

2 Attitude Change and Persuasion

Past, Present, and Future Directions

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A fundamental goal of consumer psychology research is to shed light on the underlying psychological factors that drive consumer behavior. With this objective in mind, consumer psychologists have long emphasized the importance of understanding *attitudes*. Attitudes refer to the general and relatively enduring evaluations people have of other people, objects, or ideas. Stated differently, attitudes represent the extent to which one likes or dislikes something – for example, a product, company, or brand. Because attitudes can be one of the core drivers of consumer behavior (e.g., choosing one product over another, purchasing now versus later, spending more versus less, and so on), they have been the subject of considerable scrutiny in consumer psychology. Not surprisingly, perhaps, consumer psychologists have been especially interested in understanding the means by which consumers' attitudes can be shaped or changed, particularly in the context of persuasive messages.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of past, present, and future research on attitude change and persuasion. More specifically, we (1) review some of the classic research on persuasion to provide an overview of this area, (2) highlight what we view as some of the crucial recent developments in this field, and then (3) discuss several unanswered questions and opportunities for future research. Our goal is not to be exhaustive in our coverage of any of one of these topics, but rather to offer an illustrative review of the field and, hopefully, some encouragement to pursue what we see as some of the novel and important next steps. Before turning to our review, it is useful to consider some general background issues.

Attitudes

As noted, attitudes refer to our general evaluations of people (e.g., politicians), objects (e.g., new products), or issues (e.g., social policies). Attitudes can vary in a number of important ways. First, of course, they can vary in *valence*. Some attitudes are positive, some are negative, and others are relatively neutral. Consumers' attitudes toward a particular car, for instance, might range from positive (liking it) to neutral (neither liking nor disliking it) to negative (disliking it). Moreover, attitudes can differ in their *extremity*, or the extent to which they deviate from neutral (Abelson, 1995). Indeed, two

consumers could both report liking a car (i.e., have attitudes of the same valence), but differ in the extent to which they like it, such that one has a mild liking for the car and the other a more extreme liking. Given the well-documented link between attitudes and behavior (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), these individuals could be expected to behave differently toward the car despite both holding positive attitudes.

In addition to varying in valence and extremity, attitudes can differ in their underlying *bases*. According to the classic tripartite theory (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960; Zanna & Rempel, 1988), attitudes can be based to varying degrees on affect or feelings (e.g., “this car feels fun to drive”), cognition or beliefs (e.g., “this car is fuel efficient”), and past or current behavior (e.g., “we have always driven this kind of car in my family”). Interestingly, people’s perceptions of their attitude bases can be as important as their actual attitude bases in determining their future thoughts and actions (e.g., See, Petty, & Fabrigar, 2008). Generally speaking, persuasive messages are more effective at inducing attitude change when they match (e.g., an emotional appeal targeting an affect-based attitude) rather than mismatch (e.g., a rational appeal targeting an affect-based attitude) the actual or perceived basis of the target attitude (e.g., Edwards, 1990; Fabrigar & Petty, 1999; Mayer & Tormala, 2010; See, Petty, & Fabrigar, 2008; See, Fabrigar, & Petty, 2013). As noted, people can base their attitudes not only on affect and cognition, but also on behavioral information (see Briñol & Petty, 2008). We will address this embodiment approach in the present review by describing research showing that people’s physical postures, facial expressions, and bodily movements can all play an important role in attitude formation and change.

Attitudes can also differ in their underlying strength. *Attitude strength* refers to the durability and impact of an attitude (Petty & Krosnick, 1995). Durability encapsulates an attitude’s resistance to change, such that strong (relative to weak) attitudes generally persist longer over time and are more resistant in the face of attack. Impact refers to the attitude’s influence over thoughts and behavior; in general, strong attitudes exert greater influence on thoughts (e.g., produce more attitude-consistent thinking) and behavior (e.g., produce more attitude-consistent behavior) than do their weaker counterparts. Thus, attitude strength can be a crucial moderator of persuasion effects – making it harder to change attitudes in some cases than in others – and also a crucial target of influence (e.g., strategically increasing consumers’ attitude strength when they already hold the desired position).

Over the years, attitude strength has been construed, and operationally defined, in a number of different ways (see Bassili, 1996; Petty & Krosnick, 1995). Some indicators of strength have been viewed as relatively objective in nature. For instance, attitude extremity (distance from neutrality; Abelson, 1995), attitude accessibility (the speed with which an attitude comes to mind; Fazio, 1995), and attitude ambivalence (the presence of conflicting positive and negative evaluations of the same object, which tends to weaken an attitude; Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995) can all be viewed as somewhat objective in

that they do not require people to introspect and report their perception of their own strength. Indeed, people can be ambivalent and not even know it if, for example, they have just a single consciously endorsed attitude that is univalent (e.g., “I do not like scary movies at all”) but contradicted by opposing cultural associations (“scary movies are quite popular”) or even a former attitude that is now rejected (“I used to like them”). In such cases, people can show signs of *implicit ambivalence* that weakens their attitudes even though they do not perceive or endorse having any attitude conflict (Petty & Briñol, 2012; Petty, Briñol, & DeMarree, 2007; Petty, Tormala, Briñol, & Jarvis, 2006).

Other strength indicators are more subjective in nature in that they revolve around people’s perceptions of their own attitudes and whether they are personally important (Boninger, Krosnick, Berent, & Fabrigar, 1995), backed by extensive knowledge (Davidson, Yantis, Norwood, & Montano, 1985), and held with confidence or certainty (for reviews, see Rucker, Tormala, Petty, & Briñol, 2014; Tormala & Rucker, 2007). Of importance, regardless of the particular operationalization of strength in a study, and whether it is viewed as objective or subjective, the dominant perspective is that each dimension or type of strength matters because it shapes the attitude’s durability and impact.

Finally, attitudes themselves, and the measures used to study them, have been viewed as varying along a continuum ranging from explicit to implicit. Indeed, after a long tradition of assessing the impact of influence treatments, such as persuasive messages, on attitudes using deliberative self-report measures (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Petty & Wegener, 1998), recent work has also used measures that tap the more automatic evaluations associated with objects, issues, and people. Techniques that assess automatic evaluative associations without directly asking people to report their attitudes are often referred to as *implicit measures*, whereas assessments that tap more deliberative and acknowledged evaluations are referred to as *explicit measures* (see Gawronski & Payne, 2010; Petty, Fazio, & Briñol, 2009, for reviews). Although implicit and explicit measures sometimes appear discrepant (e.g., Briñol, Petty, & Wheeler, 2006), they do often yield the same outcome (e.g., both revealing that a person likes a particular brand). In the present review, we will focus mainly on deliberative, self-report attitudes as those have been the primary focus of researchers in consumer psychology, though recent research has begun to test the effects of persuasive messages on implicit attitudes as well (Briñol, Petty, & McCaslin, 2009; Perkins & Forehand, 2010; Smith, De Houwer, & Nosek, 2013).

Persuasion: Source, Message, and Recipient Factors

There are many ways to organize the literature on attitude change and persuasion. One way, which we follow in the current chapter, revolves around the basic distinction among source, message, and recipient variables. Stated differently, researchers often think about persuasion in terms of *who* says *what*

to *whom*. Indeed, classic persuasion research essentially viewed these categories as the “3 Ws” of persuasion, whereby maximizing relevant variables within these buckets would facilitate successful persuasion outcomes. In the 1950s, when persuasion became a central focus of social and consumer psychology research, this was the prevailing view on the factors determining a given message’s likely success or failure. Since then, we have learned much more about the underlying psychological mechanisms driving persuasion and the interactions among source, message, and recipient factors, but it remains a useful trichotomy for organizing the literature. For the remainder of this chapter, we will briefly review some of the classic research on persuasion, dive deeper into recent developments in this field, and then highlight open questions and new directions, using the source-message-recipient framework as a guide for organizing and understanding the literature.

Classic Conceptualizations: Who Says What to Whom?

Source Factors

Source factors in persuasion refer to aspects of the individual or company that crafts and delivers the persuasive message. There is a voluminous body of research examining the many dimensions of message sources that can play a role in persuasion (for a review, see Briñol & Petty, 2009a). These dimensions include source credibility, attractiveness, and numerical status, among many others. The classic view on these source dimensions is that because they are positively valenced, more of them – for example, more credibility or more attractiveness – fosters more persuasion. Thus, the conventional persuasive prescription was to increase favorable source factors as a means to persuasion. For a historical review on this main effect approach to persuasion, we refer readers to Petty and Briñol (2008).

Perhaps the most frequently studied source factor is source credibility (Kelman & Hovland, 1953; for reviews see Petty & Wegener, 1998; Pornpitakpan, 2004). Source credibility is an umbrella construct that captures both the expertise and trustworthiness of the source of a message. *Expertise* generally refers to the amount of knowledge one has or one’s perceived ability to provide accurate and truthful information. *Trustworthiness* describes one’s perceived honesty or motivation to provide accurate and truthful information. In general, whether credibility is operationalized in terms of expertise (Rhine & Severance, 1970) or trustworthiness (Mills & Jellison, 1967), the classic finding is that the more credibility the source of a message has, the more persuaded his or her audience will be. As noted by Petty and colleagues (e.g., Petty, 1997; Petty & Briñol, 2008), early theories of persuasion often suggested that there was likely to be just one mechanism or process that was responsible for whichever outcome was produced. For example, an expert source was thought to increase persuasion by getting a person to learn or internalize the message arguments (Kelman, 1958).

In addition to credibility, other source dimensions such as attractiveness have proven important to persuasion. In general, the more the audience likes the source, the more persuasion there tends to be. As one example, physically attractive sources have been found to be more persuasive than physically unattractive sources (Snyder & Rothbart, 1971). Relatedly, a source's celebrity status has been shown to influence persuasion (e.g., Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983); under some conditions, celebrities are more persuasive than unfamiliar sources. Furthermore, consistent with the widely documented similarity-attraction effect (i.e., the notion that people tend to like similar others more than dissimilar others; Byrne, 1971), more persuasion tends to occur when the source of a message is similar to the audience. And importantly, source similarity can increase persuasion regardless of whether the similar dimension is important (e.g., when the source and recipient share important values) or unimportant (e.g., when the source simply mimics the recipient's subtle non-verbal behaviors; Fleming & Petty, 2000). Importantly, while source credibility has been argued to induce agreement because of increased acceptance of the message arguments, the traditional view of attractiveness was that it increases persuasion by boosting identification with the message source (Kelman, 1958).

Potentially related to the dimensions of credibility and attractiveness, a source's numerical status – that is, the degree to which the source is in the statistical majority or minority on a topic – can play an important role in persuasion. All else being equal, people have been shown to be more influenced by numerical majorities than by numerical minorities (see Wood et al. 1994; Tormala, Petty, & DeSensi, 2010). For instance, a persuasive message that ostensibly represents 75 percent of surveyed consumers' views tends to be more effective at inducing attitude change than a message representing only 25 percent of consumers' views. Traditionally, majorities were thought to be more persuasive because people seek to belong to and be accepted by the majority group (Moscovici, 1980, 1985).

Finally, source power can be important as well. Power typically involves an individual's perceived ability to control others' outcomes by providing or withholding rewards or punishments (see Chapter 12 in this volume). In general, powerful sources have been found to produce more attitude change and persuasion than powerless sources (e.g., Festinger & Thibaut, 1951; French & Raven, 1959). Classic work on this topic suggested that this effect stems from mere compliance and should be attenuated in the absence of the powerful source (e.g., Kelman, 1958).

Message Factors

In addition to source factors, message factors are crucial to persuasion. Message factors refer to characteristics of the message itself; for example, what is written or spoken in an advertisement, product review, or restaurant recommendation. Viewed differently, whereas source factors refer to features of the person or company delivering the message, message factors pertain to what that person or

company actually says. Broadly speaking, message factors can be viewed in terms of what the source says (e.g., what position they take, how compelling the arguments are), how much of it they say (e.g., number of arguments), and how often they say it (e.g., argument repetition).

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of a persuasive message is its position, or direction. That is, does the message argue against or in favor of the attitude object? Even more crucial in some ways is whether the message is proattitudinal or counterattitudinal, meaning it is congruent or incongruent with recipients' initial attitudes, respectively (Clark & Wegener, 2013). All else equal, proattitudinal messages tend to be more convincing and persuasive than counterattitudinal messages (e.g., Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979). The traditional explanation for this effect is that proattitudinal messages fall within the recipient's latitude of acceptance (Sherif & Hovland, 1961) and, thus, are evaluated more favorably.

A related distinction is whether a message is one-sided or two-sided (Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1949). Whereas one-sided messages contain arguments that advocate exclusively in the direction of the advocated position or product, two-sided messages contain arguments both against and in favor of it. A considerable amount of research has shown that two-sided messages can be more persuasive than one-sided messages, and this has been thought to occur because considering both sides increases the source's perceived trustworthiness (Crowley & Hoyer, 1994; Etgar & Goodwin, 1982; Pechmann, 1992). Even simply acknowledging minor blemishes or product flaws has been found to boost persuasion under some conditions by making the remaining positive features seem even more positive (Ein-Gar, Shiv, & Tormala, 2012).

Beyond the direction or valence of arguments in a message, there are many other message features that play an important role in persuasion. For example, argument quality – or message strength – refers to how compelling or convincing the arguments in a message are. For instance, a strong message that advocates changing a particular behavior (such as exercising) might highlight consequences of that behavior that are highly desirable, highly likely, and extremely important. A weaker message, by contrast, would highlight consequences that are less desirable, likely, or important. A voluminous body of research suggests that people tend to be more persuaded by strong rather than weak arguments (see Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty & Wegener, 1998), because strong arguments elicit more favorable message-relevant thoughts.

The sheer number of arguments presented in a message can impact persuasion as well. Specifically, messages with more arguments often lead to more persuasion than messages with fewer arguments (Calder, Insko, & Yandell, 1974; Josephs, Giesler, & Silvera, 1994; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Similarly, in product evaluation studies, it has been shown that products with more attributes sometimes appear more desirable to consumers than products with fewer attributes (e.g., Sela & Berger, 2012). This effect is consistent with the notion of a general numerosity heuristic (Pelham, Sumarta, & Myaskovsky, 1994), in which people operate according to a “more is better” rule.

As a final example, research has found that simply repeating a message can increase persuasion. This effect was originally explained by the fact that repetition facilitates learning the message arguments. As it turned out, the number of repetitions and other contextual factors were critical to this effect. For example, a few repetitions enhances persuasion, but many repetitions can undo and even reverse this effect (Cacioppo & Petty, 1979; 1989; Gorn & Goldberg, 1980; Miller, 1976). The logic is similar to that articulated in the literature on mere repeated exposure (e.g., Bornstein, 1989; Grush, 1976; Zajonc, 1968), where initial repetition enhances positive associations but over-exposure can attenuate this effect.

Recipient Factors

Finally, recipient factors also are a critical determinant of persuasion. These refer to features or characteristics of the target audience – that is, the individuals who will receive the persuasive message. Recipient factors can be stable or situational (e.g., intelligence or current mood, respectively) and can vary along numerous dimensions. Of central import in early persuasion research were variables that affect motivation and the ability to process and understand persuasive messages, as well as variables that directly affect interpretations of those messages. Consider intelligence. Past research shows that as an audience's intelligence increases, the audience becomes more difficult to persuade (Rhodes & Wood, 1992). The initial explanation for this effect was that intelligence provides individuals with the ability both to evaluate the persuasiveness of an appeal and to counter the information presented.

Of course, there are numerous recipient factors relevant to persuasion beyond intelligence, such as self-esteem, personality, knowledge, and many others. Perhaps the most studied recipient variable concerns the emotional state of the recipient of the persuasion attempt (Petty & Briñol, 2015). As one classic example, happiness has been shown to increase persuasion as a result of classical conditioning (i.e., people associating their current happiness with the message or attitude object). Another prominent recipient factor that has received considerable attention pertains to the recipient's overt physical behavior, or what they are currently doing with their bodies (see Briñol & Petty, 2008). For instance, Cacioppo, Priester, and Berntson (1993) found that neutral Chinese ideographs (irrelevant stimuli for the sample of participants) presented during arm flexion (a pulling or approach behavior) were subsequently evaluated more favorably than ideographs presented during arm extension (a pushing or avoidance behavior). Similarly, Wells and Petty (1980) found that inducing mere head nodding could influence one's agreement with a persuasive message. Like mood effects, one reason these embodiment effects could occur is through classical conditioning, whereby positive behaviors become directly associated with the attitude object (Staats & Staats, 1958).

Another recipient factor, which we devote more attention to later in this chapter, includes recipients' "cognitive feelings" (Clore & Parrott, 1994), such

as processing ease or fluency. In general, ease is associated with more persuasion than difficulty; that is, people form more favorable attitudes toward stimuli that feel easy to process (e.g., Labroo, Dhar, & Schwarz, 2008; Lee & Labroo, 2004) and are more persuaded when they can easily generate supportive reasons (e.g., because just a few are requested; Wänke, Bohner, & Jurkowitsch, 1997). The original account for this effect made reference to an availability heuristic whereby people infer that there were more reasons available when it was easy rather than difficult to generate examples (Schwarz et al., 1991).

Contextual Factors: When and Why

After a few decades of research focusing on understanding source, message, and recipient factors as a prescription for successful persuasion, researchers in the 1980s turned their attention away from asking *whether* these variables affected persuasion and instead began to emphasize *when* and *why* they affect persuasion (for a more thorough discussion of the reasons for this shift, see Petty, 1997). This new wave of research provided deeper insight into a number of puzzling issues in the field, including why some factors (e.g., an expert source) sometimes increased persuasion but in other cases undermined it, as well as why attitude change sometimes seemed durable and impactful (e.g., producing attitudes that guide behavior) but other times seemed rather transitory or ephemeral.

The result of this shifted focus was the development of new theories capable of accounting for multiple effects, processes, and consequences of persuasion. Of particular import were the elaboration likelihood model (ELM; Petty & Briñol, 2012; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), and the heuristic-systematic model (HSM; Chaiken & Ledgerwood, 2012; Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989). These frameworks helped shed new light on the multiple ways a given variable could affect attitude change in different contexts. One crucial insight, first articulated in the ELM, was that the psychological processes mediating the effects of any persuasion variable on attitude change could be organized into a finite set that operate at different points on an elaboration continuum. That is, the process guiding a given variable's effect on persuasion – determining the presence or absence of the effect, the direction of the effect, and the durability and downstream impact of the effect – depended critically on the amount of thinking the recipient was likely to engage in. Under low thinking conditions, variables can affect persuasion by operating as a simple cue or heuristic. Under relatively high thinking conditions, the same variables might impact persuasion through more thoughtful means such as by affecting the direction of thoughts that come to mind or serving as a piece of evidence (i.e., an argument) to be scrutinized. When thinking is not constrained to be low or high, the same variables can shape persuasion by affecting the amount of message-relevant thinking that occurs. In the parlance of the ELM, the processes engaged at the low end of the elaboration continuum are referred to as the *peripheral route*,

whereas processes engaged at the high end of the continuum are referred to as the *central route*. The more persuasion is based on thoughtful processing – that is, the more central route the process is – the more it tends to persist over time, resist attempts at change, and have consequences for other judgments and behavior (Petty, Haugtvedt, & Smith, 1995).

To offer one example of the organizational and predictive utility of this multiprocess framework, consider source credibility. Traditional views held that credible sources were more persuasive because people have a heuristic that, “if an expert says it, it must be true” (Chaiken, 1980). Consistent with this perspective, early research revealed that source credibility effects on persuasion are more prominent when people are not very motivated or able to think carefully (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). However, subsequent studies suggested that source credibility does not always operate according to a simple cue or heuristic. Also, more credibility does not always foster more persuasion. That may be the dominant effect, but a more nuanced look indicates that source credibility can produce different effects in different circumstances.

For example, when thinking is not initially constrained to be high or low, credibility can influence persuasion by affecting the amount of thinking people do. When people are unsure whether a message warrants or needs scrutiny, they can use the credibility of the source as a guide – for instance, thinking more about a message from a knowledgeable source than a source lacking in knowledge (e.g., Heesacker, Petty, & Cacioppo, 1983). Furthermore, if high credibility entices someone to think more about a message but that message has weak arguments, then high credibility can be associated with *reduced* persuasion, the opposite of its effect when serving as a simple heuristic. Consistent with this logic, having an expert source sometimes increases persuasion when message arguments are strong but decreases it when message arguments are weak (Bohner, Ruder, & Erb, 2002; Heesacker, Petty, & Cacioppo, 1983).

When processing motivation and ability are high, such as when the message feels highly relevant (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979) and recipients are undistracted (Petty, Wells, & Brock, 1976), people think more carefully about a message. Nevertheless, that thinking can be quite biased – for example, by source credibility. Chaiken and Maheswaran (1994) found that when a message topic was personally important but ambiguous, meaning that recipients were motivated to think about the message but it was not clearly cogent or specious in its own right, an expert (vs. non-expert) source produced more persuasion by biasing the direction of people’s thoughts. Under very similar conditions, Tormala, Briñol, and Petty (2006) also found that credible sources could increase persuasion by biasing the valence of recipients’ message-relevant thinking.

By now, considerable research has demonstrated that numerous variables beyond source credibility can have this same complexity of effects and mechanisms depending on recipients’ initial motivation to process (see Petty & Wegener, 1998). As one additional example, a message recipient’s happiness can act as a simple cue to persuasion under low thinking conditions (Slovic, Finucane, Peters, & Macgregor, 2002), be analyzed as an argument (Martin, Ward,

Achee, & Wyer, 1993) or bias the direction of thoughts (Petty, Schumann, Richman, & Strathman, 1993) under high thinking conditions, and influence his or her amount of thinking when that thinking is initially unconstrained to be high or low (Schwarz, Bless, & Bohner, 1991). Based on its ability to integrate this diversity of effects and processes, the ELM emerged as the dominant theory of persuasion, specifying the processes by which source, message, recipient, and context factors shape persuasive outcomes and processes (for historical reviews of the ELM, see Briñol & Petty, 2012; Petty & Briñol, 2012).

Current Developments: A Metacognitive Reconceptualization

As just described, following the first few decades of research on persuasion, we gained much insight into the complexity of source, message, and recipient effects with the development of multiprocess theories such as the ELM and HSM. Research guided by these frameworks shed light on the multiple roles that source, message, and recipient variables play in persuasion. Continuing in this vein, research in the past two decades years has made great strides in deepening our understanding of the processes through which persuasion variables exert their impact and expanding our insight into their diverse and previously unidentified outcomes. Perhaps the greatest shift in this domain has been the new focus on metacognitive factors in persuasion. *Metacognition* refers to thinking about thinking – that is, people’s thoughts about their own or other people’s thoughts, judgments, and mental processes (for a review, see Briñol & DeMarree, 2012; Petty, Briñol, Tormala, & Wegener, 2007). Recently, there has been an enormous influx of research investigating metacognitive inputs, mechanisms, and outcomes in persuasion.

One of the most influential demonstrations that people’s thoughts about their thoughts can be consequential came from research on the *ease of retrieval* paradigm. In the original study on this topic, Schwarz, Bless, Strack, and colleagues (1991) asked participants to list either six (which was easy) or twelve (which was difficult) examples of their own assertiveness. Interestingly, people asked to retrieve fewer examples subsequently viewed themselves as *more* assertive, because their experience of generating or retrieving relevant cognitions was subjectively easier. This cognitive ease, in turn, can lead people to infer that many more such cognitions are likely to be available (Schwarz, 2004) or that those cognitions that came to mind are valid and can be held with confidence (Tormala, Petty, & Briñol, 2002). As we will discuss, this basic idea and finding have fostered numerous and important insights in attitude change and persuasion.

Rucker and Tormala (2012) recently reviewed other metacognitive approaches relevant to the consumer domain. As just as one example, the persuasion knowledge model (Friestad & Wright, 1994, 1995; Kirmani & Campbell, 2004) proposes that consumers hold lay theories about persuasion involving the agent of persuasion, the target of persuasion, and their

interaction. Moreover, consumers use these theories to evaluate persuasion attempts (e.g., advertisements and sales pitches), assess their validity and sincerity, and determine whether it is appropriate or inappropriate to be influenced by them. These perceptions, or lay theories, are then used as a basis for responding and yielding to or resisting the influence attempt (for a recent empirical example of naive theories about consumer persuasion, see Briñol, Rucker, & Petty, 2015). Other examples of metacognitive approaches in consumer research that are relevant to understanding attitude and persuasion processes include the accessibility-diagnostics model (Feldman & Lynch, 1988; Lynch, 2006) and the multiple pathway anchoring and adjustment model (Cohen & Reed, 2006).

In this new wave of metacognition research, particular emphasis has been placed on studying the sense of certainty people have about their own thoughts and attitudes. In general, being certain about a thought or attitude means that one holds the thought or attitude with confidence or conviction and believes it is valid (Rucker et al., 2014). This feeling of confidence or conviction can stem from one's perception that the thought or attitude is correct or simply that it is clear in one's mind (Petrocelli, Tormala, & Rucker, 2007). In either case, certainty can have crucial implications for persuasion and other attitude-relevant outcomes.

For the most part, recent insights into the role of psychological certainty in persuasion has emanated from two research streams. One, termed the self-validation hypothesis (Briñol, Petty, & Tormala, 2004; Petty, Briñol, & Tormala, 2002), has focused on the role of *thought confidence* in persuasion. Conventional research in persuasion largely focused on the amount and valence of people's thinking when they receive persuasive messages. In addition to these two dimensions of thought, the self-validation hypothesis introduced the notion of thought confidence. In essence, the notion is that when individuals receive persuasive messages, it is not only the number and direction of their thoughts that matter but also the confidence with which they hold those individual thoughts (and the extent to which they like their thoughts). Thoughts that are liked and held with high confidence exert more impact on persuasion than thoughts that are disliked or held with low confidence.

In fact, some studies have revealed that having more thoughts in one direction (e.g., positive) can push attitudes in the other direction (e.g., negative) if those thoughts are held with low confidence (e.g., Tormala, Petty & Briñol, 2002). Similarly, research has demonstrated that increasing positive dimensions of a given persuasion variable (e.g., using a source with greater credibility) can sometimes undermine persuasion if doing so boosts confidence in negative thoughts (e.g., because the message contains weak arguments; Tormala, Briñol, & Petty, 2006). These effects are particularly likely to emerge if people are engaged in thoughtful processing and have both the motivation and ability to reflect on their own thinking. Thus, like the ELM, the self-validation hypothesis identifies conditions under which, and new and unique processes through which, normally positive factors can have negative persuasion effects and vice versa.

Another metacognitive factor that has received considerable scrutiny in recent persuasion research is *attitude certainty*. Although attitude certainty has a storied history in attitudes research (see Gross, Holtz, & Miller, 1995), its emergence as a central variable in persuasion is a more recent development (see Rucker et al., 2014). This emergence began with research on resistance to persuasion (Tormala, Clarkson, & Petty, 2006; Tormala & Petty, 2002; see also Petty, Tormala, & Rucker, 2004; Tormala, 2008), where it was observed that, contrary to previous assumptions, when people resisted persuasive attacks on their attitudes, those attitudes did not remain literally unchanged. On the contrary, when people resist persuasion (meaning they received a persuasive message, but their attitude valence and extremity were unchanged), they can perceive and reflect upon this resistance and then make upward or downward adjustments to attitude certainty. Consequently, persuasive messages that seem on the surface to have had no effect on attitude change can actually have an important impact on attitude certainty, which has implications for future behavior, future openness to persuasion, and so on.

Based on these kinds of findings, a great deal of persuasion research has turned from the traditional focus on the amount and direction of thoughts, or even on attitudes per se, to understanding changes in the certainty people associate with those thoughts and attitudes. This metacognitive shift has expanded existing understandings of the effects of persuasion variables on attitudinal outcomes, and it has deepened our insight into the mechanisms driving those effects. In this section, we revisit the source-message-recipient trichotomy to highlight some of the novel insights we have gained as a result of this new metacognitive emphasis. In some areas (e.g., source factors), there has been considerable research on both thought confidence and attitude certainty. In other areas, the attention has been relatively more focused on either attitude certainty (e.g., message factors) or thought confidence (e.g., recipient factors). Thus, it is a developing area of research with much work to be done. In this section, we review relevant work on psychological certainty following the source-message-recipient trichotomy.

Source Effects on Certainty

Consider source effects on metacognitive certainty. These effects have been examined in the context of both thought confidence (and the self-validation hypothesis) and attitude certainty, but in both domains the common emphasis has been on understanding the ways in which classic source variables in persuasion affect metacognitive certainty.

First, various source factors have been shown to influence people's perceptions of their own thoughts. For example, in addition to providing a simple heuristic to persuasion or influencing the amount or valence of thoughts people generate while processing a message, source credibility is now known to influence the confidence with which people hold their thoughts that come to mind during persuasive messages. Consistent with the logic that credibility influences

the perceived validity of information contained in a message (Kaufman, Stasson, & Hart, 1999), people tend to have more confidence in their message-relevant thoughts when source expertise and trustworthiness are high rather than low (e.g., Briñol, Petty, & Tormala, 2004). Moreover, because of this effect, source credibility can under some conditions backfire and undermine persuasion. Specifically, when people receive a message containing weak arguments and have negative thoughts about it, high source credibility can increase confidence in those negative thoughts (Tormala, Briñol, & Petty, 2006) and undermine persuasion. Thus, the metacognitive perspective allows us to predict and understand further instances in which normally positive persuasion variables have negative implications for persuasion.

Importantly, this metacognitive effect of source credibility depends on two critical moderators. First, source credibility affects persuasion through thought confidence only under high thinking conditions, such as when participants are relatively high rather than low in need for cognition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Indeed, considering the validity of one's own thoughts requires both motivation and ability to process (Petty, Briñol, & DeMarree, 2007). Under low thinking conditions, source credibility operates as a simple cue to persuasion, as in past research (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). Second, Tormala, Briñol, and Petty (2007) demonstrated that source credibility affects thought confidence only when the source information follows rather than precedes the persuasive message. When source information precedes a message under high thinking conditions, it biases the direction or valence of thoughts, as reviewed earlier (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). In short, elaboration and timing are two important moderators of self-validation effects.

Like source credibility, majority versus minority source status can affect persuasion by influencing the confidence with which people hold their individual thoughts. In one study, Horcajo, Petty, and Briñol (2010) presented participants with a persuasive message introducing a new company. The message was composed of either strong or weak arguments. Subsequently, source status was manipulated by attributing the message to a source in the numerical minority or majority. As predicted, thought confidence was higher when the source had majority rather than minority status. As a consequence, the majority endorsement increased persuasion when participants had positive thoughts (strong argument condition), but decreased persuasion when participants had negative thoughts (weak argument condition). Again, though, the effect of source status on thought confidence occurred only when source information followed information processing and when elaboration was high (Horcajo, Briñol, & Petty, 2014).

In addition to affecting the confidence people have in their thoughts about a message, source factors can affect the certainty with which people hold their attitudes following a message. For example, recent work indicates that attitude certainty is greater following persuasive messages from high rather than low credibility sources (e.g., Clarkson, Tormala, & Rucker, 2008), even when people resist those messages (Tormala & Petty, 2004a). For instance, if a

consumer receives a counterattitudinal message from an expert (as opposed to a non-expert), the consumer can infer that he or she now has access to the best information on the topic. Regardless of whether the consumer counterargues or accepts the message, having access to the most accurate or valid information on the topic tends to augment attitude certainty. Thus, even in the absence of attitude change as it is traditionally defined (in terms of valence and extremity), the credibility of the source of a message can shape meaningful attitudinal outcomes.

The numerical status of a source also affects attitude certainty. For example, although people typically resist persuasive messages from numerical minorities, research by Tormala, DeSensi, and Petty (2007) suggests that this resistance can mask underlying decreases in attitude certainty. The logic is that derogating (or writing off) a message source simply because that source is in the minority is perceived to be an illegitimate thing to do. Therefore, when people resist for that reason, their attitudes remain intact (e.g., they opposed some policy or product, received a message from a minority source, and then continue to oppose it), but they feel less certain about the attitude because they perceive that they have resisted attitude change for an illegitimate reason (see Rucker et al., 2014, for further discussion of legitimacy and certainty).

Message Effects on Certainty

As noted earlier, whether a message argues against or in favor of a given position is one of the most basic dimensions along which it can vary. Although there has not been much consideration of whether positive or negative messages generate greater certainty, there is some evidence that inducing people to think of their attitudes in terms of what or who they oppose, rather than support, leads to greater attitude certainty and more resistance to subsequent change (Bizer, Larsen, & Petty, 2011; Bizer & Petty, 2005). In addition, there is a considerable body of work examining the effects of learning that others oppose or support one's opinion. In particular, people feel more certain about their thoughts and attitudes when they receive high as opposed to low social consensus feedback – that is, when they learn that others agree rather than disagree with their thoughts and evaluations (e.g., Petrocelli, Tormala, & Rucker, 2007; Petty, Briñol, & Tormala, 2002; Visser & Mirabile, 2004). Interestingly, though, recent research suggests that this well-established effect of social consensus on certainty is moderated by one's need for assimilation versus uniqueness (Clarkson, Tormala, Rucker, & Dugan, 2013). Specifically, high consensus fosters greater certainty when people want to belong with or assimilate to others, but low consensus can foster greater certainty when people desire more uniqueness or differentiation.

Relatedly, people also tend to hold their attitudes with greater certainty when they perceive them to be based on consideration of both sides of an issue – that is, on both the pros and the cons (Rucker & Petty, 2004; Rucker, Petty, & Briñol, 2008). Even when the valence and extremity of their attitudes are no

different (e.g., because considering the cons did not uncover any negatives), merely perceiving that both sides of an issue have been weighed boosts the perception that one's information is more complete. At the same time, if considering both sides of an issue actually reveals conflicting information, such as a favorable product attribute but also a negative customer review, attitude certainty can be lowered as the accuracy of any individual piece of information becomes more questionable (e.g., Koriat, 2012; Smith, Fabrigar, MacDougall, & Wiesensthal, 2008). Thus, perceived consideration of both sides can foster greater certainty as long as that consideration does not yield too much contradictory evidence on a topic.

Argument quality also has been shown to influence attitude certainty. For example, Tormala and Petty (2002; 2004b) found that when people resisted persuasion, the stronger the persuasive message appeared to be, the more certain recipients felt of their original attitudes. In essence, resisting a compelling message is more impressive than resisting a weak or feeble message, leading people to feel more certain about the validity of their original attitudes when those attitudes withstand a strong rather than weak attack. In fact, this effect emerged even when participants across conditions resisted identical messages, but were led to believe that it was strong or weak.

Finally, the amount of information contained in a persuasive message can affect attitude certainty as well. In general, the more information people believe they have received from a message, the more certain they are of their post-message attitudes (Smith et al. 2008). This result has also been observed in research on omission neglect (e.g., Sanbonmatsu, Kardes, & Herr, 1992), which reveals that alerting people to potentially missing information from a message reduces the certainty with which they hold their attitudes. Reduced certainty, in turn, can foster a reluctance to act on one's attitude in the future (see Rucker et al., 2014).

Recipient Effects on Certainty

Just as characteristics of the source and message can affect psychological certainty, so too can characteristics of the target or recipient of the message. Unlike message factors, however, where the bulk of the research attention was on attitude certainty, with recipient factors the lion's share has been focused on understanding the confidence with which people hold their individual message-relevant thoughts.

One prominent feature of message recipients that has received attention is how people behave physically, or what they do with their bodies (see Briñol & Petty, 2008). To summarize, research shows that recipients' body postures, facial expressions, and physical movements can influence persuasion not only by serving as simple cues or affecting the direction and amount of thoughts, but also by affecting thought confidence. As with other sources of thought confidence, the confidence that emerges from behaviors or bodily states can moderate the effect of just about any thought that is currently available or on one's

mind (for a review on embodied validation, see Briñol, Petty, & Wagner, 2012). For instance, in a series of studies Briñol and Petty (2003) found that under high thinking conditions, head movements (e.g., nodding or shaking) affected the confidence people had in their thoughts, which mediated the effect of head movements on persuasion. Consequently, when people generated positive thoughts toward a proposal (e.g., while listening to strong arguments), vertical head movements (i.e., head nodding) led to more favorable attitudes than horizontal head movements (i.e., head shaking). However, when people listened to weak arguments and generated mostly negative thoughts toward the proposal, head nodding led to less favorable attitudes than head shaking. Subsequent research replicated these findings using body postures associated with confidence (e.g., pushing the chest out) versus doubt (e.g., hunching forward with a back curved; Briñol, Petty, & Wagner, 2009).

Research has revealed that emotions can play a similar role in persuasion by affecting thought confidence. For example, Briñol, Petty, and Barden (2007) found that when placed in a happy (versus sad) state following message processing, people felt more confident about their thoughts and relied on them more closely in forming their attitudes and behavioral intentions. Importantly, happiness can validate thoughts by increasing confidence in or liking of them. Thus, happiness increased persuasion when people had positive thoughts, but it decreased persuasion when people had negative thoughts. Replicating other self-validation studies, Briñol, Petty, and Barden (2007) also found support for the idea that emotion effects on thought confidence were restricted to high elaboration conditions (e.g., high need for cognition) and situations in which the emotion induction followed rather than preceded one's thinking. In contrast, under low elaboration conditions (e.g., low need for cognition), emotions had just a main effect on attitudes such that happy participants agreed with the message more than did sad participants. Subsequent research has replicated these findings with more unpleasant emotions that are also associated with confidence, such as anger and disgust (Petty & Briñol, 2015).

Bodily movements, behaviors, and emotions are not the only recipient variables relevant to persuasion. As introduced earlier, more cognitive feelings can also play an important role. For example, the subjective sense of ease with which new information can be perceived or generated has been shown to play an important role in persuasion. Indeed, ease effects – in particular, increased persuasion following the generation of two rather than ten positive arguments on a topic – can also be driven by thought confidence under high elaboration conditions (Tormala, Falces, Briñol, & Petty, 2007; Tormala, Petty, & Briñol, 2002). Moreover, other recipient variables have been studied with regard to self-validation, including self-affirmation, self-confidence, and power (see Briñol & Petty, 2009b, for a review). The confidence that emerges from the fit or matching of two related variables (e.g., Clark, et al., 2013; Huntsinger, 2013) and the confidence that sometimes is associated with responses to threat and aggression (Blankenship, Nesbit, & Murray, 2013; Briñol, Petty, & DeMarree, 2015) can also validate thoughts. As noted, in all of these cases, confidence in positive

thoughts increases persuasion while confidence in negative thoughts reduces persuasion.

In addition to the work just reviewed on thought confidence, there was some research exploring recipient factors that affect attitude certainty. As just one example, there is now considerable evidence that perceived thoughtfulness can influence the certainty with which people hold their attitudes. In general, the more people believe they have thought about or analyzed an object or issue, the more certain they are of their attitude toward it (Barden & Petty, 2008; Barden & Tormala, 2014; Wan, Rucker, Tormala, & Clarkson, 2010). For instance, Wan and colleagues (2010) presented participants with advertisements under conditions of regulatory depletion or non-depletion. Results indicated that when participants were depleted (versus non-depleted), they inferred that they had processed the ads more deeply, and this fostered greater attitude certainty. Interestingly, though, these effects can be moderated by other factors. For instance, Tormala, Clarkson, and Henderson (2011) found that attitude certainty increases when people perceive that they have taken their time and evaluated something slowly as long as the attitude object is unfamiliar. For familiar objects, people may have a different lay theory that reverses the weight given to slow versus fast evaluation.

Remaining Questions and Future Directions

As we have reviewed, attitude change research has a very rich history dating back many decades. Nonetheless, the field continues to evolve, particularly in our collective understanding of the varied and nuanced effects of classic persuasion variables and the mechanisms they trigger. Indeed, over the years, we have moved from the consideration of singular main effect predictions (e.g., that source credibility boosts persuasion) to more complex interaction predictions stemming from new insights around the cognitive processes driving persuasion (e.g., that source credibility can increase or decrease persuasion due to its effect on information processing) to still higher-order predictions for new outcomes based on the discovery of important metacognitive factors in this domain (e.g., showing that thought confidence and attitude certainty can be affected by people's perceptions of source credibility even when their attitude valence and extremity hold constant). Despite, or perhaps because of, this long history and constant evolution, there remain many open questions and opportunities for future research. In this final section of the chapter, we highlight what we see as some of the more interesting and promising next steps.

Before we do, we acknowledge that there have been other recent calls for future research. For example, Briñol and Petty (2012) described four areas of future research in attitudes and persuasion: (1) identifying more moderating conditions for effects and processes (e.g., moving from elaboration and timing to new contextual features), (2) studying new potential consequences of the different mechanisms of attitude change, (3) discovering new underlying

processes of persuasion, and (4) moving from single measures to multiple measures of attitude change. In the latter area, as noted earlier, the impact of persuasion treatments on attitudes first used deliberative measures, whereas now attitude change can also be assessed using automatic measures (Briñol, Petty, & McCaslin, 2009; Smith, De Houwer, & Nosek, 2013). Future research is likely to continue to explore this topic and take advantage of technological advances to understand attitudes. One area that is likely to see an exponential increase in interest concerns how attitudinal processes can be charted with new brain imaging techniques (e.g., Cunningham, Packer, Kesek, & Van Bavel, 2009).

In the remainder of the chapter, we focus on substantive areas and conceptual questions that we see as important to explore in the near future. Interestingly, these questions also key in on the source-message-recipient trichotomy outlined earlier. In particular, we submit that some of the more intriguing directions for new research relate to understanding source-message-recipient dynamics – that is, the interdependent and shifting nature of these variables. For instance, what happens to the source's attitude after delivering a persuasive message? Under what circumstances, and through what mechanisms, do message recipients become future message sources (e.g., advocates for a cause)? When and why do people deliberately act as both source and recipient and design messages to persuade themselves? What determines the kinds of messages that sources elect to deliver to others? We elaborate on these and other questions next.

Source–Recipient Dynamics

One important question that has received some but not nearly enough attention in past research relates to the interdependent relationships between message sources and recipients. For instance, how is the source of a message influenced by the apparent success or failure of that message in changing the recipient's attitude? Building on recent work investigating metacognitive factors in resistance and persuasion (Tormala, 2008), it stands to reason that when the source of a message can perceive the success or failure of his or her persuasion attempt, that perception could influence his or her attitude certainty, openness to future persuasion, and so on. Consistent with this logic, in a classic study in the communications domain, Infante (1976) found that after succeeding (versus failing) to persuade someone, people became more resistant to subsequent counterattitudinal proposals. More recently, Prislin and colleagues (2011) found that a source's initial success or failure in persuading others affected not only his or her certainty, but also his or her actual persuasive efficacy in subsequent persuasion attempts.

We see this area as ripe for further inquiry. As one possibility, just like one's own persuasion or resistance experience can lead one to reflect on one's attitude and adjust certainty upward or downward, we presume there are factors that foster certainty increases and decreases following both successful and unsuccessful attempts at persuading others. Perhaps if one can attribute one's success to the cogency of one's message, for instance, one gains certainty. If one

attributes one's success to situational factors (e.g., the recipient's good mood, or known status as a "yes man"), this effect might disappear or even induce doubt. Also interesting to explore is whether there are interpersonal effects of successful and unsuccessful persuasion attempts. Imagine that a source succeeds in persuading a recipient. Could this success be interpreted as reflecting that the source and recipient share core values and/or think in similar ways? If so, it seems reasonable to surmise that the source might like the recipient more after a successful (versus failed) persuasion attempt. In any case, the downstream consequences of persuasion attempts for the source, and perhaps his or her relationship with the recipient, are interesting and understudied topics in persuasion research.

Viewing source–recipient relations in a different light, persuasion can also be construed in terms of the dynamic relationship between two or more people. As noted, the bulk of the literature on persuasion to date has focused on how either an individual source or an individual recipient generates or responds to a persuasive message. One new and potentially important direction is to investigate how source and recipient variables interact with each other. Consider the work on power. On the face of it, given that high power represents a position of dominance over low power, it seems reasonable to expect more persuasion when the source has power over the recipient (e.g., compliance; Kelman, 1958) and less persuasion when the recipient has power over the source. While this certainly is possible (see Lammers, Dubois, Rucker, & Galinsky, 2013), it is also possible that greater persuasion arises when there is a match between the power of the source and recipient.

Consistent with this latter notion, Dubois, Rucker, and Galinsky (2014) recently found that high power sources are sometimes more persuasive when delivering their messages to high power recipients, whereas low power sources tend to be more persuasive when delivering their messages to low power recipients. In other words, Dubois and colleagues observed a matching effect with power and persuasion. Importantly, matching, like any other variable, can operate through multiple processes (e.g., affecting processing, validating thoughts), thus increasing or decreasing persuasion depending on the circumstances (Briñol, Tormala, & Petty, 2013).

Recipient (Source) Variables as Source (Recipient) Variables

Also germane to understanding that sources and recipients can vary along the same dimensions, there are a multitude of variables that have been examined primarily with respect to the recipient but also apply to the source, and that have been examined primarily with respect to the source but also apply to the recipient. Future research would benefit from expanding current conceptualizations of recipient variables to source variables and vice versa.

As one example, individual differences in need for cognition (the tendency to enjoy and engage in effortful thought; Cacioppo & Petty, 1982) have been studied almost exclusively as a recipient variable. Some recipients think more

than others, and this difference influences the way they process persuasive messages (see Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996). However, sources presumably vary in need for cognition as well. How does this variation affect their persuasiveness? Briñol et al. (2005) found that although high (versus low) need for cognition individuals were able to generate more convincing arguments in a group setting, they were less efficient at reaching group consensus as the size of the group increased. The authors observed that high need for cognition individuals tended to easily persuade those low in need for cognition because of their greater arsenal of arguments and enhanced resistance to counterarguments (Shestowsky, Wegener, & Fabrigar, 1998), but they had no persuasive advantage against others who shared their high need for cognition, unless they received training on group dynamics (see Petty, Briñol, Loersch, & McCaslin, 2009, for a review).

On a related note, Kupor, Tormala, Norton, and Rucker (2014) recently suggested that although thoughtfulness traditionally has been studied as a recipient variable (e.g., more thoughtfulness creates stronger attitudes; see Barden & Petty, 2008), it can also be explicitly high or low in a message source (e.g., "I have given this a lot of thought and..." or "My quick gut reaction is..."). In a series of studies, Kupor et al. (2014) found that people liked others more, and were more influenced by their decisions, when those others calibrated their level of thoughtfulness to the demands of the situation. When making a difficult decision, for instance, more source thoughtfulness fostered greater influence and liking. When making an easy decision, however, less thoughtfulness fostered greater influence and liking.

Recent work has taken a similar approach to attitude certainty. Again, although certainty has been studied almost exclusively with respect to message recipients (e.g., high certainty increases resistance to persuasion; Tormala & Rucker, 2007), it can vary on the source side as well. How does a source's expressed certainty or uncertainty affect persuasion? In a recent series of studies, Karmarkar and Tormala (2010) presented participants with restaurant reviews that explicitly incorporated some statement of certainty or uncertainty. For instance, some reviews gave the restaurant a "confident 4 out of 5 stars," whereas others gave the restaurant a "tentative 4 out of 5 stars." Interestingly, results indicated that although non-expert sources could increase their persuasiveness by expressing certainty rather than uncertainty, the opposite was true for expert sources. That is, experts gained persuasiveness by expressing less rather than more attitude certainty. The authors found that when expert (non-expert) sources expressed less (more) certainty, that struck recipients as surprising or unexpected, causing them to tune in and process the message more deeply, which gave it more impact.

Going forward, there is a great opportunity for researchers to continue this line of inquiry. Theoretically, any variable that traditionally has been viewed as a recipient variable could also be studied as a source variable. This might include other forms of attitude strength such as attitude importance, accessibility, or ambivalence; mood states; personality variables; and so on. Similarly,

any variable that traditionally has been studied as a source variable could be subject to research as a recipient variable, including expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, likeability, and the like. Illustration of this latter possibility come from work on epistemic authority in which source credibility is examined as a recipient rather than a source variable (Kruglanski et al., 2005), research on individual differences in self-monitoring, which have been studied as both a recipient and a source variable (Shavitt, Lowrey, & Han, 1992), and work on numerical status, with minority status being relevant as both a source and recipient variable (Morrison, 2011). We see this as an interesting and fruitful direction for future work.

Turning Recipients into Sources: Creating Advocacy

Another important yet understudied topic in the persuasion literature pertains to the generation of persuasive advocacy. Stated differently, what factors determine whether the recipient of a persuasive message will become a future *source* of a related message? What transforms an attitude holder into an attitude advocate? This topic has remained relatively underdeveloped over the years despite its obvious importance, particularly in consumer psychology, where word of mouth and sharing behavior have emerged as central topics (see Berger, 2014). However, there has been some classic and contemporary work that is of at least indirect relevance, including research on attitude bolstering (Briñol, Rucker, Tormala, & Petty, 2004; Lydon, Zanna, & Ross, 1988; Xu and Wyer, 2012), research on supportive resistance strategies (McGuire, 1964; Visser, Krosnick, & Simmons, 2003), studies on the persuasive effect of the transmitter (Echterhoff, Higgins, Kopietz, & Groll, 2008), work on the “saying is believing” effect (Hausmann, Levine, & Higgins, 2008), and research on proselytizing (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956; Gal & Rucker, 2010).

In one recent study exploring the determinants of advocacy, Akhtar, Paunesku, and Tormala (2013) examined the potential effects of message strength. The authors presented prospective voters with a strong or weak persuasive message endorsing their preferred candidate in the 2012 presidential election (e.g., pro-Obama participants received a message in favor of reelecting Barack Obama), and subsequently asked about their advocacy intentions – for instance, their willingness to help the Obama campaign and to try to persuade others to share their view on Obama. Ironically, results indicated that recipients expressed greater advocacy intentions, and actually wrote more in an advocacy message, when they first received weak rather than strong arguments supporting their existing positions. In essence, weak proattitudinal messages induced recipients to believe that they had something important and unique to contribute to the cause, which turned them into advocates, or more willing and energized sources of future messages in the same direction.

Further research that delineates the key contributors to advocacy would help illuminate the factors that transform message recipients (e.g., supporters of a

cause) into message sources (e.g., advocates for that cause). In so doing, future studies could help deepen our insight into the numerous important outcomes stemming from persuasive messages that reach beyond attitudes themselves. Indeed, in the Akhtar, Paunesku, and Tormala (2013) research, weak arguments were not more *persuasive* than strong ones. In fact, because participants already held relatively firm attitudes toward Barack Obama, message strength had no effect on attitudes in those studies. Importantly, though, it had a clear and consistent effect on attitudinal *advocacy*. Thus, by better understanding the subtle and previously hidden effects of persuasion variables, we can better predict and apply those effects in the service of important attitude-relevant objectives beyond traditionally identified metrics of persuasion (e.g., attitude measures).

Also important, once an individual decides to advocate for a cause, or attempt to persuade someone else, what determines the strategy he or she employs? As reviewed in this chapter, we know much about the effects of different persuasion strategies on the effectiveness of a given appeal, but we know very little about the determinants of the strategies that sources elect to implement. We assume this decision is guided at least in part by people's lay theories and persuasion knowledge (Briñol, Rucker, & Petty, 2015; Friestad & Wright, 1994, 1995; Kirmani & Campbell, 2004), but what are those theories and how do they vary by person and context? This question is wide open for future exploration and could be of tremendous theoretical and practical import.

Partly related to our previous discussion, how do sources' persuasion strategies affect their own attitudes and self-perceptions? An interesting line of research by Kipnis and colleagues suggests that using different social influence strategies can have different effects. For example, when people rely on their authority or power to influence others, they tend to feel worse about themselves, about their persuasive attempts, and about the recipients than they do when they convince others using arguments or other impression formation strategies that do not exploit their power or authority (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; O'Neal, Kipnis, & Craig, 1994; Rind & Kipnis, 2002). In general, it could be that some persuasion strategies are perceived as more legitimate than others, and that sources feel more certain about their own attitudes, and about themselves, when they use seemingly legitimate means (for a related discussion, see Tormala DeSensi, & Petty, 2007). Future research could enhance our understanding of both source and recipient persuasion dynamics by exploring these issues.

Turning Sources into Recipients: Self-Persuasion

Finally, one of the classic and most indispensable topics in attitude change and persuasion research is that of self-persuasion: understanding the situations, motives, and mechanisms that lead people to persuade themselves to adopt a new attitude. At its core, self-persuasion is about inducing people to serve as the

source of a message aimed at themselves (see Maio & Thomas, 2007). In this respect, self-persuasion is about turning message recipients into their own message sources. One classic study of self-persuasion explored the effects of role playing on attitude change (Janis & King, 1954). In this initial work, participants were induced to act out a specified role (e.g., convince a friend to stop smoking or listen to an appeal to stop smoking). Famously, participants were more persuaded in the direction of the message when they generated it themselves compared to when they passively observed its delivery or listened to the information. One account for this effect is that self-generated messages are more persuasive because creating them leads people to engage in biased scanning of the arguments that they find to be especially compelling (e.g., Greenwald & Albert, 1968).

More recently, self-persuasion research has adopted a metacognitive perspective. For instance, Briñol, McCaslin, and Petty (2012) found that people put more effort into generating persuasive messages when they had doubts rather than confidence in a point of view (see also Gal & Rucker, 2010; cf. Akhtar, Paunesku, & Tormala, 2013; Matthes, Morrison, & Schemer, 2010; Rios, DeMarree, & Statzer, 2014). Greater effort in generating the message led to more self-persuasion. Also germane, recent research on the mere thought effect – the phenomenon whereby merely thinking about an object or issue can foster attitude polarization because people bring attitude-consistent thoughts to mind (e.g., Tesser, 1978) – suggests that self-persuasion effects can be amplified under conditions in which people feel greater confidence. For example, Clarkson, Tormala, and Leone (2011) varied the amount of time people had to think about an issue on which they initially held moderate attitudes. When participants had more time to think, they held their (attitude-consistent) thoughts with more confidence, and thus showed greater self-generated attitude change. Interestingly, though, too much time to think undid this effect, as people began to doubt their own thoughts and depolarize their attitudes (see also Clarkson, Valente, Leone, & Tormala, 2013).

Particularly in the domain of consumer behavior, we believe this classic topic of self-persuasion is ready for a rebirth. Indeed, it is now widely reported that consumers are growing increasingly skeptical of conventional marketing and advertising messages, relying more and more on word of mouth and other consumers for their information and opinions (see Dubois, Rucker, & Tormala, 2011). Accordingly, marketers have made more and more use of social networks, customer reviews, and alternative information sources to spread their messages. A natural next step, we postulate, is to create the conditions under which consumers will be persuaded by themselves or their own thinking. Consider an example in which an individual consumer selects an item (e.g., a pair of shoes) from an online retailer and then transfers to a checkout or purchase page. Based on the findings of Clarkson, Tormala, and Leone (2011), there might be some advantage to getting this consumer to wait briefly, which could allow him or her to generate more attitude-consistent thoughts (e.g., “those shoes really will be great for going out at night”), which in turn

boosts his or her likelihood of completing the purchase and ordering the shoes (see Clarkson, Tormala, & Duhachek, 2010).

Relatedly, it is well known that merely completing a customer satisfaction survey can enhance customer satisfaction (Dholakia & Morwitz, 2002). Perhaps customer satisfaction surveys represent opportunities for customer influence via self-persuasion. If, for example, customers were asked to articulate the reasons for their purchase or explain the ways in which the product has been useful to them, a self-persuasion process may be engaged in which customers selectively focus on favorable arguments supporting their purchase and thereby convince themselves that it was a good one. Indeed, inducing people to list positive or negative thoughts on a topic can foster more positive and negative attitudes, respectively (Killeya & Johnson, 1998; Xu & Wyer, 2012). Exploring these kinds of effects in customer survey scenarios could be a useful next step in this domain.

More broadly, we see self-persuasion as an extremely important and still underexplored area in the attitudes literature. Although it had a prominent position in early attitudes research, it has been relatively neglected by recent scholars. There remain many open questions. For instance, when and why do people seek to persuade themselves? Is it when they have discrepancies between their actual and desired attitudes (DeMarree, Wheeler, Briñol, & Petty, 2014)? What strategies do people use? Are some strategies more effective than others? What contextual factors turn these strategies on and off? There are, of course, many more questions that could be raised. For now, we simply highlight self-persuasion as an area of future growth, with many open questions of both a basic and an applied nature.

Coda

Attitude change and persuasion are at the heart of consumer behavior. Research in this area dates back to the middle of the twentieth century. Since that time, attitudes, attitude change, and persuasion have been among the most studied topics in social and consumer psychology, and perhaps in psychology more generally. In this chapter, we sought to provide a broad overview of the persuasion literature, covering classic views of important variables and their effects, discussing modern metacognitive reconceptualizations, and highlighting unanswered or just partially answered questions deserving of new and deeper consideration. Over the years, researchers have made great strides in advancing our basic understanding of persuasion variables and when and how they exert their influence. Nevertheless, the field is constantly evolving and there remain many exciting paths forward. Attitudes are and will continue to be one of the most indispensable constructs in consumer research, and we hope the current chapter can serve as at least a partial guide, and strong encouragement, to pursue some of the important and exciting next steps.

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