In Part I, the cognitive response approach was outlined, techniques for the measurement of attitudes and cognitive responses were described, and the logic of experimentation was discussed. In Part II, the cognitive response approach is used to explain the effects of traditional independent variables on attitude change processes. Each of the chapters in Part II reviews an important area of research in persuasion and notes how a cognitive response analysis has been, or can be, useful in understanding why each independent variable has the effect it does.

The process of persuasion has typically been analyzed in terms of who says what to whom, how, and with what effect (Lasswell, 1948). "With what effect," of course, refers to whether or not any attitude change has been produced. The other four items serve to identify the four major independent variables in persuasion research. These variables are source (who), message (what), recipient (to whom), and modality (how).

Because the cognitive response approach to persuasion focuses attention on the thoughts that pass through a person's mind as a communication is anticipated, received, or reflected upon, a cognitive response analyst would seek to determine how different variables affected the manner in which a communication was processed. Figure II.1 diagrams one possible cognitive response model of attitude...
changes that result from exposure to persuasive communications (Petty, 1977a). The model proposes that enduring changes in attitudes are the result of *cognitively responding* to the message content, whereas temporary shifts in opinion are the result of *persuasion cues*. Cognitive responding refers to overt, verbalizable thinking related to the message content, whereas a persuasion cue refers to a factor or motive inherent in the persuasion setting that may be sufficient to produce an initial attitude change without the need for thinking about the message content.

Because enduring attitude changes result from thinking about the information presented in a message, whereas temporary shifts may result without processing, it becomes crucial to delineate those factors that will lead to message processing. As Miller, Maruyama, Beaber, and Valone (1976) have noted: ‘‘It may be irrational to scrutinize the plethora of counterattitudinal messages received daily. To the extent that one possesses only a limited amount of information processing time and capacity, such scrutiny would disengage the thought processes from the exigencies of daily life [p. 623].’’

According to the model, two factors will determine whether or not a person will think about the content of a message—motivation and ability. A person will not be motivated to process every message that is presented. Numerous variables may affect a person’s motivation to process a stimulus. For example, messages that have high personal relevance, or that arouse dissonance, or that the recipient is solely responsible for evaluating may be particularly likely to be processed (cf. Petty & Cacioppo, 1979b; Petty, Harkins, & Williams, 1980). Recipient variables such as a person’s ‘‘need for cognition’’ (see Chapter 1) may also affect motivation.

If a message is to be processed, however, the communication recipient must also have the ability to process the message. The complexity of a message, the number of times it is repeated, whether or not there are any extraneous distractions present—all these things may affect one’s ability to process (cf. Cacioppo & Petty, 1979b; Petty, Wells, & Brock, 1976). Recipient variables such as a person’s prior knowledge about, or familiarity with, an issue may also influence the ability to process a message in a meaningful fashion. If the message is incomprehensible, or the person has no schema or framework for relating the message to his or her existing beliefs and values, then no processing can occur, even if sufficient motivation is present. Only if a person has both the motivation and the ability to process a persuasive communication can *enduring* attitude change result according to the model.

When both motivation and ability are present, then the next important question concerns the nature of the information processing that occurs. What kinds of thoughts are elicited by the message? Are they generally favorable toward the position advocated or unfavorable? Variables such as the quality of the arguments presented and the person’s initial attitude on the topic may affect whether predominantly favorable or unfavorable cognitions are elicited. In some instances, even though a person is motivated and able to process the message, only
neutral or topic-irrelevant thoughts will be elicited. When this occurs, enduring attitude change is unlikely.

If a person generates thoughts that have favorable or unfavorable implications for the advocated position, it is likely that enduring attitude change will result if the elicited thoughts produce a lasting change in the underlying cognitive foundation of the attitude. In other words, if several new, favorable implications of the advocated position are uncovered by thinking about the message, but none of them enters long-term memory, enduring attitude change is unlikely. The number of favorable and unfavorable cognitive responses generated and the amount of rehearsal of the thoughts that occurs may both ultimately affect whether or not any new cognitions will be stored in memory. When the new cognitions stored are more positive than those available prior to message exposure, an enduring positive attitude change (persuasion) is likely; and when the new cognitions stored are more negative than those available prior to message exposure, an enduring negative attitude change (boomerang) is likely.

Clearly, the cognitive response model in Fig. II.1 indicates that it is quite difficult to produce an enduring attitude change. The recipient of a persuasive message must have both the motivation and the ability to process the information contained in the communication; cognitions that have favorable or unfavorable implications for the advocated position must be elicited; and finally, these cognitive responses must supplement or supplant the cognitions existing previously in memory.

Of course, measurable attitude change sometimes occurs in response to a message even though none of the foregoing conditions are met. Returning to Fig. II.1, it can be seen that if a person lacks either the motivation or the ability to process a message, a temporary shift in attitudes may result if a persuasion cue is present. For example, if a young man were motivated to please his date, he might shift certain uninvolving attitudes to agree with hers regardless of the arguments she puts forth, or even if no arguments were presented. Attitude shifts that are the result of persuasion cue processes will endure only as long as the operative cue(s) remain(s) salient (i.e., only as long as the young man wants to impress his date).

Many of the attitude changes observed in the psychological laboratory are probably the result of persuasion cue processes (as are many of the attitude shifts observed in the "real world") (Cialdini, Levy, Herman, Kozlowski, & Petty, 1976). For example, one reliable lab finding is that subjects will readily shift their opinions on very esoteric and complex issues in order to agree with the position advocated by a highly prestigious and expert source. Yet these changes generally do not persist when measured only 1 week later (cf. Cook & Flay, 1978). According to the cognitive response model, enduring change should not be expected in this case, because the initial attitude change was not likely to be based on an extensive processing of the information provided by the source. When the source is no longer salient, the attitude shift disappears.
FIG. II.1. A cognitive response model of enduring and temporary attitude shifts that result from exposure to persuasive communications. Adapted from Petty (1977a).

In sum, the cognitive response approach to attitude change processes outlined in Fig. II.1 holds true the following:

1. If the communication recipient has the motivation and ability to process the message, and the message processing leads to changes in cognitive structure, then any attitude change produced is likely to be enduring.
2. If motivation or ability are absent, or if no cognitive structure change results from processing the message, then an attitude change may still occur if a persuasion cue is present.
3. Attitude shifts that result from persuasion cue processes are likely to be rather temporary unless the cue remains salient, or unless the person subsequently becomes motivated or acquires the ability to process the message.

4. If neither motivation, nor ability, nor persuasion cues are present, no attitude change will occur as a result of exposure to the communication.

The chapters in Part II of this volume discuss how the four traditional independent variables in persuasion research—source, recipient, message, and modality—can affect the manner in which a communication is processed. Figure II.1 may provide a useful organizing device for thinking about the chapters in this section.

In Chapter 7, Hass discusses the effects of source characteristics on the cognitive processing of persuasive communications; that is, do highly credible sources motivate more processing or less? The cognitive processes mediating the effects of expert, attractive, and powerful sources are described. Chapter 8 by Eagly is on recipient characteristics as determinants of responses to persuasive messages. Three different strategies for assessing the relationship between personal characteristics and cognitive responses are outlined and critiqued. In addition to the emphasis on source and recipient factors in Chapters 7 and 8, message variables are discussed when appropriate. Thus, for example, Hass explains that the optimal level of message discrepancy depends on the level of source credibility, and Eagly notes that the relative effectiveness of one- and two-sided messages depends on the educational level of the recipient. Message variables are also covered in relevant sections of the remaining chapters.

Chapter 9 by Burnstein and Sentis examines attitude changes that result from group interaction. Theories based on normative processes (approval seeking) and cognitive/informational processes are compared and evaluated. In Chapter 10, Cialdini and Petty explore the cognitive and attitudinal effects of simply expecting to receive or present a persuasive message. Again, the roles of normative and informational factors are discussed, and the antecedents of both enduring and temporary anticipatory attitude shifts are described.

The last two chapters in Part II apply the cognitive response approach to two variables that are of particular interest to advertising and marketing researchers. In Chapter 11, Sawyer examines the effects of message repetition on cognitive responding and persuasion; and in Chapter 12, Wright investigates the effects of the modality of a message (e.g., print, radio, TV) on cognitive responses and persuasion.