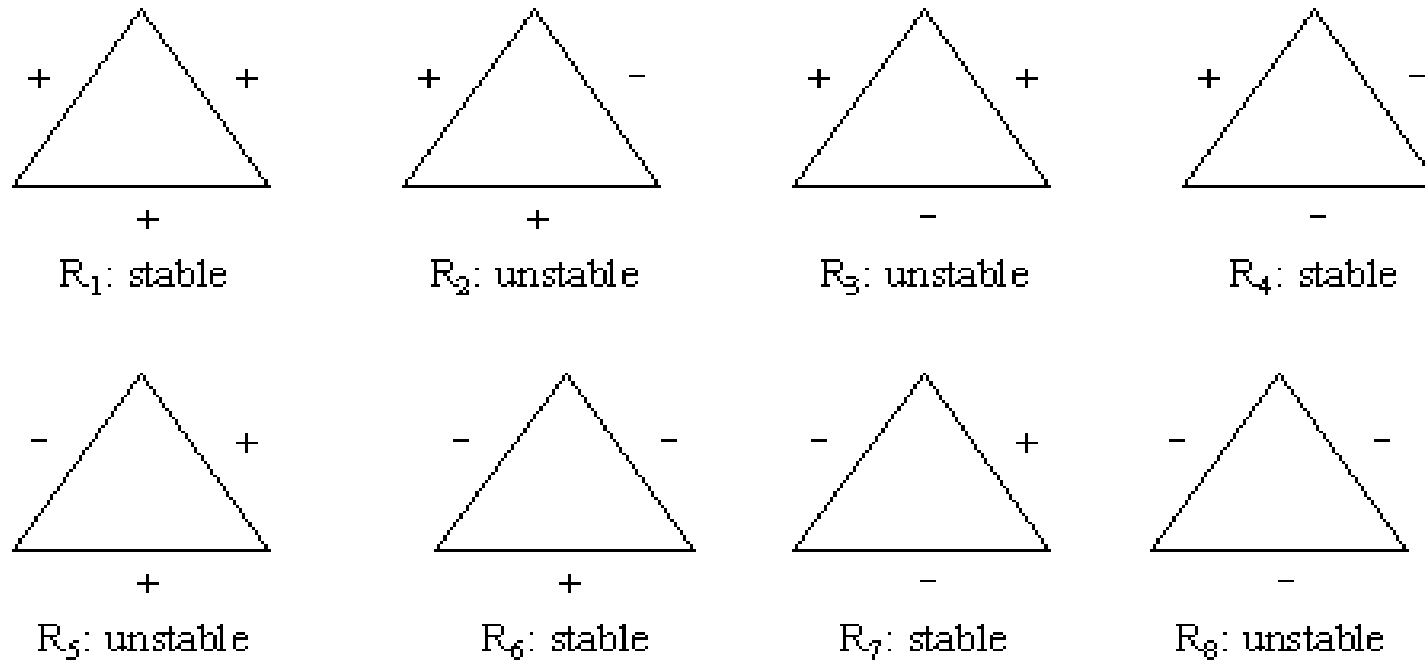
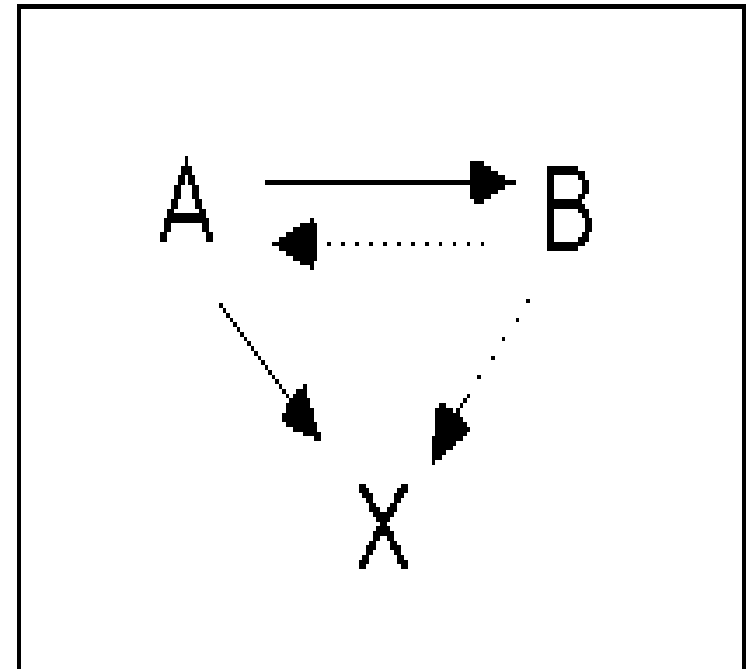


Figure 3: Eight Triangular Relations

Newcomb's Symmetry Model

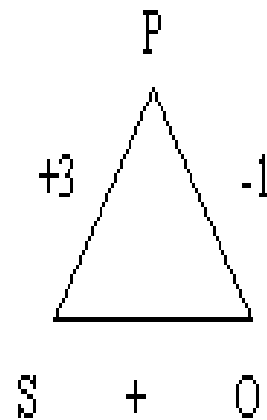
- **Cognitive-consistency model in interpersonal communication**
- **Applied to explain interpersonal influence on attitude changes**
- **Communicative acts occur when inconsistent**



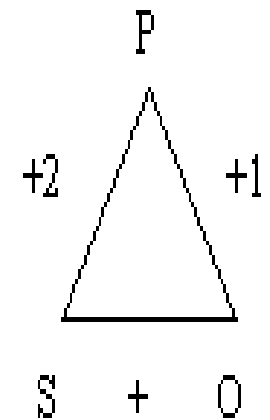
Osgood's Congruity Theory

- Applied to mass communication
- Involving the attitudes towards the sources of information and the objects of the information

Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955) Congruity Theory



Incongruity



Congruity



Cognitive Dissonance Theory

- Developed by Leon Festinger
- **Dissonance**: the state where two elements of knowledge are in a dissonant relation
- Dissonance provokes a psychologically uncomfortable state and motivates the effort to reduce it and achieve consonance.
 - *Free Choice*
 - *Induced Compliance*



Process Models of Persuasion

- **Attitude change is mediated by the thoughts that occur in the recipient's mind over time.**
- **These models focus on how people process persuasive messages, that is, their information processing.**
- **These models give a more active role to the receiver as an information-processing agent than earlier models.**



Basic Assumptions

- **People are economy minded, investing cognitive effort in a task only when there are sufficient motivation and cognitive resources.**
- **People rarely process information in perfect conditions because of both environmental and cognitive constraints**
- **In many cases, people process a persuasion message superficially, attending only to some peripheral cues.**



Heuristic-Systematic Model

- **Systematic Information Processing**
 - A comprehensive analytic orientation to information processing
 - Evaluation of the validity of the advocated position by scrutinizing the persuasive information and relating it to prior knowledge

- **Heuristic Information Processing**
 - Focusing on the subset of information and using simple decision rules or heuristics which are stored in memory



Elaboration Likelihood Model

- Persuasion is largely a function of the likelihood that receivers will engage in elaboration of the persuasive message (by Petty & Cacioppo)
- Elaboration: issue-relevant thinking
- Dual routes to attitude change depending on the degree of elaboration
 - Central route
 - Peripheral route



The Dual Routes

- **The Central Route**: When the receiver actively processes the information while being persuaded by the rationality of the message; elaboration in relative high
- **The Peripheral route**: When attitude change is guided by some simple cues such as source credibility, the mood of the receiver, styles, etc.
- **The Factors Influencing Elaboration**
 - Motivation & cognitive ability



Source factors: Credibility

- **Receiver based construct**
 - **Judgments made by a perceiver concerning the believability of a communicator**
- **Factors influencing credibility judgments**
 - **Information about the communicator's education, occupation, and experience**
 - **Fluencies in delivery (oral communication)**
 - **Citation of evidence sources**



Primary Dimensions of Credibility

- **Expertise: knowledge about a given subject**
 - Experienced/inexperienced
 - Qualified/unqualified
 - Intelligent/unintelligent
 - Competent/incompetent

- **Trustworthiness: an impression of honesty and integrity**
 - Moral/immoral
 - Ethical/unethical
 - Just/unjust



Credibility and Persuasion Effects

- **Credibility as a cue**
 - Under conditions of low personal relevance
- **The Sleeper Effect**
 - The effects of credibility change over time
 - Unlike the traditional view, a delayed impact may be greater than an initial effect.
 - The persuasive effects of a message from a low credibility source may increase over time.
 - Disassociation of a message from its sources in the minds of receivers



Message Factors: Fear Appeals

- **Fear: aroused when a situation is perceived to do harm to one's well being**
 - **Generally effective in attitude & behavior changes.**
 - **Why? Experiencing fear desire protection; fear also influences information-processing**
 - **Moderate levels of fear appeals: perceived reality**



Message Factors: One or two-sided

- How to structure a message or how to present an argument
- One-sided message: More effective for the people who...
- Two-sided message: More effective for the people who...
- Supportive versus refutational message



Theory of Inoculation

- **Sometimes, the persuader's goal may not be to change attitudes but to make attitudes resistant to possible change.**
- **Major Assumptions**
 - **Most people have many unchallenged beliefs.**
 - **Those beliefs can often be easily swayed because people are not used to defending them.**
 - **A biological analogy: immunization**



Inoculation Strategy

- **Two major defensive strategies**
 - **Supportive defense**
 - **Refutational defense (inoculation)**
- **Why immunization works?**
 - **The experience of seeing the first attacks refuted can lower the credibility of the later attacks.**
 - **Pre-exposure to attacks may make a person more aware that his/her beliefs are vulnerable.**
 - **Pre-exposure to attacks may motivate the person to develop additional supporting arguments.**