There is a consensus among experimental social psychologists that attitudes are general and enduring positive or negative feelings about an object, person or issue (e.g. Cacioppo, Harkins and Petty 1981; Insko and Schopler 1972). For example, a French-Canadian may like (i.e. hold a positive attitude toward) the proposition that Quebec should exercise its independence. An instance in which an active attempt is made to change this person’s attitude would be termed persuasion.

Attitudes and persuasion are important aspects of social interactions for several reasons. First, an attitude serves as a convenient summary of the evaluative nature of a person’s beliefs. The French-Canadian in our example above, for instance, may believe that Quebec is a self-sufficient province, that its culture and traditions are worthy of preserving, and that the governmental policies in Canada are subjugating Quebec’s unique culture and traditions. Eliciting and scaling the valuations and probabilities of a person’s beliefs about an object or issue could be done, but assessing the general attitude toward the object or issue is simpler and yields a useful summary of that information (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Second, knowing a person’s attitudes renders the social interaction with that person more predictable since attitudes, in a general sense, influence behaviours (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Fishbein 1980). Finally, various aspects of a person’s personality may be reflected in the attitudes the person holds and in the means found to be most effective in changing these attitudes (see Smith, Bruner and White 1956). Katz (1960), for example, proposed that attitudes can serve a variety of functions that are beneficial to an individual’s personality. Katz listed four functions that he felt were most important: (1) The utilitarian or instrumental function – these attitudes are held because they help the individual to gain rewards and avoid punishments. A minority member may possess positive attitudes toward characteristics of the majority because these attitudes (i.e. their verbal and behavioural expressions) maximize the likelihood of obtaining social rewards and advancements. (2) The ego-defensive function – these attitudes are held because they help people protect themselves from embarrassing or unflattering facts about themselves or about others who are important to them. By holding negative attitudes towards minority groups, for instance, a minority member might be able to enhance his or her own feelings of distinctiveness and self-worth. (3) The value-expressive function – this function occurs when a person holds an attitude because of the

---

1 We thank Ellen Ryan, Howard Giles, Gertrude Nath, and Barbara Andersen for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Preparation of this chapter was supported by University Faculty Scholar Award No. A240.
satisfaction derived from expressing a position congruent with personal values and self-concept. For example, minority members who value personal freedom may be somewhat resistant to the majority influence to assimilate a particular style of speech because their attitudes toward their unique ethnic accent is serving as a means of expressing their independence. (4) The knowledge function - attitudes that serve this function help people to understand the people and events around them. If minority members dislike the majority leader in a province or country because it helps them to understand how the leader can be so insensitive to their unique needs and traditions, then this attitude would be said to serve the knowledge function. Katz went on to argue that an attitude is more susceptible to change when a persuasive attempt accurately targets the underlying function that the attitude serves (see Giles and Ryan, this volume: ch. 13).

The phenomena of attitudes and persuasion have been the focus of over 40 years of experimental research in social psychology. In the following sections, we survey the major approaches to attitudes and persuasion that characterize this research. We examine how these theoretical approaches might be used to account for the research on language variables and attitudes, and we suggest possible routes for future research.

Several of our emphases in this chapter are worth noting at the outset. First, we focus on the psychological mechanisms that underlie attitudes and persuasion, since accurately predicting attitude change and behaviour in unique settings is difficult unless the idiosyncratic reasons people have for holding a particular attitude are known. Second, we examine the effects of attitudes not only on self-report ratings, but also on comprehension of relevant material, elaboration of attitude-relevant material, and behaviour (e.g. assimilation of accentedness). As we shall show, different people may report the same attitude, but differ in the reasons for and the consequences of holding it. Finally, we explain how factors, such as the similarity or expertise of the communicator, have heterogeneous effects that are explicable only by viewing them from the perspective of the context in which they emerge.

**Approaches to the study of attitudes and persuasion**

In a recent text on attitude change, we have grouped the various theories that have emerged from experiments of attitudes and persuasion in social psychology into the following seven approaches (see Petty and Cacioppo 1981a): (1) conditioning and modelling, (2) message learning, (3) judgement, (4) motivation, (5) attribution, (6) combination approaches, and (7) self-persuasion. Each of these approaches postulates a unique process that is responsible for attitude change, and all continue to retain and gain adherents.

**Conditioning and modelling**

The first approach emphasizes some of the basic principles of learning that have been found in studies of classical and operant conditioning in animals, and in studies of modelling in humans. The focus of this approach is on the effects of the direct administration of rewards and punishments to the target of influence for expressing verbally or behaviourally certain attitudes, or on the effects of the target observing others being rewarded or punished for expressing certain atti-
tudes. According to this view, attitudes toward stimuli become more favourable if they are associated with pleasant contexts (classical conditioning) or lead to positive outcomes (operant conditioning). Studies of modelling suggest that the classical and operant conditioning of attitudes can occur vicariously as well, with particularly intriguing implications for attitude development. For example, research by Ryan and her colleagues (see Ryan 1979; Ryan and Carranza 1977) suggests the possibility that the children of bilingual parents, after observing repeatedly the more positive contexts (i.e. vicarious classical conditioning) or outcomes (i.e. vicarious operant conditioning, or ‘observational learning’) that accompany their using their second language, may develop more favourable attitudes toward learning the second (majority) language than toward learning their ethnic language; moreover, they may develop stronger preferences to employ the second than ethnic language, and more favourable sets of beliefs and stereotypes about speakers of the second than ethnic language (see Day, this volume: ch. 7).

The research on vicarious classical conditioning is interesting in that it suggests that an initially neutral stimulus can become capable of eliciting a strong positive or negative attitude from people simply because they repeatedly observe others responding positively or negatively to it. Though this possibility has received little empirical attention, it suggests how people might acquire positive or negative attitudes (e.g. toward a minority group) even though they know very little about or have never been directly exposed to the attitude object (e.g. the minority group).

Similarly, accents or speech styles may elicit general positive or negative attitudinal responses from people because of their past (vicarious) learning history. Interestingly, these people initially should not be able to give any logical reasons for responding positively or negatively to the speaker, but rather they should be forced to generate rationalizations for their response. Future research using this approach to study stereotyped responses to language variations might be informative regarding the psychological processes underlying these stereotypes.

Message learning

The second major approach outlined by Petty and Cacioppo (1981a) considers the learning of the arguments contained in a persuasive message as the prerequisite for attitude change and evolved from the work by Carl Hovland and his associates (Hovland, Janis and Kelley 1953; Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield 1949; Hovland, Mandell, Campbell, Brock, Luchins, Cohen, McGuire, Janis, Feierabend and Anderson 1957). In this approach, the focus is on how source (e.g. similarity, accentedness), message (e.g. exposure frequency, affectivity of vocabulary), recipient (e.g. self-esteem, speech style of recipient), and channel factors (e.g. print, audio-visual) affect attention to, comprehension of, and retention of the information contained in the message. Experiments were designed initially to assess the simple (i.e. main) effects of these factors on recall and attitude change, but a disarray of results across experiments led to the use of more complex designs and the discovery of interactive effects of source, message, recipient, and channel factors on attitude change (see reviews by McGuire 1966, 1969, 1978). Moreover, efforts to map inductively the role of message learning in the persuasion process have led to a serious questioning of its position as the pre-eminent mediator of attitude change (e.g. Cacioppo and Petty 1979b; Greenwald 1968; Insko, Turnbull and Yandell 1974; Petty 1977). Insko et al. (1974) have found the
relationship between message comprehension and attitude change to be fairly flat, which means that sizeable differences in message comprehension are necessary before differences in attitude change emerge.

Nevertheless, Hovland and his colleagues’ classification of independent variables as source, message, recipient, and channel factors and dependent variables as measures of attention, comprehension, retention, and yielding, and their rigorous experimental approach have had a significant impact on the study of persuasion. Studies of language variables and attitudes, for example, can be categorized into the cells of an independent x dependent variable matrix of persuasion studies (McGuire 1969). When this is done, you find that most studies of language variables and attitudes deal with perception of the source (see other chapters, this volume; Bradac, Bowers and Courtright 1980; Giles and Powesland 1975; Shuy and Fasold 1973). Among the findings is that faster speech rates enhance the perception of the source’s competence whereas both increased and decreased speech rates lead to lowered evaluations of benevolence compared to normal rates (Brown, Strong and Rencher 1973; Brown, Strong, Rencher and Smith 1974; Smith, Brown, Strong and Rencher 1975; Street and Hopper, this volume: ch. 11). Moreover, the use of rhetoricals, or ‘tag’ questions, makes the speaker appear less confident and, perhaps, less competent since the source gives the impression of equivocating (see Kramarae, this volume: ch. 5; Newcombe and Arnkoff 1979), although the use of rhetoricals may also make the source appear more polite since the listener is given the opportunity to disagree (Bates 1976). The language, dialect and accent used by a speaker are also important determinants of source perceptions, with certain speech styles (e.g. standard accents) elevating the valuation of the source across a wide range of dimensions (e.g. competence, dynamics, dominance – Giles 1973b; Giles and Powesland 1975; Lambert 1967; Palmer 1973).

Source perceptions and attitude change in this area of research have occasionally been found to vary similarly. For instance, the simplest source effects that have emerged from the work of Hovland and his associates are that the level of source credibility (expertise and/or trustworthiness) and of similarity are directly related to attitude change. Hovland and his co-workers reasoned this was the case for credibility because highly credible sources are likely to be correct and, hence, offer the strongest incentives for message learning and yielding (Hovland et al. 1953), whereas this was the case for similarity because social approval from similar others is particularly rewarding. Consistent with this reasoning, Miller, Maruyama, Beaber and Valone (1976) found that increased relative to normal speech rates produced higher ratings of source credibility and more attitude change.

A number of exceptions to this simple effect have been identified, however (e.g. see Cooper, Darley and Henderson 1974; Giles and Powesland 1975). In a field study using a political appeal, Cooper et al. (1974) illustrated how people who chose freely to listen to an unconventional rather than conventional (and more likeable) source actually changed their attitudes more to justify their choosing to listen to the unconventional-appearing source. Hence, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results of studies on language variation and impression formation to the recipients’ susceptibility to the source’s persuasive appeal.

In addition, one variable can affect more than one inference about a source. What happens, for example, if divergent inferences are made about a source’s expertise and similarity as sometimes results in studies of language variables (see
Scherer (1979b)? Brock (1965) conducted an interesting study that bears upon this question. Brock trained two part-time salesmen to deliver a standard persuasive communication to customers who had decided to purchase house paint. A salesman would approach the customers as they headed toward the check-out counter and suggest to them that they purchase another brand of paint. To buttress his recommendation, the salesman would tell the customer either that he personally had tried both types of paint in the same quantities as the customer had chosen and that the alternative brand was much better (i.e. high similarity condition), or that he recently bought 20 times the amount of each type of paint and found the alternative brand to be much better (i.e. high expertise condition). Brock found that more customers bought the advocated brand of paint when the salesman presented himself as similar rather than dissimilar to (but more expert than) the customer.

There are important implications for the study of language variables and attitudes of this finding, since language variables may establish the speaker as being similar to the recipients, or, in some instances, as being more prestigious or competent than the recipients. Consider a study by Giles (1973b), who exposed 250 subjects in Great Britain who spoke with regional accents to a message arguing against capital punishment. Five groups of subjects were formed, each of which received the same basic information in a message but that differed in the style in which the message was delivered. One group read a typescript of the message, whereas the remaining groups each heard a recording of the message delivered by a male evincing either a Received Pronunciation (RP), South Welsh, Somerset or Birmingham accent (see Edwards, this volume: ch. 2). Giles (1970, 1971b) had previously documented that speakers exhibiting an RP accent were perceived as the most prestigious, a South Welsh accent the next most prestigious and so forth. On the other hand, the regional accented speakers were perceived as being more similar to the recipients than the RP speaker. Giles (1973b) found that the RP speaker and typescript produced no attitude change, while the use of regional accents led to more attitude change than these two conditions. These data are consistent with Brock's (1965) finding that similarity can be a more powerful determinant of persuasion than other source characteristics such as expertise, or prestige in this case, since the speaker using a regional accent similar to the recipients' accent was more persuasive than when using the more prestigious but less similar RP accent. Other interpretations of these data are also possible, of course, and we shall outline an alternative account in a subsequent section on the various approaches to attitudes and persuasion.

Another important finding in research on source factors and persuasion involves the difference in the effects of issue-relevant and issue-irrelevant source characteristics. Mills and Harvey (1972), for instance, asked subjects to read a message arguing in favour of broader education for college students. The message was attributed to either an expert or an attractive source. In addition, some subjects learned the identity of the source at the outset of the message, whereas others were told the identity of the source at the end of the message. Mills and Harvey found that subjects were more persuaded when the expert was identified at the outset compared to the end of the message, but that subjects were equally persuaded whether the attractive source was identified at the beginning or end of the message. Husek (1965) and Norman (1976) have obtained conceptually similar results. The implication of this finding is that issue-irrelevant source character-
istics, such as the physical attractiveness of a communicator, may have temporary effects on persuasion that can be distinguished from the effects of the message arguments per se. Presumably, this occurs because these factors did not alter the subjects' interpretation of the information provided in the message. Issue-relevant source characteristics, on the other hand, may actually alter the meaning of the information provided in the message (see Asch 1948), which means that the effects on persuasion of source and message characteristics should be much less likely to manifest separately, either immediately or over time (e.g. in delayed-action attitude changes). Since language variables sometimes affect the (issue-relevant) source perceptions of competence and dominance in one way, and the (issue-irrelevant) source perceptions of benevolence and likeability in a contrary manner (see Scherer 1979b; Street and Hopper, this volume: ch. 11), the preceding distinction may prove useful in research on language variables and enduring attitude changes.

Of course, the effects of language variables are contingent upon encoding and decoding processes. Encoding refers to the speaker's selection and utilization of particular forms of delivering the message, whereas decoding refers to the judgemental aspects of the recipients processing the communication (e.g., comprehending/yielding; see Giles and St Clair 1979). A recipient factor that has received little attention but that is pertinent to the study of language variables (e.g. convergence/divergence possibilities) is the person's ability to encode or decode language variables (e.g. speech style, tone of voice). For instance, Hall (1980) asked subjects to deliver over the telephone a persuasive message dealing with the recipient's willingness to participate in psychological research. Half of the callers were told to use 'your vocal cues only' to influence the person to indicate more hours, and half of the callers were told to use their vocal cues only to influence the person to indicate fewer hours. In addition, Hall collected measures of the callers' and recipients' ability to encode and decode nonverbal signals in a separate experimental session. Hall found that there was a strong effect of recipients' decoding skill on persuasion in that good decoders agreed more to the caller's nonverbal request to participate in many or few hours of psychological research than poor decoders. The effect of encoding skill was less pronounced, but the greatest agreement occurred when skilled encoders were speaking to skilled decoders. In Hovland's framework, this combination would be expected to enhance comprehension and increase pressures to yield.

Perceptual judgements

The third approach encompasses the perceptual–judgemental theories of persuasion. These theories have in common their focus on factors that alter a person's perception of the position being recommended in a persuasive message, and how attitude judgements are made in the context of a person's past experiences (e.g. Eise and Stroebbe 1972; Ostrom and Upshaw 1968; Sherif and Hovland 1961). For instance, just as placing your hand in lukewarm water feels differently when you bring your hand from very hot or very cold water, an expression of attitude is perceived differently when coming from a very positive or very negative context.

In social judgement theory (Sherif and Hovland 1961; Sherif and Sherif 1967; Sherif, Sherif and Nebergall 1965), judgements about social as well as physical stimuli are postulated to be susceptible to two judgemental distortions: assimilation and contrast. Assimilation refers to a shift in judgement toward an anchor, such as
the person's initial attitude. Contrast, on the other hand, refers to a shift in judgement away from an anchor. According to social judgement theory, assimilation occurs when a stimulus (e.g. the position recommended in a persuasive message) falls within a range of positions that the recipient finds acceptable, a range called the latitude of acceptance. The effect on an attitudinal statement that falls within the latitude of acceptance, then, is that the statement appears more similar to the recipient's own initial attitude than it is in fact, and is more likely to be endorsed. Conversely, contrast is thought to occur when a stimulus falls within a range of positions that the recipient finds unacceptable, a range called the latitude of rejection. The effect on an attitudinal statement that falls within the latitude of rejection is that the statement appears more distant from the recipient's own initial attitude than it is, and is, in most instances, more likely to be rejected.

Social judgement theory could be used to examine how speaker's attitudes toward ethnic memberships, as inferred from speech style for example, affect recipients' views of the speaker's positions on issues. For instance, Granberg and Brent (1974) analysed data from the 1968 presidential election in the United States. Specifically, they examined how voter's attitudes toward the Vietnam war affected their perceptions of the major presidential candidates' positions on the war. Granberg and Brent found the pro-Humphrey voters who favoured the war displaced Humphrey's position on the war toward their own (i.e. assimilation), whereas they displaced Wallace's position away from their own (i.e. contrast). Similar effects may occur if, by the intensity of the language they select to describe a (common) position, different speakers connote that they hold positions that fall differentially within the recipients' latitudes of acceptance or rejection (see Burgoon and Bettinghaus 1980; Burgoon and Miller 1971).

The concept of latitudes has been useful in other regards as well. Eagly and Telaak (1972), for example, exposed pro-birth control subjects who had either narrow, medium or wide latitudes of acceptance on the issue to an anti-birth control message that was either mildly, moderately, or strongly discrepant from their own position. For all three levels of communication discrepancy (i.e. the distance from the subjects' initial attitude and the advocated position), subjects with wide latitudes of acceptance showed greater attitude change than did subjects with either narrow or medium latitudes of acceptance. Contrary to social judgement theory, subjects with a narrow latitude of acceptance showed a slight negative reaction to the mildly discrepant message even though it fell within their latitude of acceptance, whereas subjects with a wide latitude of acceptance showed a positive reaction to the strongly discrepant message even though it fell within their latitude of rejection. Eagly (1981) suggests that the size of the latitude of acceptance on an issue may be a better predictor of general susceptibility to persuasion on an issue than susceptibility to messages of a specified level of discrepancy. This means that the width of people's latitudes of acceptance may serve as a useful means of identifying individual differences in their susceptibility to influence in studies of language variables and attitude change on an issue. For example, although Miller et al. (1976) demonstrated that a source's speaking rate influenced recipients' attitudes, it might be possible to account for additional variance by identifying those recipients who hold wide versus narrow latitudes of acceptance around their attitudes toward the issue (e.g. growing vegetables hydroponically).

Williams and his associates (Williams, Hewett, Hopper, Miller, Naremore and Whitehead 1976) provide a good example of how measures of these latitudes might
be used in studies of language attitudes. Williams et al. (1976) asked 65 subjects to rate particular stereotypes and stimulus videotapes on scales designed to tap two factors: confidence—eagerness and ethnicity—nonstandardness. Measures included not only the category on each scale that best described the stimulus person (the ‘best estimate’), but also the latitudes of acceptance, noncommitment, and rejection on each scale. Subjects rated their stereotype of an Anglo, Black, and Mexican American child, and videotapes of a lower-class and a middle-class child in each of the Anglo, Black, and Mexican American ethnic groups. Although their results were not subjected to statistical tests to determine the significance of the differences that they observed, Williams et al. (1976) reported that (a) the measures of best estimate and latitudes were reliable and valid; (b) the best estimate position and the midpoint of the latitude of acceptance were nearly identical, suggesting that this latitude is arranged symmetrically around the best estimate; and (c) the latitudes of acceptance and rejection are inversely though not strongly correlated \( r = -0.55 \), suggesting that as one varies the change can be derived from or imparted to the latitude of noncommitment rather than necessarily each other.

Finally, Eiser and Stroebe (1972) have proposed a judgemental theory that addresses how lexical intensity affects the perceptions of a speaker’s position. Their theory, termed accentuation theory, identifies conditions in which an attitude rating changes, but the attitude content (i.e. the actual attitude) does not change. According to accentuation theory, an attitude rating is a function of a person’s true attitude and evaluative connotations of the particular words that are used to label the extremes of the response scale. If you wanted to use a scale to measure what someone feels toward an ethnic group, you could anchor the response scale with the words ‘like’ and ‘dislike’, or you could anchor the scale with the words ‘love’ and ‘hate’. If you get different ratings with these scales, you could not assume that you had tapped different underlying attitudes. The second set of words covers a broader content range than the former set of anchors. Eiser and his colleagues have demonstrated that the lexical intensity of the anchors can affect predictably how polarized subjects’ attitude ratings are (see Giles and Ryan, this volume, ch. 13).

Eiser and Osman (1978) have argued that anchors with positive connotations imply more moderate positions than do anchors with negative connotations. The implication of their argument is that subjects’ attitude ratings will be more polarized (i.e. appear more extreme) on the positive than on the negative scale, since the scale anchored by positive or more moderately intense words corresponds to a smaller stimulus range than does the scale anchored by negative or lexically intense words.

One interesting implication of this work for research on language variables is that people from different regions or ethnic backgrounds may exhibit different attitude ratings, even though their true attitudes are similar, because the groups differ in their evaluative reactions to the scale-anchors. To date, this source of variance has been ignored in cross-cultural and inter-ethnic research.

**Motivation**

The fourth approach focuses on the different human motives as they relate to attitudes and persuasion. The most researched motive, the need to maintain cognitive consistency — consistency between beliefs, between attitudes and behaviours, and
so forth – has important implications for attitude change. We survey the best known cognitive consistency theories in this section.

There are several characteristics that cognitive consistency theories of attitudes have in common. First, each describes the conditions for equilibrium and disequilibrium among units of information, called cognitive elements. Second, each asserts that disequilibrium motivates the person to restore consistency among the elements, usually in order to remove the feeling of unpleasant tension. Third, each describes the means by which equilibrium might be accomplished. The three major theories of cognitive consistency and attitudes are balance theory (Heider 1946), congruity theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum 1955), and cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957).

Heider (1946) emphasized the person’s own point of view about elements of information and their interconnections. Balance, Heider argued, was a harmonious, quiescent motivational state in which all of the elements appeared to the individual to be internally consistent. Balance was described by Heider as occurring when recipients agree with speakers they like or disagree with speakers they dislike. These situations were said to be the most pleasant, desirable, stable and expected state of relationships among any set of elements to which a person heeded (see Cacioppo and Petty 1981c).

One of the major complaints against balance theory is that there are no provisions for degrees of liking or belongingness between elements. A positive relation between two people is scored as +1, whether the couple is mildly friendly or madly in love. Congruity theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum 1955) overcomes this objection by quantifying gradations of liking between elements. Nonetheless, congruity theory can be considered to be a special case of balance theory. Congruity theory focuses on two elements, the source and a concept, and on a relation, the assertion made by the source about the concept. Hence, it is more limited in its range of application than balance theory even though it does make very specific, quantitative predictions about the effects of imbalance (incongruity) that fall within its domain.

Cognitive dissonance theory, first proposed by Festinger (1957), is unique among consistency theories in several important regards. First, most consistency theories can consider the interrelationships among a number of elements simultaneously to determine whether or not the structure of elements is balanced. Dissonance theory considers only pairs of elements at a time. The magnitude of the dissonance within a set of many elements is determined by (a) the proportion of relevant elements that are dissonance, and (b) the importance of the elements to the person. For example, let’s say that you have to choose between two dialects. Using one dialect identifies you with friends of yours, but it also identifies you as being from an unprestigious background. The other dialect signifies ‘good-breeding’, but places you among a group in which you have no friends. There is a consonant consequence of selecting either alternative (i.e. identifying with strangers rather than friends, or labelling yourself as belonging to a high or low socioeconomic group). If there were a third dialect that you could choose where you would have both friends and prestige, then there would be much less dissonance created by choosing the third over the former two alternatives. It would be less because the third alternative has all of the positive and none of the negative attributes that characterize the other decisional alternatives. Hence, the proportion of dissonant elements is low. (Indeed, in this example, the proportion is
zero, and no dissonance would be aroused by choosing the third over the former two alternatives.)

Second, Festinger used dissonance theory to make a number of non-obvious predictions regarding attitude change. The non-intuitiveness of these predictions, coupled with the creative though sometimes questionable methods used to confirm these predictions (e.g. see Chapanis and Chapanis 1964), did much to stimulate research in this area.

The operation of cognitive consistency (specifically, balance and congruity theory) and attitude change can be illustrated with the Giles (1973b) study. The subjects were people who possessed regional accents and who had regional allegiances. The speaker varied his accent so that he appeared to have similar or dissimilar allegiances. When the speaker and recipients seemed by their speech styles to have similar allegiances, then a positive unit relation can be said to exist between these elements. When dissimilar, the unit relation is negative. The speaker argued against capital punishment, which constitutes a negative link between the speaker and the concept, capital punishment. These conditions can be viewed as constituting two sets of triads of elements with two relations specified in each triad (see Figure 12.1). According to both balance and congruity theories, the triad in which there is a positive speaker–recipient unit relation (i.e. the speaker appears similar to the recipients – see left panel of Figure 12.1) is in a state of equilibrium if the recipient moves toward agreement with the speaker about capital punishment (e.g. they both are against it). The triad in which there is a negative speaker–recipient unit relation (i.e. the speaker appears dissimilar to the recipients – see right panel of Figure 12.1), however, attains a state of equilibrium if the recipient moves toward disagreement with the speaker regarding capital punishment. The net effect of these pressures is that similarity between the speaker and recipient should lead to more attitude change than dissimilarity, which is what was observed by Giles (1973b).

![Figure 12.1](image)

**Figure 12.1:** When a speaker advocates a particular position on some issue to a recipient or audience, the social influence attempt can be viewed in terms of cognitive consistency (see text for an explanation.)

The same theories can be used to explain the pattern of data observed by Bourhis and Giles (1977). Bourhis and Giles identified Welshmen who valued their national identity and those who did not. The Welshmen were engaged individually in a conversation in English with an English interlocutor. Bourhis and Giles found that Welshmen who valued their national identity emphasized their (less prestigious) Welsh accents (i.e. diverged) when their interlocutor derogated Wales, whereas Welshmen who did not value their national identity responded to the interlocutor’s attacks by attenuating their Welsh accents (i.e. converged). In each instance, the Welshmen’s change in speech style (i.e. divergence vs convergence) served to
Cognitive dissonance theory typically applies to a different set of situations. According to dissonance theory, two elements are inconsistent (i.e. dissonant) when knowing one suggests the opposite of the other to the person. Festinger (1957) described cognitive dissonance as a motivational state that energizes and directs behavior to remove dissonance. Dissonance can be reduced by: (a) changing one of the elements to make the pair more consonant, (b) adding consonant elements, or (c) changing the importance of the elements.

Let’s return for a moment to individuals who must choose between a dialect that identifies them with family and friends but that also labels them as being from a lower-status social group and a dialect that indicates they are part of a prestigious social group. There are dissonant consequences regardless of their choice. According to cognitive dissonance theory, these individuals experience dissonance following a decision to the extent that the decision (a) is important to the person, (b) means giving up relatively attractive features of the unchosen alternative and/or accepting unattractive features of the chosen alternative, and (c) concerns alternatives that are dissimilar in their attributes but similar in their desirability. Festinger (1957) suggests four specific methods of reducing the dissonance aroused by making a decision: revoking the decision, increasing the attractiveness of the chosen alternative and/or decreasing the attractiveness of the unchosen alternative or viewing the consequences of the alternatives as similar. In the example we have described, the individuals ultimately must make a decision among alternatives with dissimilar attributes, which leaves them with the possibility of increasing the attractiveness of the chosen alternative and/or decreasing the attractiveness of the unchosen alternative to reduce dissonance. In fact, people typically use both these strategies, which results in a post-decisional spreading of the alternatives. The chosen alternative becomes more highly valued, whereas the unchosen alternative becomes less highly valued following a decision. Thus, a person who abandons his or her ethnic dialect for the majority dialect would, according to dissonance theory, tend to undervalue their ethnic background and overvalue the social rewards they acquire by their speech style.

Dissonance theory may offer an explanation for Baker’s observations that frequently a judgement is made of an individual (with a similar speech style) on other grounds and then comments about speech are made to rationalize that judgement (cited by Giles and Powesland 1975, 104). First, assume that employers expect to hire people similar to themselves in speech and appearance. When an employer decides not to hire an applicant with a similar speech style, dissonance may be aroused (see Kalin, this volume: ch. 9). To reduce this dissonance, the employer could: (a) change one of the elements to make the pair more consonant, such as altering his judgement regarding the applicant’s speech style; (b) add consonant elements, such as finding fault with other aspects of the applicant’s record; or (c) change the importance of the elements, such as deciding that speech style is not a relevant criterion upon which to select employees. Hence, although an employer’s decision may be based upon other grounds, changes in views about the applicant’s speech style (along with other characteristics) provides a simple means of reducing the cognitive dissonance aroused by the employer’s decision not to hire the applicant.
Attribution

The fifth approach involves attitude-inference, or attributional, processes. The notion common to the theories that fall under this heading is that a person’s inferences about the cause of a behaviour is the proximal mediator of the resulting attitude. These attitude-inferences might concern the communicator’s behaviour (‘why is he or she saying that?’) or they might concern the person’s own behaviour (‘why did I do that?’) (see Bem 1972). Bem has emphasized the importance of whether another or one’s own behaviour is mandated (determined by powerful situational forces) or tacted (voluntarily determined). When a behaviour is mandated, one tends to attribute the behaviour to the situation. When a behaviour is tacted, however, one tends to attribute the behaviour to something about the person, such as his or her attitude.

Giles and his colleagues (Giles and Powesland 1975; Giles and Smith 1979; Simard, Taylor and Giles 1976) have employed attributional principles in their analysis of the antecedents and consequences of accommodation (i.e. convergence of speech style). They reasoned that an attempt by someone to speak in a more understandable fashion to an audience foreign to the speaker (i.e. convergence) will cause the audience to seek causes for the speaker’s behaviour. For example, Simard et al. (1976) conducted a study in which they measured the evaluations that a French-Canadian audience made of an English-Canadian speaker who either converged (i.e. communicated in French) or did not converge (i.e. communicated in English). In half of the conditions, the English Canadian was forced to speak in a specific language (i.e. French or English; mandated behaviour) and in half the conditions the English Canadian chose to speak in either French or English (i.e. tacted behaviour). The results were in accord with the attributional analysis: The French-Canadian audience rated the speaker most positively when he chose to speak in French and least positively when he chose to speak in English. When situational pressures forced the English Canadian to speak in either French or English, the evaluations of the speaker by the audience (and the dispositional attributions) were moderated.

There are two general attributional principles, proposed by Kelley (1972, 1973), that have guided much of the attribution research in the area of attitudes and persuasion. The first is the discounting principle, which states that to the extent that a response (or effect) has a number of plausible causes, the viability of any single cause is discounted or weakened. The second is the augmentation principle, which states that a response that is unexpected (i.e. unique) given the contextual cues is especially likely to be attributed to something unique about the actor. Eagly, Wood and Chaiken (1978) have used these principles to explain why communicators who argue against their own vested interests are more persuasive than communicators who argue for their own vested interests.

Eagly et al. (1978) reasoned that message recipients generally expect speakers to argue for their own vested interests. When speakers do indeed advocate a position that benefits themselves, the speakers confirm the recipients’ premessage expectation. The recipients can attribute the speakers’ supportive arguments to their veridical view of the world, to their biased (unrepresentative) body of information on the topic (referred to as a knowledge bias), or to their concealing issue-relevant information that is nonsupportive of the recommendation in order to secure personal gains (referred to as a reporting bias). If recipients draw the first
attribution, they will be susceptible to influence; but since there are a number of alternative explanations for the speaker’s appeal (e.g. knowledge and reporting biases), the recipients tend to discount the possibility that the message arguments reflect the true state of the world. This discounting makes the recipients more resistant to speakers’ persuasive appeals.

If, however, speakers disconfirm the recipients’ premessage expectations by advocating positions that are contrary to their own best interests, then Eagly argues that argumentation occurs. Eagly suggests that recipients have few, if any, explanations for the speakers’ behaviour in these instances except that external reality is as they describe. Moreover, Eagly reasons, the unexpected nature of the speakers’ behaviours enhances the likelihood that the recipients shall attribute the recommendation to something unique about the speakers, such as their unique understanding of the issues involved. One consequence of these attributions is that the recipients are rendered particularly susceptible to the speakers’ persuasive appeals.

Eagly and her colleagues have provided substantial support for their attributional analysis of persuasion following the violation of pre-message expectancies (see Eagly and Chaiken 1975; Eagly et al. 1978). Eagly et al. (1978) established knowledge-bias expectancies by portraying a speaker as being committed to values represented by a pro-business or pro-environment side of a business decision (halting production and making radical changes in waste disposal) and reporting-bias expectancies by portraying the audience as having a strong commitment to one or the other side (i.e. continuing or halting production). In all conditions of the Eagly et al. study, the speaker advocated that the business halt production immediately and make the necessary changes in its waste disposal to protect the environment. Thus, discounting becomes likely in the context of a pro-environment speaker and/or audience, whereas augmenting becomes more likely on the part of the message recipients when they understand the speaker to be pro-business and/or to be addressing a pro-business audience. Eagly et al. (1978) found that, regardless of the type of bias that subjects expected (knowledge, reporting or both), they were more persuaded and perceived the speaker as being less biased when their pre-message expectations regarding the bias(es) were disconfirmed (i.e. when augmenting was most likely).

This attributional analysis can also be extended to account for the results of some studies on speech style and persuasion (see Giles 1973b; Powesland and Giles 1975). For instance, Giles and Powesland (1975, 95-100) indicated that arguing against capital punishment could be taken as an expression of liberal-mindedness by regional subjects in Great Britain. Moreover, Giles and Powesland (1975) suggested that the RP accent may elicit a stereotyped expectation that the speaker is a liberal, whereas the regional accents may elicit an expectation that the speaker is a conservative. When the RP speaker argues against capital punishment, the recipients’ expectations are confirmed, and discounting can occur. When the speaker emits a regional accent against capital punishment, however, he violates the recipients expectations of his position on capital punishment, and augmentation becomes likely. Of course, formally, the speaker did not violate a pre-message expectation, but he did violate an expectation that developed early in the message as a result of his style of speech. The attributional consequences outlined by Eagly and her colleagues for violations of pre-message expectations should hold
for these situations as well. The results of the above study were in accord with these predictions.

Finally, Scherer (1979b) has suggested that vocal qualities in some instances can be more important in social influence processes than content and visual cues. The attributional framework may be particularly useful in detailing the complex inferential processes that are initiated by variations in a speaker's voice quality. For instance, a beautiful voice might stimulate a halo effect that would cause one to infer that the speaker was honest, knowledgeable, and so forth, and these inferences may render the speaker particularly persuasive.

Combination

The sixth, combinative approach to attitudes and persuasion represents the precise mathematical models that have been developed to account for how the external information that a person receives is evaluated and integrated to form an overall judgement or attitude about a person, object or issue. Fishbein and Ajzen's 'theory of reasoned action' (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Fishbein 1980; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975) makes especially interesting predictions regarding attitudes and behaviours and, therefore, is discussed briefly here.

According to the theory of reasoned action, the single best predictor of behaviour is the behavioural intention, which in turn is viewed as the consequence of two other factors: (a) the person's attitude toward the behaviour, and (b) the person's subjective norm. Attitudes are viewed as being a function of the beliefs held by the person about the outcomes of a behaviour, including the likelihood that the behaviour would lead to certain outcomes, and the person's evaluation of those consequences. The subjective norm, on the other hand, is determined by what the person perceives the opinion of significant others regarding the performance of the behaviour to be (e.g. the opinions of one's friends), and the person's motivation to comply with their judgements. Little research to date has been done on the effects of language variables on attitudes, subjective norms, and behaviour but Fishbein and Ajzen's theory of reasoned action would seem to provide a cogent framework for research on these issues.

Finally, functional theory (Katz 1960), as we outlined it in the introductory section of this chapter, has not generated much research in attitudes and persuasion. The formulation has heuristic value, but operationalizing the theory has been difficult. Recently, Lutz (in press) reconceptualized functional theory in expectancy-times-value (i.e. combinative) terms and proposed specific operationalizations for the theoretical constructs. The interested reader might wish to consult Lutz (in press) for more information.

Self-persuasion

The final general approach to attitudes and persuasion is termed self-persuasion because the attitude change that occurs is viewed not as the consequence of the externally provided information per se, but rather as the result of thoughts, ideas and arguments that the recipients themselves generate. This approach is similar to that of Hovland and his colleagues in recognizing the importance of attention to and comprehension of an external message, but it is unique in postulating an additional stage of cognitive elaboration of the message. In
other words, this approach focuses on the notion that recipients have available to them and utilize vast stores of information beyond that contained in the persuasive message.

Greenwald (1968) suggested that a persuasive message elicits subject generated cognitive responses that could either support or attack the information provided in the message. If the recipient generated favourable cognitive responses to the recommendation, then persuasion would likely result. If the recipient generated unfavourable cognitive responses to the recommendation, however, then persuasion would likely not result.

Cognitive responses can be measured in a variety of ways, including electrophysiologically (Cacioppo and Petty 1979a, 1981a) and mechanically (Carter, Ruggels, Jackson and Heffner 1973). The most commonly used measure of cognitive response in persuasion, however, is the 'listed thoughts procedure', which involves subjects reporting retrospectively everything about which they thought during a specified time period (e.g. during a persuasive message). Although there are a number of issues involved in and decisions to be made when selecting a specific procedure to obtain thought listings (see Cacioppo, Harkins and Petty 1981; Cacioppo and Petty 1981b for reviews and descriptions of procedures), the following procedure for assessing people's cognitive responses is common in studies examining cognitive responses to a brief persuasive message. Subjects read the following:

We are now interested in what you were thinking about during the last few minutes. . . . Simply write down the first idea that comes to mind in the first box, the second idea in the second box, etc. Please put only one idea or thought in a box. You should try to record only those ideas that you were thinking during the last few minutes. You will have 2½ minutes to write your thoughts. . . . Please be completely honest and list all of the thoughts you had (Petty and Cacioppo, 1977, p. 648).

Twelve 8-inch (20.32 cm) horizontal lines each about 1 inch (2.54 cm) from the one above create the boxes in which subjects write their ideas.

When the 2.5 minutes for writing thoughts elapses, subjects are instructed to go back and rate their thoughts in the following manner. Ideas are rated as either + (in favour of the advocated position), -- (opposed to the advocated position), or 0 (neutral toward or irrelevant to the advocated position). Each idea that a subject lists can also be submitted to two judges for independent scoring as either an unfavourable (opposed to the advocated position), favourable (in favour), or neutral (unrelated to the topic) thought. Inter-rater reliabilities are typically quite high, and the ratings of subjects and judges are also typically very similar (e.g. rs range .70 to .95). The simple sums of favourable, unfavourable, and neutral thoughts are used in the analyses, as these measures have proven to be as reliable and valid as more complex, combinations or weightings of cognitive responses (see Cacioppo and Petty 1981b).

Recent work in attitude change has demonstrated the rich utility of considering the idiosyncratic cognitive responses that recipients exhibit when they process the information in persuasive messages and settings. Investigators have studied how such variables as message repetition (Cacioppo and Petty 1979b, 1980a), source credibility (Cook 1969; Gillig and Greenwald 1974), distraction (Petty, Wells and Brock 1976), forewarning of persuasive intent (Petty and Cacioppo 1979a) and of topic and position (Petty and Cacioppo 1977), number of arguments employed
(Calder, Insko and Yandell 1974), issue involvement (Petty and Cacioppo 1979b, 1981b), heart rate (Cacioppo 1979), group discussion (Burnstein and Vinokur 1977), and so forth affect the profile of cognitions (e.g. unfavourable, favourable and neutral thoughts) and attitude change. As we have noted, the theoretical interest in the influence on persuasion of a person’s idiosyncratic cognitive responses to an advocacy is not new (see Hovland et al. 1949), but the present level of research activity in the area marks a shift in emphasis toward this approach (see reviews by Cialdini, Petty and Cacioppo 1981; Perloff and Brock 1980; Petty and Cacioppo 1981a; Petty, Ostrom and Brock 1981).

One particularly interesting application of the cognitive response approach is Burnstein, Vinokur, and Trope’s (1973) explanation for conformity, which refers to the tendency for people to go along with the opinions or judgements of other people in the absence of any supporting arguments. Various researchers have been interested in conformity effects. For example, Festinger’s (1954) social comparison theory contends that people shift toward the majority viewpoint (i.e. conform) out of a desire to hold a veridical opinion. Moscovici’s (1976) ‘genetic’ model of social influence contends that a resistant minority may shift toward a majority viewpoint while pulling this viewpoint toward their original position – a conflictive process that can yield innovation and societal change. Burnstein et al. (1973) account for these effects by proposing that when people are presented with the conflicting opinions of others, they are motivated to think of the arguments that might have led to these others to hold their discrepant views. ‘That is to say, knowing others have chosen differently stimulates the person to generate arguments which could explain their choices’ (Burnstein et al. 1973, 244). Thus, what appears on the surface to be conformity might actually be a biased scanning of arguments and self-persuasion.

Recently, we have extended this approach to the study of language variables and persuasion. For instance, Petty, Cacioppo and Heesacker (1981) conducted a cognitive response analysis of the use of rhetorical questions in persuasion. Recall that rhetoricals in contrast to declarative statements may cause the source to appear more polite (Bates 1976) and/or less confident and assertive (Newcombe and Arnkoff 1979). A major distinction between a cognitive response analysis of rhetoricals and analyses based upon source perceptions is that the former proposes that message style may affect how the information contained in the message is processed and, hence, how susceptible or resistant the recipient is to persuasion. That is, the use of rhetoricals is one language variable in which the way something is said may affect the elaboration and integration of what is said. According to source perception analyses, of course, the actual content of the message is less important, as style dominates over substance.

If rhetoricals affect persuasion by their direct effects on source perceptions, then the effect of rhetoricals should be the same for both strong, cogent messages and weak, specious messages. If, however, rhetoricals enhance the likelihood of message elaboration, then the use of rhetoricals should increase the persuasiveness of the strong message, but reduce the persuasiveness of the weak message. Furthermore, rhetoricals should be most effective in enhancing message elaboration when recipients are not naturally devoting much effort to processing the message. If the message was naturally eliciting a great deal of thought, then it would be unlikely that the use of rhetoricals could enhance elaboration further. Indeed, if recipients were already doing a great deal of thinking on their own about the message, then
the use of rhetoricals might actually interfere with the lines of thought that recipients were pursuing on their own and, therefore, reduce the overall level of message processing. This latter notion developed from pilot work in which subjects heard a message on a highly involving topic. Rhetoricals were found to decrease rather than increase message elaboration, and subjects reported that they were trying hard to think about the message (since it proposed changes that were personally important to them) but that the questions asked by the speaker were distracting.

To test these hypotheses, students were exposed to a taped message advocating that seniors be required to pass a comprehensive exam in their major area of study before graduating. Half of the students believed that the recommendation might be adopted by their university the following year (high issue involvement), whereas the other half believed that it might be adopted by a distant university in ten years (low issue involvement). Previous research has reported that people do considerably more thinking on their own about issues of high than low issue involvement (Cialdini, Levy, Herman, Kozlowski and Petty 1976; Petty and Cacioppo 1979a, 1979b, 1981b). The message that subjects heard contained either strong arguments that were logical, defensible, compelling, and elicited predominantly favourable thoughts; or weak arguments that were open to refutation, skepticism, and elicited primarily unfavourable thoughts. Finally, subjects heard the message worded either in declarative form or such that six of the eight arguments were worded as rhetorical questions.

The results, which are illustrated in Figure 12.2, supported the cognitive response analysis of rhetoricals in persuasion. Analyses suggested that for the low-

![Figure 12.2: Mean level of agreement in relation to argument quality and use of rhetoricals for high and low involvement messages.](image-url)
involvement versions of the messages, when subjects were not naturally motivated to engage in much thought about the recommendation, the use of rhetoricals enhanced message elaboration. Specifically, subjects hearing the rhetorical versions of the low-involvement messages in contrast to the regular statement versions best realized the virtues of the strong arguments and fallacies of the weak arguments contained in the messages. For the high-involvement versions of the messages, when subjects were already highly motivated to think about the recommendation and implications of the message arguments, the use of rhetoricals attenuated message elaboration by disrupting the recipients’ natural flow of thoughts. Subjects hearing the regular rather than rhetorical versions of the high-involvement messages were more discriminating in their cognitive responses and attitudes in response to the strong and weak message arguments, and subjects exposed to the rhetorical version rated that they were more distracted from thinking about the message than did subjects exposed to the regular version. These distraction ratings, the cognitive response data and the complex three-way interaction pattern for attitudes displayed in Figure 12.2 make sense from the cognitive response perspective. These data, of course, cannot be explained parsimoniously by a source perception formulation.

Conclusions: two routes to attitude change

Seven approaches to attitudes and persuasion have been surveyed and some of their implications for language variables and attitudes have been noted. We have indicated that although these seven approaches postulate different mechanisms as underlying attitude change, they generally focus on one of two processes: (a) one in which the recipients respond to various non-content cues in the situation, making the message arguments virtually irrelevant to attitude change; and (b) one in which the recipients actively process the arguments presented in the message, often in ways that reflect the influence of source, style, message, channel and recipient factors.

We have proposed elsewhere that these two processes constitute two distinct routes to persuasion with different antecedents and different consequences in our ‘elaboration likelihood model’ of attitude change (Petty and Cacioppo 1981a, ch. 9). Under the first, or central route, thinking about issue-relevant information is the most direct determinant of the direction and amount of persuasion produced. Attitude changes induced via this route tend to be relatively enduring and predictive of subsequent behaviour. Under the second, or peripheral route, attitude change is the result of non-content cues in the persuasion setting (e.g. like demand characteristics, the physical attractiveness of the source, vocabulary difficulty in audiovisual presentations, or the rate of speech) that allow a recipient to evaluate a recommendation without thinking much about the issue under consideration. Changes in attitude induced via this route tend to be relatively temporary and are not highly predictive of subsequent behaviour (see reviews by Cialdini, Petty and Cacioppo 1981; Petty and Cacioppo 1981a, ch. 9).

One important determinant of which route will be followed is the extent to which the message recipient is personally involved with the issue under consideration (e.g. Cacioppo and Petty 1980b; Chaiken 1980; Petty and Cacioppo 1979b, 1981b). Language variables may be determinants of which route will be followed, perhaps due to their direct effect on issue involvement or to their direct effects on
people's motivation and/or ability to think about an issue. Language variables may have interactive effects on cognitive responses and attitudes, as illustrated in the study on rhetoricals and persuasion (Petty, Cacioppo and Heesacker 1981). Finally, they may have simple, more temporary 'cue' effects on attitudes and persuasion when issue involvement is low, as suggested by Miller et al.'s (1976) study on speech rate. Utilizing separate measures of cognitive response, attitudes, and behaviours in immediate and delayed post-tests would be particularly helpful in partitioning these various routes to persuasion.

In sum, the present review offers a potpourri of theoretical frameworks within which to view research on language variables and attitudes, extends social psychological theories of attitudes and persuasion to include work on language variables, and suggests possible avenues for future research. At present, data suggest that the central (e.g. argument quality) in contrast to the peripheral route (e.g. source similarity) will predominate when recipients are both able and motivated to think about and elaborate upon the present and impending implications of the recommendation for themselves and significant others.