Persuasion

Persuasion
The process of changing a person's cognitive evaluation of an attitude object.

Mere Exposure Effect (Zajonc 1968) Zajonc showed participants unfamiliar turkish words and then asked them to rate turkish words according to how positive they perceived them to be. Zajonc found that the words previously seen created more **positive evaluations** of those words. This is also an example of the **familiarity heuristic.**

The layperson perception of **persuasion** is that it occurs through rational consideration of pro's cons and cognitive evaluations of the attitude object. **Petty, Cacioppo (1981)** argue that objects are processed **superficially** as well as **systematically** which means that people often rely on salient, accessible information when evaluating an attitude object.

Fazio et al. (2002) showed female participants slides that paired novel objects with negative words or images. These subtle associations created positive attitudes toward the objects. This is an example of **evaluative conditioning** or the **persuasion heuristic.** Is this lasting or fleeting? Well, Petty et al. (1981) argue that systematic processing is the **central route to persuasion** and so much longer lasting.

The Foot in the Door Technique (Freedman & Fraser, 1966) shows that people (in this field experiment) were more likely to put up a sign in their garden purporting road safety if they had already signed a petition beforehand. Changes in behaviour arguably lead to larger commitments in the future..

Resisting Persuasion (Cialdini, 2001)

There are six basic tendencies of human behaviour: **reciprocation, consistency, social validation, liking, authority and scarcity.**

Reciprocation: People offered a free gift feel obliged to reciprocate.

Consistency: If you agree to do something, you will do it. E.g: Patrons will cancel a table more often if asked "Will you call if you cannot attend?" rather than told "Please call if you cannot attend?"

Social Validation: We look to what groups of others do for social validation. E.g. Latane and Darley's conformity studies with the smoke filled room.

Liking: You are more likely to be persuaded by someone you like. E.g. Tupperware parties use friends instead of salespeople to sell their products.

Authority: Being told what to do by a person you perceive to be in authority will persuade you to do it.

Scarcity: Items become more desirable the less they are available.

The act of changing one persons cognitive evaluation.

Cognitive Dissonance (Leon Festinger, 1957)
This is a tension that arises when one is aware of two inconsistent cognitions. We are motivated to remove the dissonance.

Festinger & Carlsmith (1959) first studied this by asking participants to perform a boring menial task for an hour (putting pegs in to square holes). After that hour, the participants were asked if they could do the experimenter a favour and get (a confederate, unbeknown to them) the next participant and tell them how it was great. They were paid $1 or $20 to do so. Those paid $20 gave poorer subsequent ratings of the experiment compared to those paid $1. This is because for the $1 participants, the had a cognitive dissonance between the desire to be honest and the poor justification ($1) they had for lying, and so they resolved this with an eventual change in attitude (towards positive) for the experiment.

This explains why people justify behaviours that cause a person to suffer. For example, **Eibach & Mock (2011)** found that despite parental investment causing largely negative effects on the parent, parents tend to idealise parenthood. Participants with children told more negative effects of having a child became more positive compared to when long-term benefits were made salient.

Jack Brehm (1956) asked women to evaluate several small appliances and were allowed to choose one to take home. Some participants were allowed to choose between two products they found equally desirable. After choosing the product, the womens ratings became increasingly favourable towards their chosen product.

Moderating Conditions of Dissonance

Individual Must Attribute Arousal to Inconsistency Between Attitude and Action: Zanna, Cooper 1984: Participants were either told they were taking a placebo or a stimulant. They were both asked to write an essay advocating tuition hikes (counter-attitudinal behaviour). Those taking stimulants used drug as external justification (=no cog dissonance) and so did not change their opinions. Those told they had taken a placebo changed their attitudes to favour tuition fee hikes.

Self Perception Theory (Daryl Bem, 1967)
We infer our own attitudes by studying our own behaviour and draw conclusions about ourselves as if we were other people. "I must have liked it for $1". This is a rival to dissonance (supervisor of Eibach)

This would argue that people consider their own behaviour (e.g. Zanna et al. writing an essay) and infer their attitude from what they are writing about.

Wells & Petty (1980) The nodding and shaking of the head experiment supports this notion, that we infer our attitudes from our behaviours. E.g. We approve of a radio broadcast advocating tuition fee hikes if we are testing headphones that cause us to nod.

Ambiguous attitudes are more likely to be influenced by these techniques such as nodding, shaking and the foot-in-the-door (Freedman et al.) technique. They are therefore more likely to be explained by self perception theory.

Strong Attitudes however are more likely to be explained by cognitive dissonance, such as belief that the world is going to end or even attitudes towards tuition fee hikes (Zanna et al.)

Lepper, Greene and Nisbett (1972) found that children playing with 'magic markers' are more likely to continue drawing if they are not rewarded and didn't expect a reward than if they are rewarded. Those that are rewarded attribute their behaviour to external contingencies (reward) and so have a expectancy attitude towards tasks like drawing and playing etc.