A Need-Based Theory of Persuasion

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During the 1950s and 1960s, two independent research groups similarly proposed that attitudes can serve psychological needs and thus have motivational basis (Katz, 1960; Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956). They further identified a list of functions that attitudes may serve and tried to test these functions experimentally. Over the last half a century, although various researchers have adopted the functional approach to study persuasion (e.g., Rothman, Martino, Bedell, Detwiler, & Salovey, 1999; Shavitt, 1990; Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956), the amount of studies are rather small, especially as compared with the extensively studies of attitudes and persuasion using the more dominant cognitive approaches. Interestingly, functional approaches prevailed in other areas of social psychological research. In particular, the nature and impact of several core social motives (e.g., belonging, self-esteem, control, etc.) have been studied extensively. It has been shown repeatedly that people strive to fortify unsatisfied social needs through cognitive as well as behavioral mechanisms (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Williams, 2007; Crocker & Park, 2004; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999). Because attitudes can serve different psychological needs, it is reasonable to expect that the effectiveness of persuasive attempts would be influenced by individuals' social motives.

In this chapter, we intended to apply the functional approach to address on how social motives might influence persuasion. Instead of emphasizing various functions that attitude can serve as theories in 1950s and 1960s did, we focuses primarily on the fundamental social motives that individuals strive for and how thwarting these motives can influence people's susceptibility to persuasive attempts. Specifically, we incorporate the accumulated understanding of the nature of fundamental social needs, including needs for belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence in the literature and propose a need-based theory of persuasion. We hypothesize that

when basic social needs are thwarted, people become more susceptible to persuasive influence that is framed to replenish such a deficiency. In this following, we start with reviewing theories and research from functional approaches; then we list the core social motives and discuss the cognitive and behavioral mechanisms in responding to thwarted social needs. Our need-based approach to persuasion will be then introduced, accompanied by some initial evidence to support our hypothesis. Finally, we discuss the implications of our theory to persuasion and attitudes research in general.

<div align="center">Functional Theories of Persuasion</div>

Theories and research adopting the functional approach started with identifying the basic functions of attitudes, and the most influential work was done by Katz and associates as well Smith and associates (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). For example, Katz (1960) proposed that an attitude can serve one or more of four types of functions, including a knowledge function, a utilitarian function, an ego-defensive function, and a value-expressive function. The knowledge function helps individuals to organize and structure one's living environment; the utilitarian function aids in securing positive outcomes and preventing negative ones; the ego-defensive function helps to protect one's self-concepts against various threats; and the value-expressive function assists in self-expression. Similarly, Smith and colleagues (1956) proposed an object-appraisal function, an externalization function, and a social adjustment function. The object-appraisal can be seen as a combination of Katz' knowledge function and utilitarian function; and the externalization function is very similar to Katz's ego-defensive function. Different from Katz's categories, Smith and colleagues (1956) emphasize how attitudes might affect one's relations with others and the social adjustment function states that attitudes can serve to facilitate, maintain, or disrupt social relationships. One key prediction of the functional approaches is that

the persuasive procedures are more effective when they match the functional basis of the targeted attitudes, which is known as the matching hypothesis (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Shavitt & Nelson, 2002).

Unfortunately, few experimental studies were conducted to test these functional theories thirty years after these theories were proposed. One of the obstacles for such an investigation is that attitudes tend to serve more than one function, and it is challenging to experimentally manipulate or create attitudes with a single or idealized function (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Shavitt, & Nelson, 2002). One way to solve this issue is to identify individuals for whom attitudes are more likely to serve a particular function (Shavitt, & Nelson, 2002). From 1980s, researchers started to adopt the self-monitoring construct (Snyder, 1974) to test the matching hypothesis. According to Snyder and colleagues (Snyder & DeBono, 1985; Lavine & Snyder, 1996), high self-monitors strive to fit into social environments, and therefore should be more likely to form attitudes in line with those of their reference groups; low-self monitors, on the other hand, strive to behave in consistent with their inner values and needs, and are thus more likely to form attitudes reflecting their own values. This analysis suggests that high self-monitoring people are more appealed to social adjustment functions suggested by Smith et al (1956), and low self-monitoring people are more likely to form attitudes with value-expressive functions proposed by Katz (1960). Indeed, DeBono (1997) found that when high self-monitoring individuals are more susceptible to persuasive messages which focus more on social adjustive functions, while low self-monitoring people are more influenced by messages that emphasize more value expressive functions. The finding was extended and replicated to context of advertising regarding people's susceptibility to different types of ads (Snyder & DeBono, 1987). Specifically, high self-monitoring people are more susceptible to ads with social adjustive

appeals, but low self-monitoring people are more favorable toward ads with value-expressive appeals.

In addition, there were studies trying to the matching hypothesis by experimentally manipulating persuasive attempts to match or mismatch the expected function of attitude objects (see, Shavitt & Nelson, 2002). For example, Shavitt (1990) asked participants to read ads emphasizing the utilitarian function or social identity function of products. These products serve primarily either a utilitarian or a social identity function. For instance, coffees primarily serve a utilitarian function but not a social identity function. When the ad of a brand of coffee is framed to emphasize the utilitarian function (e.g., to focus on the flavor and taste of coffee), it matches the expected function of the product; when it is framed to emphasize some social identity functions (e.g., to reveal one's personality), it does not match the expected function of the product. Shavitt (1990) found that functionally matched ads led to more favorable attitudes towards the products than functionally mismatched ads.

Recently, Clary and colleagues (Clary et al., 1998) expanded functional approach to test how matching (versus mismatching) between perceived outcome/benefits of a real-life activity (i.e., volunteering) and individuals' motives to undertake the action would influence their levels of satisfaction and future intentions. The researchers identified 6 motives underlying volunteerism, including values (similar to the Katz's 1960 value-expressive function of attitudes), understanding (related to the knowledge and object appraisal functions), social (similar to the social adjustive function), career (related to Katz's utilitarian function), protective (related to the ego defensive function or externalization concerns), and enhancement (relates to the ego defensive function). With field studies, Clary et al (1998) found that when volunteers' perceived benefits following their volunteering experiences matched their underlying motivations, they

became more satisfied with their volunteering experiences and had high levels intentions to volunteer in the future.

The matching hypothesis was also broadened to deal with the match (versus mismatch) between store atmosphere and the appeals of products. For example, Schlosser (1998) proposed that store atmosphere could serve as a social identity appeal and that a pleasing atmosphere should influence quality perception of social identity products but not utilitarian products. Two experiments supported this matching hypothesis between store atmosphere and products. Moreover, Schlosser (1998) found that people indicated greater intentions of purchasing products that match the store atmosphere.

All the above studies supported matching hypothesis; however, it should be noted that matching may not always lead to more favorable outcomes. For example, the source of the message can match or mismatch the functional basis of recipients' attitudes (e.g., low self-monitors receive a message from an expert source and high self-monitors receive a message from an attractive source). Ziegler and colleagues (Ziegler, von Schwichow, & Diehl, 2005) found that when provided an ambiguous message, participants agreed more with the message when the source matched (vs. mismatched) attitude functions. However, such a biased processing was not observed when participants were provided with unambiguous messages, that is, participants agreed more with unambiguous messages with strong arguments than unambiguous messages with weak arguments regardless of their levels of self-monitoring. Similarly, Petty and Wegener (1998) showed that matching arguments can either enhance or reduce attitude change depending on the cogency of the matched information.

As noted earlier, although these studies provided important insights on the matching hypothesis, functional approaches to persuasion were relatively scattered. In the following, we

modify Williams' (2007) need-thread/need-fortification framework to propose that thwarted or unsatisfied social motives can affect people's susceptibilities to persuasive attempts that could fortify such motives. A detailed functional approach to persuasion and some initial evidence are offered afterwards.

William's framework of need-threat/need-fortification

A substantial amount of theorist and studies have been focusing on coping responses associated with threatened social needs over the last twenty years. The literature has accumulated consistent evidence to suggest that when these social needs are thwarted, people strive to fortify the thwarted needs through cognitive and behavioral mechanisms. Interestingly, research on social exclusion/ostracism has found seemingly conflicting (i.e., pro-social versus anti-social) reactions toward social exclusion (see Williams, 2007). Williams (2007) proposed a need-threat/need-fortification framework to explain such controversies. The key ideas of this framework are that social exclusion/ostracism threatens four fundamental needs (i.e., to belong, to maintain reasonable high self-esteem, to perceive control over one's social environment, and to perceive one's existence as meaningful) and that people engage in fortifying responses when each of the need is threatened. Past research indeed shows that thwarting each of the needs could lead to fortifying responses.

Belonging

People desire for positive and lasting relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Williams, 2001), and they strive for social connections the belonging need is unsatisfied. Ostracized individuals have been shown to be more likely to conform to others (Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000) and more willing to donate more money to a student organization (Carter-Sowell, Chen, & Williams, 2008). Most recently, it was found that socially excluded individuals mimic a

subsequent interaction partner more than included ones (Lakin, Chartrand, & Arkin, 2008). People also engage in cognitive responses to fortify threatened belonging need. For instance, Gardner and colleagues (Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer, 2000) found that social exclusion led to enhanced memory for events related to affiliation. Further, Pickett, Gardner, and Knowles (2004) found that social excluded individuals performed better on tasks requiring judgment of social information. Aside from these complex cognitions (e.g., memory and judgment), social excluded individuals performed better on tasks involving early-stage perceptual processing than social included ones (DeWall, Maner, & Rouby, in press). Traits associated with deficits in belonging need, such as the need to belong and loneliness, have also been shown to correlate with cognitive performance similarly (Pickett & Gardner, 2005).

It is important to point out that people's desire to fortify threatened belonging need does not imply that they would attend to socially information or take actions regardless of the social situations. Indeed, socially excluded individuals do not affiliate with the perpetrators of exclusion or novel partners with whom they do not anticipate to have face-to-face interaction (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister & Schaller, 2007). Maner and colleagues (Maner et al., 2007) further found that people who are more afraid negative evaluative from others are less willing to interact with new partners in an affiliative fashion. These findings suggest that socially excluded individuals regulate their resources to maximize the chance of acceptance by others. They are less willing to spend their resources or efforts in activities which might not improve their social inclusion status. Such a regulation may even happen without cognitive awareness. For example, Lakin et al (Study 2, 2008) found that those excluded by an in-group mimic a confederate of an in-group member more than a confederate of an out-group member.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is how people perceive others perceive themselves. People prefer positive self-images and they engage in various strategies to serve the purpose of self-enhancement when the positive images are threatened. At an individual-level, when people feel badly about a misdeed or negative outcomes, they either use other positive self-concepts to affirm the self (Steele, 1988), or attribute the outcomes to external instead of internal factors, or make downward comparison to maintain self-esteem. In addition, self-esteem can functions as a monitoring system when people face the threat of exclusion or rejection (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). Specifically, social exclusion threatens self-esteem and self-esteem can provide a fast and automatic assessment of other's inclusion or exclusion intentions thus facilitate to either enhance inclusion or avoid exclusion. At an intergroup level, according to social identity theory (Fajfel, 1982), the desire to main positive self-identity and self image can lead to evaluations that bolters one's in-group and derogates out-groups.

Control

People need to perceive control over one's social environment (Seligman, 1998), and they could create positive illusions in threatening situations, such as an illusion of control over their social situations (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Williams and Lawson Williams (2003) recently demonstrated that people desire for higher levels of control when their perceived control is threatened. In their studies, participants were ostracized by two people appeared to be either friends or strangers and then tested their interactions with a newcomer. They found that male participants exerted greater desire for control (in Study 1) and that female participants indicated a stronger desire for control (in Study 2), when they were ostracized by two friends (as opposed to two strangers). Williams and Lawson Williams (2003) reasoned that participants' perceived

control were more threatened when they were ostracized by two friends than by two strangers, because an individual was stripped of a certain amount of control when they fond themselves in a triad with two people who are friends with each other.

Meaningful Existence

Over the last twenty years or so, social psychologists have studied extensively the motive to feel meaningful and significant. From the terror management perspective (Greenberg, Pyzczynski, & Solomon, 1986), the conflict between the survival instinct and the awareness of the inevitability of death produces the potential or paralyzing terror, and people tend to defend their cultural worldviews to boost their sense significant and meaningful. The literature shows consistently that mortality salience enhances one's likeness toward people who enhance ones worldview but increases one's derogation toward those who challenge it. For example, research found that Christian participants in the mortality salience condition reported more fondness of a Christian target and more adverse reactions to a Jewish target (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, Rosenblatt, Veeder, Kirkland, & Lyon, 1990). Similarly, after a mortality salience induction, American participants increased their affection for a pro-American essay author and increased their disdain for an anti-American essay author (Greenberg, Simon, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Chatel, 1992).

The above review shows the powerfulness of these social motives in guiding people's feelings, thinking, and behaviors. People are motivated to increase or boost their social needs via cognitive or behavioral mechanisms when these fundamental motives are threatened. Because attitudes serve social functions, it is reasonable to expect that these social needs or motives can also have important implications on attitudes and persuasion.

A Need-Based Theory of Persuasion and Initial Evidence

Although people can process persuasive attempt either systematically or peripherally, the outcome of these pervasive processes should serve psychological functions for the individuals. When people's social needs (e.g., needs to belong, for self-esteem, to control, and for meaningful existence) are threatened, their response to various persuasive influences should help to fortify the thwarted needs. For example, if a persuasive attempt suggests an opportunity to form social bonds with others, socially excluded people or those with high need to belong should be more likely to be influenced by such an attempt than socially included people. In this chapter, we primarily focuses on the four basic needs listed above. These needs were chosen because each of them has been shown to lead to fortifying response when it is threatened. These motives are not meant to be exclusive. It is worthwhile to point out though that these motives overlap substantially with the core social motives suggested by Fiske and colleagues (Fiske, 2002, 2004; Steven & Fiske, 1995), including belonging, understanding, controlling, enhancing self, and trusting.

We also believe that there should be boundary conditions regarding the increased susceptibility of individuals with thwarted social needs toward persuasive attempt. Based on the finding that socially excluded individuals affiliate with partners with whom they have a chance to meet in person, but not perpetrators of exclusion or novel partners with whom they do not anticipate to meet (Maner et al., 2007). It is reasonable to expect that socially excluded people will be more persuaded by appeals that have the implications or can provide chances to improve socially connections with new partners, not just any types of appeals.

Following the same logic, socially excluded individuals should be more susceptibility to persuasion when the appeal suggests a larger chance of fortifying belonging need than when it

indicates a smaller chance. The likelihood of forming social connections can be manipulated by time, distance, or other methods. For example, researchers can tell participants that the anticipated interaction is going happen the next day or it is going to happen next year. It is reasonable to expect that socially excluded participants would be more susceptible to appeals that are framed to provide an opportunity to form social bonds in a near future than in a distance future. We are now collecting data to test these hypotheses.

In addition, it is typically to include mixed message in studies of persuasion. How would socially excluded people respond to appeals include mixed message but framed with opportunities of social connections? For example, a socially excluded person is reading descriptions about a hotel. Some of the information focuses on the positive features, while the other focuses on the negative ones. When the excluded person is also informed that this hotel is a great place to meet new people and to make friends. Would he/she like this hotel more or less than his/her socially included counterpart? If all the messages about the hotel were positive, we would expect that socially excluded individuals to like the hotel more than socially included ones. However, it can be different when socially excluded individuals are provided with mixed messages. Because socially ostracized individuals regulate their efforts to form connections with others so that to fortify their threatened belonging needs, they may not view the hotel with some negative features as a good place to meet new people. That is, they may prefer to meet people in situations where they can expect good social interactions and thus increase their chances of boosting their belonging needs. This was indeed what we found in a recently completed study on the interactive effects of social exclusion and social cues.

We manipulated social exclusion using the Cyberball game (Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000). Half of the participants were excluded during the game, while the other half were

included. Following this manipulation, participants were asked to read comments about a hotel from past customers. Half of the comments were positive, for example, "In general the hotel rooms have clean floor, beddings, chairs, and other furniture"; "The reception staffs are friendly and helpful (they allow early check-in; are willing to change rooms upon guests' requests; and sometimes offer advice for local tour)"; and so on. The other half were negative, for instance, "The air-conditioning does not function well. The room is too hot or too cold, difficult to get the air-conditioning work right." Right before receiving the mixed messages, half of the participants were provided with the following comments from a particular traveler:

"*Everyday I began with a breakfast in the hotel restaurant. I got to know some travelers on the breakfast table. We shared information about sight-seeing activities...We also hang out in the bars and hotel lobby, and actually went to lots of interesting streets, shops, and parks together. I met some local people there too, chatted with them...*"

The other half of the participants were not provided with these extra comments. These comments were used as social cues, which suggest that the hotel can provide opportunities to meet new people and to make friends. After reading these messages, participants were asked to indicate their attitudes towards this hotel using a 9-point bipolar scale. Participants, in the end, were asked to recall the messages that they read and to write down their thoughts while reading the messages about the hotel.

Analysis indicated a significant interaction between the effects of social exclusion and social cues. As can be seen in figure 1, for socially included participants, the added social cues or explicitly stated chance of forming new social bonds led to increased favorability toward the hotel; however, for socially excluded participants, the added social cues led to decreased favorability toward the hotel. Further analysis indicated that when provided with social cue,

socially excluded participants recalled less positive comments toward the hotel than participants in the other conditions, and that they had more negative thoughts toward the hotel than participants in the other conditions. These results suggest that socially excluded participants became more selective toward the places that they prefer to meet new people, which provide initial evidence to our hypothesis.

Conclusion

The functional approach of persuasion has a long history in social psychological research. Theories backed in 1950s and 1960s firstly recognized and emphasized that attitudes could serve social and emotional needs. Past research on persuasion has studied individual difference variables, such as self-monitor, need for cognition, and so on. The intention of this chapter is to draw researchers' attentions to the rich literature on basic social motives, which can provide insights on persuasion research. Generally, we believe that persuasive attempts that can help to boost or increase threatened social needs, including belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence can are more likely to succeed. In addition we think there this general effect can be moderated by various factors.

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Figure 1

Participant's favorability toward the hotel as a function of social exclusion status and social cue