
CHAPTER THREE

Social Psychological Foundations of Social Marketing

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A fundamental goal of marketing is to influence people's behavior, such as increasing consumers' trial of a product, willingness to pay for a particular brand, or their inclination to recommend a service to their friends. In the case of social marketing, behaviors are targeted that will improve the well-being of particular individuals or society more broadly. For example, social marketing efforts can be aimed at improving the well-being of women by encouraging them to perform self-administered breast exams, or at improving the well-being of the population more generally by influencing policy makers to enact laws such as bans on smoking in public or the use of assault weapons.

In each of the preceding examples, there is an attempt to influence particular behaviors, such as performing self-administered breast exams or voting to change policy. This chapter recognizes that one common and effective means to influence behavior is to change individuals' attitudes. That is, as people adopt more favorable attitudes toward self-administered breast exams or specific public policies, they are more likely to engage in attitude-relevant behaviors. The present chapter reviews the fundamental variables and processes by which attitude change and persuasion operate. In doing so, this chapter contributes to the bedrock of social marketing by providing the reader with the tools to influence individuals' volitional behavior via attitude change. Our assumption is that the same basic

principles of attitude change uncovered in decades of basic research (see Briñol & Petty, 2012) will be useful in developing effective social marketing campaigns (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996).

To understand the importance of attitude change in affecting behavior, this chapter begins with an introduction to the concept of attitudes and their role in guiding behavior. Subsequently, we provide an overview of a classic trichotomy for organizing persuasive variables around source, message, and recipient factors. The chapter continues by introducing the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986) of persuasion to understand the critical role the amount of thinking plays in how and when a particular source, message, or recipient factor influences persuasion. After explaining how any given variable can affect persuasion in many different ways, the chapter turns to examining how there can also be interactions among various source, message, and recipient factors. Finally, the chapter discusses the importance of elaboration and other factors in producing attitude strength for creating attitudes that are persistent, resistant, and influential in guiding behavior.

Attitudes and Attitude Change

Attitude can be understood as the degree to which an individual likes or dislikes a person, place, or thing (for discussion, see Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Pratkanis, Breckler & Greenwald, 1989). They are evaluative judgments that associate some degree of favor or disfavor with an object. For example, with regard to social marketing efforts, a relevant attitude object might be an individual's attitude toward a charity, green products, or a new public policy. In each case, an attitude might range from positive (e.g., I like this charity) to neutral (e.g., I neither like nor dislike this charity) to negative (e.g., I dislike this charity). Attitudes can also range in extremity (Abelson, 1995), such that two individuals might both like an attitude object (e.g., a green product) but differ in how much they like it.

One of the fundamental reasons scholars have been enamored with the study of attitudes is that attitudes have been shown to predict and influence behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Even though behavioral compliance tactics, such as a change in norms or laws, can affect behavior, many behaviors targeted by social marketing efforts are often left solely to the discretion of the individual. For example, when a woman engages in self-administered breast exams or a legislator votes for a particular bill or a consumer gives to a charity or purchases a green product, these are all volitional choices on the part of the individual guided in part by that individual's attitudes. Furthermore, even mandating behavioral compliance

often requires a change in the attitudes of those voting for a policy. For example, laws can be changed to ban cigarette smoking in public, but doing so still requires policy makers to first endorse and vote for the policy. Because attitudes guide behavior, a core means to achieve a desired behavior is to change people's attitudes. This observation rests at the heart of a large body of literature in social psychology and marketing dedicated to changing attitudes through persuasion (for reviews, see Petty & Wegener, 1998a; Fazio & Petty, 2007). Given that some behavioral outcome is likely to be the end objective for many social marketing efforts, changing people's attitudes is likely to be intertwined with most such efforts. Later in this review, we discuss when changes in attitudes are more or less likely to result in behavior change.

Source, Message, and Recipient Factors

In the study of persuasion, scholars have long utilized a classic trichotomy to describe variables involved in the success of a persuasive communication. Aristotle may have been among the first to describe such factors during the fourth century BCE. Specifically Aristotle wrote of the importance of *ethos*, characteristics of the speaker that enhance persuasion, such as charisma or trustworthiness; *logos*, the logic of the argument within the message itself; and *pathos*, recipient factors that facilitate or inhibit the persuasiveness of a message and, in particular, emotional reactions (Aristotle, 1991). In modern times, scholars have used the terms "source," "message," and "recipient" to describe these fundamental inputs into the persuasion process (McGuire, 1968).

This trichotomy provides an excellent starting point and organizational structure for reviewing the factors that affect the persuasiveness of a message. The next section reviews classic examples of specific source, message, and recipient factors that have been shown empirically to affect persuasion. In the discussion of these factors, the intent is not to universally summarize every possible variable that might fall into these descriptive buckets. Rather, the goal is to adequately summarize clear examples within each of these categories so that readers can apply them as an organizing tool to assess and evaluate variables present in their own social marketing efforts.

Source Factors in Persuasion

Source factors refer to aspects of the individual or organization delivering the message, irrespective of the message content. Perhaps the most common source factor studied in the literature is the credibility of the source

(Kelman & Hovland, 1953; see Petty & Wegener, 1998a, for a review). Source credibility is used to refer to two aspects of the source: the expertise of the source (i.e., the amount of knowledge the source possesses on the message topic) and the source's trustworthiness (i.e., the motivation of the source to be honest about the information delivered). Expertise increases the credibility of a source because it enhances a source's ability to convey information that is accurate; trustworthiness increases the credibility of a source because it suggests that the source is motivated to share truthful information. Early research found that audiences were more persuaded when the source of a message was an expert (Rhine & Severance, 1970) or viewed as trustworthy (Mills & Jellison, 1967).

Researchers have catalogued a number of other aspects of the source that affect persuasion, independent of source credibility. For example, past research has found that people's attitudes are influenced by the physical attractiveness of a source. Attractive sources have been shown to enhance persuasion compared to unattractive sources (Snyder & Rothbart, 1971). In addition, a source's power—his or her control over resources—can affect persuasion. Powerful sources have been shown to produce more attitude change than powerless sources (e.g., Festinger & Thibaut, 1951; French & Raven, 1959; see Briñol & Petty, 2009a, for a review). Similarly, sources might vary on how warm or competent they are perceived to be (Aaker, Vohs & Mogilner, 2010) or how liked they are (Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann, 1983). In each of these cases, a property of the source influences the extent of attitude change, and it may or may not matter what the source says. Although initial research on source factors focused on effects of sources that were consistent with their valence (i.e., credible, attractive, and powerful sources increased persuasion), in the following sections, we review research showing that source factors can produce various effects depending on the circumstances. This means that positively valenced source factors can sometimes be associated with increased persuasive impact, but at other times these very same aspects of the source can be associated with decreased persuasion.

Message Factors in Persuasion

Message factors constitute what is literally said or spoken in the message or how the message is structured or organized. One important aspect of the information contained in the message itself is how compelling the arguments provided are. Strong arguments tend to present consequences that are highly desirable, likely to occur, and important (Petty & Wegener, 1998a). If people are carefully thinking about a message, the quality of the

arguments has a greater impact on persuasion than if the level of thinking is low (Petty, Wells & Brock, 1976). Messages can also vary in the total number of arguments that are presented, as well as their quality. Prior research has shown that messages with more arguments can lead to greater persuasion than messages with fewer arguments (Calder, Insko & Yandell, 1974; Josephs, Giesler & Silvera 1994), and this is especially true when thinking is low (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984).

Beyond the quality or length of information a message contains, messages can also vary in the type of information they present. For example, messages can vary in whether they are simple or complex (Ahearne, Gruen & Saxton, 2000) or whether the information contained in the message consists only of arguments in favor of the advocated position (one-sided) or consists of arguments both in favor of and against a position (two-sided) (Hovland, Lumsdaine & Sheffield, 1949). Early research found that two-sided messages, despite disclosing information against the presenter's position, could sometimes exert a persuasive advantage over one-sided messages. One reason for this outcome was that people were more likely to infer that the source of a two-sided message was trustworthy when the source openly acknowledged weaknesses in the source's own position (Crowley & Hoyer, 1994). As was just noted for source factors, the available research suggests that variables relevant to the message can increase or decrease persuasion depending on the situation and the psychological processes by which they operate. The next sections describe the key aspects responsible for these different persuasion outcomes.

Recipient Factors in Persuasion

Recipient factors refer to characteristics of the individuals receiving the message (i.e., the audience). There are numerous recipient factors relevant to persuasion, and they can be divided into many different categories. For example, recipient variables can be categorized by both trait and state. Trait factors consist of more stable characteristics of an individual such as the person's demographics (e.g., gender, age, race), cognitive skills (e.g., intelligence), personality (e.g., extraversion or introversion), and particular belief systems (e.g., previous attitudes or issue-related knowledge). State factors consist of features of an individual that are more likely to vary over time, across contexts, or based on the immediate situation. For example, people can be in a variety of temporary states related to their current mood, how powerful they feel, and how fatigued they are.

Previous research has established that both trait and state aspects of the recipient can play integral roles in persuasion. For example, a

meta-analysis suggested that as an audience's intelligence increases, the audience becomes more difficult to persuade (Rhodes & Wood, 1992). The argument for this relationship has been linked to the idea that intelligence provides individuals with the ability to both evaluate the persuasiveness of an appeal and to counter-argue the information presented. Similarly, research by Briñol, Rucker, Tormala and Petty (2004) suggested that some individuals are naturally more resistant to persuasion than others. Specifically, they found that individuals' own beliefs about whether they tended to resist or succumb to persuasion predicted their actual resistance or yielding to persuasion.

With regard to state factors of the recipient, a large body of research has suggested that the temporary mood or emotional state of a recipient can affect how a recipient responds to persuasion. For example, early research found that placing individuals in a negative state because of an unpleasant odor in the room decreased persuasion (Razran, 1940). The initial arguments for this relationship were based on a learning theory framework. Specifically, researchers suggested that when an object was paired with a negative experience, simple associative processes led people to view the object as negative (see Zanna, Kiesler & Pilkonis, 1970). But if the object was paired with positive experiences such as music (e.g., Gorn, 1982) or food (Dabbs & Janis, 1965), attitudes would become more favorable. As was the case with source and message variables, subsequent research revealed that the valence of the recipient's experience is not the only factor that matters for persuasion, and recipient factors can influence attitudes by multiple processes in different situations.

Source, Message, and Recipient Factors: Summary

This section provides a very brief and selective review of some common source, message, and recipient factors in persuasion, noting that each could play an important role in influencing attitudes. In doing so, this provides a first fundamental question for social marketers to ask: What are the source, message, and recipient factors at play in their particular context? For example, imagine a social marketing effort that is aimed at funding a new research center to improve the lives of children with Down syndrome. A natural starting point would be to take stock of who would deliver the message, what the message would say, and whom the target recipient is. By addressing these considerations, social marketers can make judicious decisions as to how they might design their communications. Specifically, one would want to design a persuasion effort that uses these variables in ways that would yield the most favorable and strongest attitudes.

The difficulty in such an approach is that the formula for successful persuasion is not as simple as highly credible sources being more persuasive than less-credible sources, more arguments always being more persuasive than fewer arguments, or a recipient in a positive mood being easier to persuade than a recipient in a negative mood. Indeed, excitement about seemingly simple early findings on attitudes and persuasion became momentarily marred by more complex and conflicting findings. For example, whereas early research found that credible sources enhanced persuasion (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), later research found that the use of credible sources could decrease persuasion (Sternthal, Dholakia & Leavitt, 1978). Whereas initial research suggested that increasing the number of arguments increased persuasion (Calder, Insko & Yandell, 1974), later research found that enhancing the number of arguments either had no effect (Norman, 1976) or could decrease persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984a). And whereas research suggested negative emotions decreased persuasion (Zanna, Kiesler & Pilkonis, 1970), other research found that negative emotions could sometimes increase persuasion (Rogers, 1983).

The contradictory evidence for how the same variable affected persuasion had at least two noticeable effects. First, these findings crippled efforts to link a particular variable (e.g., the use of a highly credible source) with a single and unilateral effect on persuasion (i.e., more persuasion) (Petty, 1997; Petty & Briñol, 2008). Second, these findings raised the question of whether there was a scientific manner to craft messages beyond trial and error. In response to these findings, researchers moved away from trying to understand whether a particular variable had a positive or negative effect on persuasion and instead sought to understand when and why a variable had a positive versus a negative effect on persuasion.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model

One of the most prominent solutions to understanding when the same variable would have a positive versus a negative effect on persuasion and why each effect would occur came with the introduction of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986). The ELM is a model of persuasion that focuses on how persuasion is affected by recipient elaboration—the amount of message-relevant thinking an individual engages in when processing a persuasive message. Petty and Cacioppo (1981, 1986) introduced the idea that the amount of effort people put into processing information rests on an elaboration continuum. At one end of the continuum, people engage in relatively little scrutiny and thinking about the information presented (low elaboration). At the other end of the

continuum, people engage in a great deal of thoughtful scrutiny of the information presented (high elaboration). As will be detailed momentarily, the degree of elaboration an individual engages in has important consequences for how particular source, message, or recipient variables affect persuasion.

Next, we provide a broad overview of the model. The emphasis and objective is to introduce the reader to the core constructs and implications of the model as opposed to the finer details. More detailed discussions of the ELM and its postulates have been summarized more comprehensively elsewhere (Petty & Briñol, 2012; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty & Wegener, 1999). In addition, the present chapter places added emphasis on explaining how the model can be used to parsimoniously understand the effects that a variety of source, message, and recipient factors will have on persuasion.

Central Versus Peripheral Routes to Persuasion

The Elaboration Likelihood Model posits that persuasion can take place through one of two routes. First, persuasion can occur through a central route. The central route is marked by a careful scrutiny of message-relevant arguments to determine one's response to the message. Second, persuasion can occur through the peripheral route. Persuasion that occurs through the peripheral route is marked by a greater reliance on simple heuristics or rules of thumb for determining one's attitude. The extent to which people use the central versus the peripheral route is determined by the amount of message elaboration an audience engages in. When situational and individual factors result in the audience's elaboration level being high, attitude change is more likely to occur through the central route. In contrast, when the recipient's elaboration level is low, attitude change is more likely to occur through the peripheral route. The ELM is an early example of what became an explosion of dual-process and dual-system theories that distinguished thoughtful from non-thoughtful persuasion (see Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Sherman, Gawronski & Trope, 2014). We focus on this particular theoretical framework because it has guided the most research on attitude change and persuasion.

What determines the degree of elaboration people engage in, and whether persuasion is primarily a result of central versus peripheral route processing? The degree of elaboration engaged in is affected by an individual's motivation and ability to process the information presented. Specifically, an individual is likely to elaborate on information when motivated to do so because it is personally relevant (Maheswaran & Chaiken,

1991; Petty & Cacioppo, 1979), when they are personally responsible for outcomes related to the information (Petty, Harkins & Williams, 1980), or when the person naturally enjoys thinking (Cacioppo, Petty & Morris, 1983). However, in addition to being motivated to process information, an individual must have the ability to do so. A variety of factors can affect an individual's ability to process a message, including the person's level of knowledge (Wood & Lynch, 2002), whether the person is distracted (Petty, Wells & Brock, 1976), and whether the person has multiple opportunities to read the message via repetition (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979).

Importantly, although there are two routes to persuasion, this does not mean that a message recipient is forced into processing information via only one route. Rather, as the degree of elaboration increases, an individual's response to a persuasive message is more likely to depend on central route processes and less likely to depend on peripheral route processes. For example, an individual paying attention to the substantive merits of a message is more likely to consider the relevance of the source's physical attractiveness, but this does not mean that attractiveness will not also exert some influence as a simple peripheral cue or work by other means (e.g., biasing thinking). Thus, the central and peripheral routes should be thought of as anchors at either end of the elaboration continuum, but an individual can fall along any point of that continuum.

Multiple Roles for Variables

One of the most powerful insights from the ELM is that it proposes that variables can play "multiple roles" in the persuasion process and that the process by which a variable affects persuasion depends on the level of message elaboration. That is, based on whether an individual's elaboration of a message is relatively low, moderate, or high, the same variable (e.g., source credibility, emotion) can exert an influence on persuasion through a different process. As will be explained, the fact that the same variable can affect persuasion through distinct processes means that the same variable can have positive or negative effects on persuasion depending on the process.

Understanding the multiple mechanisms by which variables impact attitudes is critical for a number of reasons. First, understanding the process by which variables can produce influence is important because if any one variable can affect influence via different processes, then different outcomes for the same variable are possible. For example, when thinking is constrained to be low, a happy state of the consumer might lead to more attitude change than a sad state because emotion serves as a simple positive cue (i.e., if I feel good, I must like it), but when thinking is

unconstrained, a happy state could reduce processing of a cogent message compared to a sad state, thereby reducing persuasion. Second, the underlying process has implications for the immediate and long-term consequences of the persuasive attempt. In particular, the more thoughtful the mechanism that is involved in producing attitude change, the more the attitude created is expected to be durable, resistant, and impactful over time (Petty, Haugtvedt & Smith, 1995). For example, if a person agreed with a store salesperson's request to purchase a box of cookies solely because of the salesperson's attractiveness, the person would be easier to talk into purchasing a different box of cookies on a subsequent visit than if the initial purchase came after the attractiveness led the consumer to carefully scrutinize the merits of the cookies and form a strong favorable attitude toward them. Thus, the ELM holds that the process by which an influence attempt is successful is consequential for the future. That is, even if two different processes result in the same extent of influence at an initial occasion, the consequences of this influence can differ.

The next section explains how several different source, message, and recipient variables have been shown to affect persuasion under different degrees of elaboration. Because not every possible process has been examined for every possible variable, the full array of effects that specific variables are capable of incurring cannot be documented. However, this section showcases the many different roles two particular variables, source credibility and recipient mood or emotion, have been shown to play in the persuasion process.

Effects of Variables under Low Elaboration Conditions

When the elaboration likelihood is low, either because of low motivation or ability to think about the persuasive proposal, variables are likely to exert their influence by serving as simple cues or input to simple heuristics. Heuristics can be thought of as rules of thumb, such as "When a message comes from a friend, it can be trusted." Evidence for the use of heuristics often comes from the fact that when people's message-related thoughts are examined, there are very few of them and/or those thoughts do not mediate or explain the reason behind the attitudes formed (see Rucker, Briñol & Petty, 2011, for discussion). That is, the use of heuristics means that people did not rely much on the substantive message content in forming their attitudes.

Under conditions of low elaboration, the credibility of the source has been shown to serve as a simple positive cue to persuasion. For example, when messages deal with unimportant or irrelevant issues (low motivation

to think), irrespective of the actual merits of the arguments presented, individuals are likely to be more persuaded by credible sources compared to noncredible sources (Petty, Cacioppo & Goldman, 1981). This can be understood as resulting from the use of a simple heuristic or association such as “If an expert and trustworthy source supports this position, it must be good.” Similarly, message factors, such as the total number of arguments contained in a message, have been shown to serve as input to a numerosity heuristic when the level of thinking is low, but not when it is high (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984a). When not thinking much, people might rely on the following heuristic: “If there are so many (few) reasons in favor of this proposal, it must be good (bad)!”

Recipient factors can also be used as simple heuristics. For example, the mood of the recipient can be used as a simple cue. In one study, Schwarz and Clore (1983) showed that participants reported being more satisfied with their lives on sunny days than on rainy days, which the authors reasoned was a result of participants misattributing their good mood from the weather to their life satisfaction. In the persuasion domain, Petty, Schumann, Richman, and Strathman (1993) found that when elaboration was low because the message object was irrelevant to the participants, people liked the object more when they were in a positive mood than when they were in a negative mood. Furthermore, Petty and colleagues (1993) found that participants’ actual thoughts toward the product did not differ, suggesting this outcome occurred because of a thoughtless and heuristic process.

Cutting across source, message, and recipient factors, under low-elaboration conditions, persuasion is typically the result of a simple inference or association process. Individuals can look to the source, message, or themselves for simple cues to help them make a decision, irrespective of message content, or these simple cues can sometimes become automatically associated with the attitude object.

Effects of Variables Under Moderate (Unconstrained) Elaboration Conditions

When individuals’ elaboration level is moderate (i.e., not constrained to be very high or low by other factors), variables can affect the amount of thinking in which people engage. For example, variables might serve as critical triggers that lead people to either increase or decrease their motivation or ability to process a persuasive message. As a consequence, a source, message, or recipient factor might lead people to rely more versus less on either peripheral cues or their reactions to the substantive message arguments. A common means to study whether a variable affects the amount of

elaboration has been to use an argument quality manipulation (Petty, Wells & Brock, 1976). An argument quality manipulation typically consists of including in one's experiment a pair of between-subject conditions. In the first condition, arguments are presented that are strong and compelling, leading to the generation of favorable thoughts if people think about the arguments. In the second condition, arguments are developed that are weak and specious, leading to the generation of unfavorable thoughts (counter-arguments) when people think about the arguments. The core idea is that if a variable is getting people to attend carefully to the information (i.e., high elaboration), then the inclusion of this variable should be associated with increased persuasion when the arguments are strong but decreased persuasion when the arguments are weak. To test if and how a variable (e.g., positive versus negative mood) affects elaboration, the variable is crossed with an argument quality manipulation. The effect of the variable on elaboration is determined by the relative difference between weak and strong argument conditions (see Rucker, et al., 2011, for a detailed discussion of the argument quality tool).

As one example of how a source variable affected the amount of processing using argument quality manipulation, Priester and Petty (2003) examined how the trustworthiness of a source influenced message elaboration. Priester and Petty proposed that a message that was presented by an untrustworthy or biased source might receive greater scrutiny compared to when the message came from a trustworthy source. They theorized that because a biased source might have ulterior motives, individuals would have to exert extra effort to examine the validity of the arguments presented compared to when the source could be trusted. Consistent with this hypothesis, Priester and Petty found that people were more likely to use the quality of the arguments to determine their attitudes when the message came from an untrustworthy source. That is, the quality of the arguments had a larger impact on attitudes when the source was untrustworthy than when it was trustworthy.

Message factors can also affect the extent of message elaboration. As one example, Smith and Shaffer (2000) examined how the presentation of a message in a vivid and concrete fashion increased or decreased elaboration. Smith and Shaffer proposed that vivid messages would increase information processing when the vivid elements were consistent with the theme of the message itself but would lead to less processing when the vivid elements were inconsistent with the theme of the message. Supportive of this proposition, Smith and Shaffer (2000; experiment 2) found that participants showed a greater discernment between weak and strong arguments when the vivid aspects of a message were congruent with the theme

of the message compared to when the vivid aspects were incongruent with the theme of the message.

Finally, recipient factors also affect individuals' motivation to process a message. One important individual difference measure linked to elaboration is "need for cognition" (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Cacioppo, Petty & Kao, 1984). Need for cognition reflects individual differences in the extent to which people enjoy and engage in thinking. When situational factors do not encourage or prevent people from processing a message, individuals' high in need for cognition are more likely to elaborate on a message than those low in need for cognition. For example, Haugtvedt, Petty, and Cacioppo (1992) found that individuals high in need for cognition were more influenced by the quality of the arguments in an advertisement than those low in need for cognition, but those low in need for cognition were more influenced by the attractiveness of the endorsers pictured in the ad than were those high in need for cognition. In addition to chronic individual differences, situational factors can also affect the degree of elaboration people engage in. For example, Worth and Mackie (1987) examined the role of mood in people's processing of a message. They found that, compared to participants in a neutral mood, participants in a happy mood scrutinized subsequent information less carefully. In general, sad individuals tend to process less carefully than happy individuals, but an exception occurs if people in a happy state believe that the message to be processed will maintain their happiness. If this is the case, then they can process as much or more than those in a sad state (Wegener, Petty & Smith, 1995).

Effects of Variables under High Elaboration Conditions

As we have reviewed, under low elaboration conditions, variables affect persuasion via a simple associative or cue-based process, and under moderate elaboration conditions, variables affect persuasion by influencing the amount of message processing. In contrast, when elaboration is constrained to be high, these same variables can affect persuasion through several different processes. Specifically, under high elaboration conditions, variables have been shown to affect persuasion by serving as arguments, biasing an individual's processing, validating an individual's thoughts, or being involved in a correction for bias.

First, under high elaboration conditions, variables can serve as arguments. Here, the same variable (e.g., source expertise, the individual's mood) that served as a simple cue when the level of thinking was low, or affected the extent of processing when thinking was not constrained, is

itself scrutinized as to whether or not it is a meaningful and logical argument or reason for changing an attitude or adopting the advocated position. For example, whereas an attractive source might increase persuasion under low elaboration purely because people have a positive association with attractive individuals (Snyder & Rothbart, 1971), under high elaboration conditions, people scrutinize whether the attractiveness of the source is relevant to the advocacy. An attractive source will exert little impact when people view the attractiveness as irrelevant to the merits of the advocacy. However, when the attractiveness is relevant—for example, if the source is advertising a beauty product that should make the user look attractive—then a physically attractive source could be more persuasive than an unattractive source by serving as a cogent argument (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984a). Similarly, the content of the message in terms of the arguments presented plays an important role under high elaboration conditions. With high elaboration it is not as important whether there are numerically many or few arguments, but whether the arguments presented are strong or weak (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984b). As discussed earlier, when the arguments presented are strong, people will be more persuaded than when the arguments are weak. Finally, with respect to recipient mood, Martin, Abend, Sedikides, and Green (1997) examined how participants evaluated a story that was designed to make them happy or sad. Because a core goal of the story was the mood it was supposed to induce, participants' mood could be viewed as a relevant argument. Thus, if a story was designed to make people sad, actually feeling sad would be a strong argument in favor of the merits of the story, but feeling happy would make the story seem worse.

Second, under high elaboration conditions, variables can also direct or bias individuals' thinking. In particular, when arguments are not clearly strong or weak (i.e., ambiguity exists), variables can bias or cloud how individuals assess the arguments. For example, Chaiken and Maheswaran (1994) found that when arguments were ambiguous, individuals tended to generate more favorable thoughts, and thus form more positive attitudes, when those arguments were associated with an expert versus a non-expert source. This effect can be understood by the notion that the expert's credibility affected the thoughts participants focused on and generated in response to the message. When thinking levels are high, people interpret the ambiguous arguments in such a way as to make the arguments seem more compelling. Similarly, in the domain of recipient variables, mood has been shown to bias processing. In the research described earlier by Petty and colleagues (1993), in addition to examining the effects of mood under low elaboration conditions, the authors examined the effects of mood

under high elaboration conditions (e.g., when a product was viewed as relevant to individuals and thus meriting their attention). The authors found that positive moods also led to more favorable attitudes than negative moods when the level of thinking was high. However, unlike low elaboration conditions, where mood did not affect participants' thoughts, Petty and colleagues found that under high elaboration conditions, positive mood led to greater persuasion by biasing the thoughts participants generated about the product, making them more favorable when participants' moods were positive rather than negative.

Third, in addition to serving as an argument and affecting the direction of the thoughts generated, variables can also have an impact on the structural features of an individual's thoughts under conditions involving a high level of thinking. Although there are a number of dimensions of thoughts that might be affected, one being accessibility, most research has focused on a meta-cognitive factor—the confidence people have in their thoughts (for a review, see Petty, Briñol, Tormala & Wegener, 2007; Briñol & Petty, 2009b). Confidence in thoughts is important because as thoughts are held with greater confidence, people are more likely to use those thoughts in forming their judgments (Petty et al., 2002). In contrast, when people doubt the validity of their thoughts, their thoughts are less likely to have an impact on judgments. This may be one reason why some advertising campaigns are unsuccessful; although such campaigns might produce the appropriate favorable thoughts, these thoughts are not held with sufficient confidence to affect attitudes.

There are many factors of the source, message, and recipient that can influence persuasion by affecting thought confidence. For example, Tormala, Briñol, & Petty (2006) found that learning a message came from an expert source after processing it led people to have greater confidence in their thoughts than learning a message came from a non-expert source. Because participants were more confident in their thoughts when the source was an expert, people were more likely to use those thoughts in forming their attitudes. Recipient mood has also been shown to affect the confidence people place in their thoughts. Specifically, Briñol, Petty, and Barden (2007) exposed participants to a message containing either weak or strong arguments and encouraged them to process the message carefully. This fostered relatively high elaboration conditions where participants generated either favorable thoughts (in response to the strong message) or unfavorable thoughts (in response to the weak message). Subsequently, Briñol and colleagues manipulated participants' moods by asking them to recall a time they were happy or sad. Finally, they assessed participants' attitudes toward the message. Results showed that positive

mood validated participants' thoughts such that they were more confident in their thoughts after they had recalled a time they felt happy as opposed to after recalling a time they felt sad. As a result of this "thought validation," participants were more (or less) persuaded when their favorable (or unfavorable) thoughts had been validated.

Finally, under high elaboration conditions, variables can lead individuals to respond to potential bias in their thinking and attempt to correct for such bias. Specifically, because people are motivated to hold correct attitudes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), under careful scrutiny they might detect factors that they believe are biasing their judgments and make an effort to correct for them. For example, as mentioned earlier, Schwarz and Clore (1983) found that incidental effects of the weather (e.g., mood) on judgments were attenuated when participants were first asked about the weather. Presumably being asked about the weather made the idea that the current weather might bias their evaluation salient, which led them to correct for it. In the domain of persuasion, Petty, Wegener, and White (1998) showed that people were more persuaded by a source they liked (e.g., an individual from a rival university who praised the participants' own university) than a source they disliked (e.g., an individual from a rival university who chastised the participants' own university). However, under high elaboration conditions, when participants were instructed to avoid bias, they corrected for their dislike of the source. In fact, they appeared to over-correct such that they become more favorable to the dislikable source. Of course, people must be motivated and aware of a bias in order to correct for it (for discussion, see Wegener & Petty, 1994; Petty et al., 1998).

Summary of Multiple Roles

To reinforce the idea that elaboration affects how the same variable might influence persuasion, consider the variety of examples previously used with respect to recipient mood. On first blush, it might seem logical that positive mood would foster greater persuasion than negative mood. Indeed, as we noted, the first research based on simple associative process was consistent with this perspective (Razran, 1940; Gorn, 1982; Zanna, Kiesler & Pilkonis, 1970). However, the now-large empirical literature suggests the relationship between mood and persuasion is highly dependent on elaboration.

When thinking is constrained to be low (e.g., due to many distractions), then emotions tend to serve as simple associative cues and produce evaluations consistent with their valence (Petty et al., 1993). Under low-level thinking conditions, positive emotions produce more agreement

than negative ones. When thinking levels are high, though, emotions serve in other roles. First, emotions can be evaluated as evidence (e.g., negative emotions such as sadness or fear can lead to positive evaluations of a movie if these are the intended states; see Martin, 2000). Also, when thinking levels are high, emotions can bias the ongoing thoughts (e.g., positive consequences seem more likely when people are in a happy state as opposed to a sad state; DeSteno, Petty, Wegener & Rucker, 2000). The bias is emotion specific. In one study (DeSteno, Petty, Rucker, Wegener & Braverman, 2004), participants made to feel sad were more persuaded by a message pointing to sad consequences of a proposal rather than by a message pointing to angry consequences, whereas those participants made to feel angry were more persuaded by a message pointing to angering consequences than by a message pointing to sad ones. If an emotion is induced after people have finished thinking about the message rather than prior to doing so, then emotions can affect confidence in their thoughts (Briñol, Petty & Barden, 2007). This effect depends on the link between specific emotions and certainty appraisals. Thus, because emotions such as happiness and anger are associated with certainty, these would validate thoughts whereas emotions such as sadness would cause doubt in thoughts and lead to less use of them (Tiedens & Linton, 2001). Finally, when the likelihood of thinking is not constrained to be high or low by other variables, then emotions can affect the extent of thinking. People might think about messages more when in a sad state than when in a happy state, either because sadness signals a problem to be solved (Schwarz, Bless & Bohner, 1991), conveys a sense of uncertainty (Tiedens & Linton, 2001), or invokes a motive to maintain one's happiness (Wegener & Petty, 1994).

This discussion illustrates the importance for social marketers to understand not only the variables at play in a persuasive message but the recipient's elaboration level. Without considering the elaboration level, a marketer may incorrectly believe a variable will have a positive effect when, in fact, it may have a negative effect.

The Interplay between Recipient, Source, and Message Factors

Although a given variable can affect persuasion through a variety of processes, the persuasion situation is a dynamic one. Persuasive communications often host interactions between recipient, source, and message factors. To highlight this interplay, we focus on interactions that have been observed between message and recipient factors. In particular, much past research on persuasion has examined the effectiveness of matching, tailoring, or aligning messages to their audience in order to enhance persuasion

(for reviews, see Petty, Wheeler, & Bizer, 2000; Briñol & Petty, 2006; Rucker, 2012; Salovey & Wegener, 2003). As an illustrative case, we review several examples of how information about a recipient factor might interact with the type of message factors a marketer should vary to affect persuasion through a variety of roles.

Self-Monitoring and Matching

Self-monitoring is an individual difference measure (Snyder, 1974) that refers to whether individuals change their behavior to fit with the demands of different situations or focus on their internal values and feelings to guide their behavior across situations. In an early demonstration of matching effects, Snyder and DeBono (1985) examined how individuals who were low versus high in self-monitoring responded to appeals focused on the social image conveyed by the product as opposed to appeals that stressed the intrinsic quality or merit of the product. Snyder and DeBono reasoned that because high self-monitors are social chameleons who adapt to the situation and the desires of others, they would be more persuaded by arguments that signaled the social image function that an object offered to them. In contrast, because low self-monitors are more focused on their own values, the authors reasoned they would be more persuaded by arguments that stressed the inherent merits of the product. Indeed, the authors found evidence consistent with this perspective. Why does matching the message to an individual's self-monitoring affect persuasion? As with other variables, we propose that the matching may affect persuasion through a variety of processes.

When elaboration is low, a match of message content to a person's level of self-monitoring is more likely to influence attitudes by serving as a simple cue (DeBono, 1987). That is, whereas early work is consistent with low and high self-monitors evaluating different arguments (social image versus quality) as more compelling, even when the content of the message is not processed carefully, if a source simply asserted that the arguments were consistent with a person's values, a low self-monitor might be more inclined to agree than a high self-monitor by reasoning, "If it links to my values, it must be good."

In accord with the ELM, if elaboration is not constrained to be high or low, matching messages to individual differences in self-monitoring can increase message processing (Petty & Wegener, 1998b). This means that when the arguments are strong, matching should lead to more persuasion (as found by Snyder & DeBono, 1985), but when the arguments are weak, matching leads to less persuasion (the opposite effect). In one study, Petty

and Wegener (1998b) matched or mismatched messages that were strong or weak to individuals who differed in their self-monitoring. In this research, high and low self-monitors read appeals based on image (e.g., how good a product makes you look) or quality (e.g., how efficient a product is) that contained arguments that were either strong (e.g., beauty or efficacy that last) or weak (e.g., momentary beauty or efficacy). The cogency of the arguments had a greater effect on attitudes when the message was framed to match rather than mismatch the person's self-monitoring status, indicating that matching enhanced processing of message quality.

When elaboration is high, matching might bias processing. Indeed, some research suggests that high self-monitors are more motivated to bias processing in the form of fostering favorable thoughts to messages that make an appeal to image rather than an appeal to values (e.g., Lavine & Snyder, 1996). Additionally, when elaboration is high, matching message contents and/or frames to self-monitoring can influence attitude change by more specific mechanisms under other circumstances. For example, Evans and Clark (2012) recently showed that thought confidence increased when a low (versus high) self-monitor received a message from an attractive (versus credible) source. In line with the self-validation logic, high (versus low) self-monitors relied on their thoughts more when the source was attractive (versus credible), which increased persuasion for positive thoughts but decreased persuasion for negative thoughts.

In sum, self-monitoring demonstrates how the message content can affect persuasion based on a match or mismatch to this individual difference variable. Furthermore, just as source, message, and recipient variables can have multiple roles, so too can matching, with matching having different effects depending on elaboration level.

Self-Schemas and Matching

Wheeler, Petty, and Bizer (2005) examined how individuals' self-schema—general cognitive associations to how one perceives the self—interacted with the initial title and first paragraph of message content to affect subsequent processing. Specifically, in one experiment, participants' degree of extroversion was measured. Wheeler and colleagues then exposed participants to a message for a VCR that began with a first paragraph that contained information designed to resonate with extroverts ("With the Mannux VCR, you'll be the life of the party, whether the party's in your home or out of it."), or to resonate with introverts ("With the Mannux VCR, you can have all the luxuries of a movie theater without having to deal with the crowds."). Subsequently, the remaining paragraphs

contained arguments that were varied between participants to be either weak or strong. Wheeler and colleagues found that individuals engaged in greater elaboration of the remaining message content when the initial paragraph matched participants' self-schemas. That is, the difference between weak and strong arguments was greater when the early message content matched participants' self-schemas. This finding suggested that a match between self-schema and the initial information presented in a message affected subsequent message elaboration. Wheeler and colleagues replicated these findings in a second experiment with the self-schema of need for cognition (i.e., individuals' propensity to enjoy and engage in thinking; Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Individuals were more likely to process subsequent information when a message appealed to their enjoyment of deliberate thinking or quick decision-making. In the work by Wheeler and colleagues, elaboration was not constrained to be high or low. In accordance with the multiple roles, though, when elaboration is constrained to be low, perspective matches to self-schemas could serve as simple positive cues, and when elaboration is constrained to be high, such matches could bias information processing.

Regulatory Focus and Gains versus Losses

Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) suggests that two distinct types of goals drive humans: promotion and prevention. Promotion goals refer to the desire to attain positive outcomes, whereas prevention-focused goals refer to a desire to avoid negative outcomes. For example, an individual with a promotion goal might approach a situation (e.g., studying) with a focus on achievement (e.g., I want to earn an A), and an individual with a prevention-focused goal might approach the same situation with a focus on avoiding a loss (e.g., I do not want to earn a B).

Cesario, Grant, and Higgins (2004) examined the implications for persuasion of matching message content to whether a recipient was promotion versus prevention focused. To test their hypothesis, in one experiment, the authors measured participants' chronic tendencies to be promotion versus prevention focused in their goal pursuits. Participants were then exposed to a new message about the benefits of an after-school program that was framed in a manner to appeal to either promotion or prevention focused individuals. Specifically, given that promotion goals related to advancement and obtainment, one set of messages was framed to emphasize the gains from the program ("This program . . . will advance children's education and support more children to succeed"), whereas another was focused on the negatives that would be avoided ("This program will . . .

secure children's education and prevent more children from failing"). Cesario and colleagues (2004) found that participants who were chronically promotion focused were more persuaded by the message that emphasized gains, and participants who were chronically prevention focused were more persuaded by the message that emphasized the negatives that would be avoided. As might be expected by now, this simple main effect of matching is not the only result that can occur. Interested readers should consult Cesario, Higgins, and Scholer (2008) for the multiple roles this type of matching can induce.

Social Hierarchy and Warmth Versus Competence Appeals

Dubois, Rucker, and Galinsky (2013) recently proposed a relationship between an audience's position in the social hierarchy and information related to warmth versus competence. Specifically, they proposed that individuals high in the social hierarchy were more sensitive to and focused on information related to competence because being at the top of a hierarchy creates a more agency-focused means of thinking (Rucker, Galinsky & Dubois, 2012). In contrast, they proposed that individuals low in the social hierarchy were more sensitive to and focused on information related to warmth because being lower in the social hierarchy creates a natural focus on others. As a consequence, information related to competence could be viewed as a better argument to them than information related to warmth.

To test this idea, Dubois and colleagues measured people's perceived social standing and their willingness to give money to a charity that featured characteristics associated with competence (e.g., skillful, competent, and capable) or characteristics associated with warmth (e.g., warm, trustworthy, and good-natured). Dubois and colleagues found that as participants' position in the social hierarchy increased, they were willing to donate more money to an organization associated with competence but less to an organization associated with warmth.

In a second experiment, Dubois and colleagues (2013) replicated the results by examining natural variations in people's power and associations with the source of a message. Specifically, Aaker, Vohs, and Mogilner (2010) demonstrated that ".com" companies were perceived as more competent but less warm than ".org" companies. Building on Aaker and colleagues' finding, Dubois and colleagues (2013) found that individuals who occupied positions of power at work (i.e., report their job to be that of a boss) were more persuaded by a message that came from a ".com" company as opposed to a ".org" company.

In the work by Dubois and colleagues (2013), the authors explicitly encouraged people to process and think about the information condition (i.e., high elaboration conditions). However, consistent with the multiple roles hypothesis, different outcomes are likely to occur at different levels of elaboration. For example, under moderate elaboration conditions, matching might affect the amount of information processing, which could increase or decrease persuasion based on whether subsequent arguments are strong or weak.

Matching Effects: Summary

For social marketers, the notion of message matching, alignment, or tailoring is a powerful tool. This suggests that after the source, message, and recipient factors have been identified, one should consider whether they are in alignment and the consequences of alignment or misalignment for persuasion. This section has emphasized the possibility of matching messages and recipients, but social marketers can work with many other kinds of matches, such as matches between the source and the recipient, the recipient and the context, the inductions and the measures, and so forth (Petty & Briñol, 2014). Furthermore, based on the ELM, matching effects need not always have a positive effect on persuasion. Rather, the result of message alignment is likely to hinge on factors such as the elaboration level and the quality of the arguments.

Attitude Strength: Persistence, Resistance, and Influence

As indicated earlier, the importance of attitudes, and therefore the topic of persuasion, stems in part from the fact that attitudes ultimately influence behavior. However, a large body of literature now recognizes that not all attitudes are equally likely to predict behavior to the same degree. In particular, attitude scholars have introduced the idea of “attitude strength” to recognize that attitudes differ with respect to the extent to which they are persistent across time, resistant to change, and likely to predict and influence behavior (Petty & Krosnick, 1995). Given that a core goal of persuasion research is to create attitudes that are likely to guide behavior over time, persuaders often should be focused not only on changing attitudes, but on creating changed attitudes that are strong.

There are many determinants of an attitude’s strength (see Petty & Krosnick, 1995, for a review). For example, attitudes tend to be stronger when they are held with certainty (Tormala & Rucker, 2007; Rucker,

Tormala, Petty & Briñol, 2014), are easily accessible (Fazio, 1995), or are important to a person (Eaton & Visser, 2008). Of relevance to the discussion of elaboration, attitudes formed under high elaboration conditions tend to be stronger than attitudes formed under low elaboration conditions (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty, Haugtvedt & Smith, 1995). For example, with regard to attitude persistence, Haugtvedt and Petty (1992) developed a paradigm where individuals who were high and low in need for cognition formed similarly valenced and extreme attitudes. Haugtvedt and Petty then measured participants' attitudes two days later. As stated earlier, individuals high in need for cognition are more likely to engage in greater elaboration when forming their attitudes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1982). Although individuals with high and low need for cognition had equally favorable attitudes initially, after two days, only the new attitudes of individuals with a high need for cognition persisted. Those who were low in need for cognition showed a marked decrease in favorability after this short period of time.

Attitudes formed under high elaboration conditions have also been shown to be more resistant to subsequent efforts to change them. For example, Haugtvedt and Wegener (1994) developed a paradigm that examined how resilient participants' initial attitudes were to a subsequent attack. Specifically, participants were first given a message either in support of or in opposition to a topic. The elaboration of this message was manipulated by how personally relevant the message was to participants. This encouraged participants to form an initial attitude on the topic that was based on high or low amounts of thought. Subsequently, all participants received a second message that presented the opposition's position on the topic. Haugtvedt and Wegener found that participants changed less in the direction of the second message when they had processed the first message under high, as opposed to low, relevance conditions. Put differently, if participants formed their attitudes toward the first message under high elaboration conditions (i.e., high relevance), those attitudes became more difficult to change.

Finally, research has shown that attitudes formed under high elaboration conditions are more predictive of behavior than attitudes formed under low elaboration conditions. As one example, Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann (1983) gave participants a message for a consumer product. Elaboration was manipulated by making the product of either low or high relevance to participants. Petty and colleagues found that participants' attitudes were more predictive of their behavioral intentions (e.g., intention to buy) when the attitude had been formed under high as opposed to low elaboration conditions.

What are the implications of attitude strength for social marketing efforts? If the goal of a social marketing effort is to create long-term and enduring change, then social marketers may seek to target audience members under circumstances that favor central route processing. This might be accomplished by making sure targets are selected for whom the message is personally relevant. Alternatively, marketers could increase elaboration by using variables that increase message elaboration. Or, if ability is an issue, a brand might provide multiple exposures to allow participants to process the message over time. However, the collective evidence suggests that enduring change and influence are more likely to be accomplished through the central route.

The fact that central route persuasion leads to stronger attitudes does not mean that the peripheral route is invariably undesirable. There may be situations in which a momentary change in attitude would be enough to instigate an important behavioral action. For example, a television commercial might create an initial change that leads a consumer to engage in a product trial, and that product trial could become the ultimate catalyst for product adoption. Similarly, there might be cases where consumers are simply not interested in engaging in careful processing of a message, which means the peripheral route is the space a social marketer must work within. Finally, there might be cases where an individual has a compelling cue but lacks strong arguments that are differentiated from the competition. These are all examples where the peripheral route to persuasion might occur and be desirable. In cases where attitude change occurs through peripheral route processes, there may be other means to increase the strength of an attitude (see Petty & Krosnick, 1995; Tormala & Rucker 2007).

In summary, a social marketer should understand the implications of the elaboration level not only for the initial degree of attitude change, but also for the persistence, resistance, and influence of the attitude on behavior.

Implications for Implicit Measures of Attitudes

After a long tradition of assessing the impact of persuasive treatments on attitudes with deliberative self-reports of people's attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Petty & Wegener, 1998a), more recent work has assessed change with measures that tap the more automatic evaluations associated with objects, issues, and people (Petty, Fazio & Briñol, 2009; Gawronski & Payne, 2010). Techniques that assess automatic evaluative associations without directly asking people to report their attitudes are often referred to

as implicit measures (for a review in the consumer domain, see Perkins & Forehand, 2009). Because implicit and explicit measures of attitudes are useful in predicting behavior separately (Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann & Banaji, 2009) and in combination (Petty & Briñol, 2006; Briñol, Petty, & Wheeler, 2006), it might be useful for marketers to understand how each is modified by various persuasion techniques. From the perspective of the ELM, sufficient research now makes it clear that the same fundamental processes described in this chapter for understanding changes in explicit measures of attitudes are also critical for understanding changes in automatic evaluations (Briñol, Petty & McCaslin, 2009).

Conclusion

The present chapter informs social marketers by providing an introduction to the foundations of attitudes and attitude change. The chapter first offered an organizing structure by which to think of the factors that can affect the persuasiveness of a communication: the source, the message, and the recipient. Second, it introduced the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as an organizing framework to understand how numerous variables can exert different effects on persuasion as a function of elaboration. Third, the chapter introduced and discussed the importance of matching and alignment effects in persuasion, and it explained how the ELM could be used to understand and study such effects. Finally, it introduced the concept of attitude strength and the role of elaboration in determining the persistence, resistance, and influence of attitudes.

At the core, the present chapter offers four key questions that social marketers should ask themselves when crafting a message designed to persuade a recipient:

- What are the relevant source, message, and recipient factors in a given context?
- What is the elaboration likelihood level of the target audience?
- How might source, message, and recipient variables interact?
- Has a communication fostered strong (i.e., enduring, resistant, and influential) attitudes?

By asking these questions, social marketers can seek to understand and improve the efficacy of their persuasive attempt before any efforts have been undertaken. As other chapters in this volume will attest, social marketing represents a complex process with many problems and challenges. However, understanding the basic principles of persuasion, whether central or peripheral, represents an excellent starting point.

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