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Exploring Public Speaking: 2nd Revision

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Chapter 13

Persuasive Speaking



Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- ◇ Define persuasion;
- ◇ Define ethos, logos, and pathos;
- ◇ Explain the barriers to persuading an audience;
- ◇ Construct a clear, reasonable proposition for a short classroom speech;
- ◇ Compose an outline for a well-supported persuasive speech;
- ◇ Analyze the audience to determine appropriate emotional and personal appeals.

Chapter Preview

13.1 – Why Persuade?

13.2 – A Definition of Persuasion

13.3 – Why is Persuasion Hard?

13.4 – Traditional Views of Persuasion

13.5 – Constructing a Persuasive Speech

13.1 – Why Persuade?

When your instructor announced on the syllabus or in class that you would be required to give a persuasive speech for this class, what was your reaction? “Oh, good, I’ve got a great idea,” or, “Oh, no!”? For many people, there is something a little uncomfortable about the word “persuasion.” It often gets paired with ideas of seduction, manipulation, force, lack of choice, or inducement as well as more positive terms such as encouragement, influence, urging, or logical arguments. You might get suspicious if you think someone is trying to persuade you. You might not appreciate someone telling you to change your viewpoints. On the other hand, you might not think you have any beliefs, attitudes, values, or positions that are worth sharing with others.

However, if you think of persuasion as simply a formal speech with a purpose of getting people to do something they do not want to do, then you will miss the value of learning persuasion and its accompanying skills of appeal, argument, and logic. Persuasion is something you do every day, in various forms. Convincing a friend to go see the latest movie instead of staying in to watch TV; giving your instructor a reason to give you an extension on an assignment (do not try that for this speech, though!); writing a cover letter and resume and going through an interview for a job—all of these and so many more are examples of persuasion. In fact, it is hard to think of life without the everyday give-and-take of persuasion.

You may also be thinking, “I’ve given an informative speech. What’s the difference?” While this chapter will refer to all of the content of the preceding chapters as it walks you through the steps of composing your persuasive speech, there is a difference. Although your persuasive speech will involve information—probably even as much as in your informative speech—the key difference is the word “change.” Think of it like this:

INFORMATION + CHANGE = PERSUASION

You will be using the information for the purpose of changing something about the audience members and possibly the environment, based on their responses. In the next section we will nail down an understanding of the persuasive act and then move on to the barriers to persuasion.

13.2 – A Definition of Persuasion

Persuasion can be defined in two ways, for two purposes. The first (Lucas, 2015) is “the process of creating,

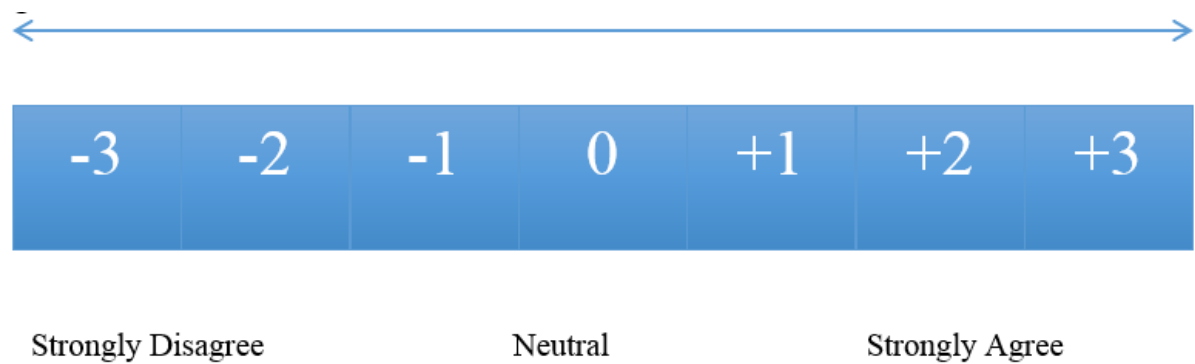


Figure 13.1—Persuasion Continuum

Proposition

The central idea statement in a persuasive speech; a statement made advancing a judgment or opinion

reinforcing, or changing people’s beliefs or actions” (p. 306). This is a good, simple straightforward one to start with, although it does not encompass the complexity of persuasion. This definition does introduce us to what could be called a “scaled” way of thinking about persuasion and change.

Think of persuasion as a continuum or line going both directions (see Figure 13.1). Your audience members, either as a group or individually, are sitting somewhere on that line in reference to your central idea statement, or what we are going to call a **proposition** in this chapter. In your speech you are proposing the truth or validity of an idea, one which the audience may not find true or acceptable, to be valid. Sometimes the word “claim” is used for proposition or central idea statement in a persuasive speech, because you are claiming an idea is true or an action is valuable.

For example, your proposition might be, “The main cause of climate change is human activity.” In this case you are not denying that natural forces, such as volcanoes, can affect the climate, but you are claiming that climate change is mainly due to pollution and other harmful things humans have done to the environment. To be an effective persuasive speaker, one of your first jobs after coming up with this topic would be to determine where your audience “sits” on the continuum in Figure 13.1.

+3 means strongly agree to the point of making lifestyle choices to lessen climate change (such as riding a bike instead of driving a car, recycling, eating certain kinds of foods).

- +2 means agree but not to the point of acting upon it.
- +1 as mildly in favor of your proposition; that is, they think it's probably true but the issue doesn't affect them personally.
- 0 means neutral, no opinion, or feeling uninformed to make a decision.
- 1 means mildly opposed to the proposition but willing to listen to those with whom they disagree.
- 2 means disagreement to the point of dismissing the idea pretty quickly.
- 3 means strong opposition to the point that the concept of climate change itself is not even listened to or acknowledged as a valid subject .

Since everyone in the audience is somewhere on this line or continuum, persuasion in this case means moving them to the right, somewhere closer to +3. Thinking about persuasion this way has three values:

- You can visualize and quantify where your audience “sits.”
- You can accept the fact that any movement toward +3 or to the right is a win.
- You can see that trying to change an audience from -3 to +3 in one speech is just about impossible. Therefore, you will be able to take a reasonable approach. In this case, if you knew most of the audience was at -2 or -3, your speech would be about the science behind climate change in order to open their minds to its possible existence, but the audience is not ready to hear about its being caused mainly by humans or what action should be taken to reverse it.

Your instructor may have the class engage in some activity about your proposed topics in order for you to write your proposition in a way that it is more applicable to your audience. For example, you might have a group discussion on the topics or administer surveys to your fellow students. Some topics are so controversial and divisive that trying to persuade about them in class is inappropriate.

You might also ask if it is possible to persuade to the negative, for example, to argue against something or try to move the audience to be opposed to something. In this case you would be trying to move your audience to the left on the continuum rather than to the right. Yes, it is possible to do so, but it might

confuse the audience. Also, you might want to think in terms of phrasing your proposition so that it is favorable as well as reasonable. For example, “Elderly people should be restricted from driving” could be replaced with “Drivers over the age of 75 in the state of Georgia should be required to pass a vision and health test every two years to renew their drivers’ licenses.” The first one is not clear (what is “elderly?”), reasonable (no license at all?), or positive (based on restriction) in approach. The second is specific, reasonable, doable, and positive.

It should also be added that the proposition is assumed to be controversial. By that is meant that some people in the audience disagree with your proposition or at least have no opinion; they are not “on your side.” It would be foolish to give a speech when everyone in the audience totally agrees with you. For example, trying to convince your classroom audience that attending college is a good idea is a waste of everyone’s time since, for one reason or another, everyone in your audience has already made that decision. That is not persuasive. Those who disagree with you could be called the **target audience**, the ones on whom you are truly focusing your persuasion. At the same time, another cluster of your audience that is not part of your target audience are those who are extremely opposed to your position to the point that they probably will not give you a fair hearing.

Target audience

the members of an audience the speaker most wants to persuade and who are likely to be receptive to persuasive messages

To go back to our original definition, “the process of creating, reinforcing, or changing people’s beliefs or actions,” and each of these purposes implies a different approach. You can think of *creating* as moving an audience from 0 to +1, +2, or +3. You only really “create” something when it does not already exist, meaning the audience’s attitude will be a 0 since they have no opinion. In creating, you have to first engage the audience that there is a vital issue at stake. Then you must provide arguments in favor of your claim to give the audience a basis for belief.

Reinforcing is moving the audience from +1 toward +3 in the hope that they take action (since the real test of belief is whether people act on it). In reinforcing, the audience already agrees with you but need steps and pushes (nudges) to make it action. *Changing* is moving from -1 or -2 to +1 or higher. In changing, you must first be credible, provide evidence for your side but also show why the audience’s current beliefs are mistaken or wrong in some way.

However, this simple definition from Lucas, while it gets to the core of “change” that is inherent in persuasion, could be improved with some attention to the ethical component and the

“how” of persuasion. For that purpose, let’s look at Perloff’s (2003) definition of **persuasion**:

A symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice. (p. 8)

First, notice that persuasion is symbolic, that is, uses language or other symbols (even graphics can be symbols), rather than force or other means. Second, notice that it is an attempt, not always fully successful. Third, there is an “atmosphere of free choice,” in that the persons being persuaded can choose not to believe or act. And fourth, notice that the persuader is “trying to convince others to change.” Modern psycho-logical research has confirmed that the persuader does not change the audience directly. The processes that the human mind goes through while it listens to a persuasive message is like a silent, **mental dialogue** the audience is having with the speaker’s ideas, and the audience members as individuals eventually convince themselves to change based on the symbols used by the speaker.

Some of this may sound like splitting hairs, but these are four important points. The fact that an audience has free choice means that they are active participants in their own persuasion and that they can choose whether the speaker is successful. For our purposes in this class, it calls on the student speaker to be ethical and truthful. Sometimes students will say, “It is just a class assignment, I can lie in this speech,” but that is not a fair way to treat your classmates.

Secondly, the basis of your persuasion is language; even though “a picture is worth a thousand words” and can help add emotional appeal to your speech, you want to focus on communicating through words. Third, Perloff’s definition distinguishes between “attitude” and “behavior,” meaning that an audience may be persuaded to think, to feel, or to act. Finally, persuasion is a process. Successful persuasion actually takes a while. One speech can be effective, but usually other messages influence the listener in the long run.

13.3 – Why is Persuasion Hard?

Persuasion is hard mainly because we have a bias against change. As much as we hear statements like “The only constant is change” or “Variety is the spice of life,” the evidence from

Persuasion

A symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice

Mental dialogue

an imagined conversation the speaker has with a given audience in which the speaker tries to anticipate what questions, concerns, or issues the audience may have to the subject under discussion

research and from our personal experience shows that, in reality, we do not like change. Recent research, for example, in risk aversion, points to how we are more concerned about keeping from losing something than with gaining something. Change is often seen as a loss of something rather than a gain of something else. Change is a step into the unknown, a gamble (Vedantam & Greene, 2013).

In the 1960s psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe wanted to investigate the effect of stress on life and health. As explained on the Mindtools website:

They surveyed more than 5,000 medical patients and asked them to say whether they had experience any of a series of 43 life events in the previous two years. Each event, called a Life Change Unit (LCU), had a different "weight" for stress. The more events the patient added up, the higher the score. The higher the score, and the larger the weight of each event, the more likely the patient was to become ill. (The Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale, 2015)

Selective exposure

the decision to expose ourselves to messages that we already agree with, rather than those that confront or challenge us

You can find the Holmes-Rahe stress scale on many websites. What you will find is that the stressful events almost all have to do with change in some life situations—death of a close family member (which might rate 100 LCUs), loss of a job, even some good changes like the Christmas holidays (12 LCUs). Change is stressful. We do not generally embrace things that bring us stress.

Additionally, psychologists have pointed to how we go out of our way to protect our beliefs, attitudes, and values. First, we selectively expose ourselves to messages that we already agree with, rather than those that confront or challenge us. This **selective exposure** is especially seen in choices of mass media that individuals listen to and read, whether TV, radio, or Internet sites. Not only do we selectively expose ourselves to information, we selectively attend to, perceive, and recall information that supports our existing viewpoints (referred to as selective attention, selective perception, and selective recall).

This principle led Leon Festinger (1957) to form the theory of **cognitive dissonance**, which states, among other ideas, that when we are confronted with conflicting information or viewpoints, we reach a state of dissonance, which can be very uncomfortable, and we will do things to get rid of the dissonance

Cognitive dissonance

a psychological phenomenon where people confronted with conflicting information or viewpoints reach a state of dissonance (generally the disagreement between conflicting thoughts and/or actions), which can be very uncomfortable, and results in actions to get rid of the dissonance and maintain consonance

and maintain “consonance.” The easiest way to do so is to not expose oneself to conflicting messages in the first place.

Additionally, as mentioned before, during a persuasive speech the audience members are holding a mental dialogue with the speaker or at least the speaker’s content. They are putting up rebuttals or counter-arguments. These have been called *reservations* (as in the audience member would like to believe the speaker but has reservations about doing so). They could be called the “yeah-buts”—the audience members are saying in their minds, “Yeah, I see what you are arguing, but—”. Reservations can be very strong, since, again, the bias is to be loss averse and *not* to change our actions or beliefs.

In a sense, the reasons *not* to change can be stronger than even very logical reasons *to* change. For example, you probably know a friend who will not wear a seatbelt in a car. You can say to your friend, “Don’t you know that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (2009) says, and I quote, ‘1,652 lives could be saved and 22,372 serious injuries avoided each year on America’s roadways if seat belt use rates rose to 90 percent in every state?’” What will your friend probably say, even though you have cited a credible source?

He or she will come up with some reason for not wearing it, even something as dramatic as “I knew a guy who had a cousin who was in an accident and the cop said he died because he was wearing his seatbelt.” You may have had this conversation, or one like it. His or her argument may be less dramatic, such as “I don’t



like how it feels” or “I don’t like the government telling me what to do in my car.” For your friend, the argument for wearing a seat belt is not as strong as the argument against it, at least at this moment. If he or she is open-minded and can listen to evidence, he or she might experience cognitive dissonance and then be persuaded.

Solutions to the Difficulty of Persuasion

With these reasons for the resistance audience members would have to persuasion, what is a speaker to do? Here are some strategies.

Since change is resisted, we do not make many large or major changes in our lives. We do, however, make smaller, concrete, step-by-step or incremental changes in our lives every day. Going back to our scale in Figure 13.1, trying to move an audience from -3 to +2 or +3 is too big a move. Having reasonable persuasive goals is the first way to meet resistance. Even moving someone from -3 to -2 is progress, and over time these small shifts will eventually result in a significant amount of persuasion.

Secondly, a speaker must “deal with the reservations.” First, the speaker must acknowledge they exist, which shows audience awareness, but then the speaker must attempt to rebut or refute them. In reality, since persuasion involves a mental dialogue, your audience is more than likely thinking of counter-arguments in their minds, so including a refutation section in your speech, usually after your presentation of arguments in favor of your proposition, is a required and important strategy.

However, there are some techniques for rebuttal or refutation that work better than others. You would not want to say, “One argument against my proposition is . . . , and that is wrong” or “If you are one of the people who believe this about my proposition, you are wrong.” On the other hand, you could say that the reservations are “misconceptions,” “myths,” or “mistaken ideas” that are commonly held about the proposition.

Generally, strong persuasive speeches offer the audience what are called **two-tailed arguments**, which bring up a valid issue against your argument which you, as the speaker, must then refute. After acknowledging them and seeking to refute or rebut the reservations, you must also provide evidence for your refutation. Ultimately, this will show your audience that you are aware of both sides of the issue you are presenting and make you a more credible speaker. However, you cannot just say something like this:

Two-tailed arguments

a persuasive technique in which a speaker brings up a counter-argument to their own topic and then directly refutes the claim

One common misconception about wearing seatbelts is that if the car goes off a bridge and is sinking in water, you would not be able to release the belt and get out. First, that rarely happens. Second, if it did, getting the seat belt unbuckled would be the least of your worries. You would have to know how to get out of the car, not just the seat belt. Third, the seat belt would have protected you from any head injuries in such a crash, therefore keeping you conscious and able to help anyone else in the car.

This is a good start, but there are some assertions in here that would need support from a reliable source, such as the argument that the “submerging in water” scenario is rare. If it has happened to someone you know, you probably would not think it is rare!

The third strategy is to keep in mind that since you are asking the audience to change something, they must view the benefits of the change as worth the stress of the change. If you do good audience analysis, you know they are asking, “What’s in it for me?” What benefit or advantage or improvement would happen for the audience members? It could be the benefit of being logical, having consonance rather than dissonance, being consistent with the evidence and authorities on a subject, or there might be some benefit from changing behavior.

If the audience is being persuaded to sign an organ donor card, which is an altruistic action that cannot benefit them in any way because they will be dead, what would be the benefit? Knowing others would have better lives, feeling a sense of contribution to the good of humanity, and helping medical science might be examples. The point is that a speaker should be able to engage the audience at the level of needs, wants, and values as well as logic and evidence.

13.4 – Traditional Views of Persuasion

In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle took upon the study of the public speaking practices of the ruling class in Athenian society. For two years he observed the rhetoric of the men who spoke in the assembly and the courts. In the end, he wrote *Rhetoric* to explain his theories about what he saw. Among his many conclusions, which have formed the basis of communication study for centuries, was the classification of persuasive appeals into ethos, logos, and pathos. Over the years, Aristotle’s original understanding and definition of these terms have been refined as more psychological research has been done

Ethos

the influence of speaker credentials and character in a speech; arguments based on credibility

Ethos

Ethos has come to mean the influence of speaker credentials and character in a speech. Ethos is one of the more studied aspects of public speaking, and it was discussed earlier in Chapter 3. During the speech, a speaker should seek to utilize his or her existing credibility (based on the favorable things an audience already knows or believes about the speaker, such as education, expertise, background, and good character) and to improve or enhance his or her credibility (through citing reliable, authoritative sources, strong arguments, showing awareness of the audience, and effective delivery).

The word “ethos” looks very much like the word “ethics,” and there are many close parallels to the trust an audience has in a speaker and his or her honesty and ethical stance. In terms of ethics, it goes without saying that your speech will be truthful. Another matter to consider is your own personal involvement in the topic. Ideally you have chosen the topic because it means a great deal to you personally.

Logos

logical and organized arguments and the credible evidence to support the arguments within a speech; arguments based on logic

For example, perhaps your speech is designed to motivate audience members to take action against bullying in schools, and it is important to you because you work with the Boys and Girls Club organization and have seen how anti-bullying programs can have positive results. Sharing your own involvement and commitment is key to the credibility and emotional appeal (ethos and pathos) of the speech, added to the logos (evidence showing the success of the programs and the damage caused by bullying that goes unchecked). However, it would be wrong to manufacture stories of personal involvement that are untrue, even if the proposition is a socially valuable one.

Logos

Aristotle’s original meaning for **logos** had philosophical meanings tied to the Greek worldview that the universe is a place ruled by logic and reason. Logos in a speech was related to standard forms of arguments that the audience would find acceptable. Today we think of logos as both logical and organized arguments and the credible evidence to support the arguments. Chapter 14 will deal with logic and avoiding logical fallacies more specifically.

Pathos

the use of emotions such as anger, joy, hate, desire for community, and love to persuade the audience of the rightness of a proposition; arguments based on emotion

Pathos

In words like “empathy,” “sympathy,” and “compassion” we see the root word behind pathos. **Pathos**, to Aristotle, was using the emotions such as anger, joy, hate, desire for community,

and love to persuade the audience of the rightness of a proposition. One example of emotional appeals is using strong visual aids and engaging stories to get the attention of the audience. Someone asking you to donate money to help homeless pets may not have a strong effect, but seeing the ASPCA's commercials that feature emaciated and mistreated animals is probably much more likely to persuade you to donate (add the music for full emotional effect).

Emotions are also engaged by showing the audience that the proposition relates to their needs. However, we recognize that emotions are complex and that they also can be used to create a smokescreen to logic. Emotional appeals that use inflammatory language—name-calling—are often unethical or at least counterproductive. Some emotions are more appropriate for persuasive speeches than others. Anger and guilt, for example, do have effectiveness but they can backfire. Positive emotions such as pride, sympathy, and contentment are usually more productive.

One negative emotion that is useful and that can be used ethically is fear. When you think about it, we do a number of things in life to avoid negative consequences, and thus, out of fear. Why don't we drive 100 miles an hour on the interstate? Fear of getting a ticket, fear of paying more for insurance, fear of a crash, fear of hurting ourselves or others. Fear is not always applicable to a specific topic, but research shows that mild fear appeals, under certain circumstances, are very useful. When using fear appeals, the speaker must:

- Prove the fear appeal is valid.
- Prove that it applies to the audience
- Prove that the solution can work
- Prove the solution is available to the audience

Without these "proofs," the audience may dismiss the fear appeal as not being real or not applying to them (O'Keefe, 2002).

For example, a student gave a speech in one of our classes about flossing teeth. He used dramatic and disturbing photos of dental and gum problems but also proved that the dramatic photos of gum disease really did come from lack of flossing. The solution to avoid the gum disease was readily available, and the student proved through his evidence that the solution of flossing regularly did work to avoid the disease. Fear appeals can be overdone, but mild ones supported by evidence are very useful.

Because we feel positive emotions when our needs are met and negative ones when our needs are not met, aligning your proposition with strong audience needs is part of pathos. Earlier in this book (Chapter 2) we examined the well-known Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Students are often so familiar with it that they do not see its connection to real-life experiences. For example, safety and security needs, the second level on the hierarchy, is much broader than what many of us probably initially think:

- supporting the military and homeland security;
- buying insurance for oneself and one's family;
- having investments and a will;
- personal protection such as taking self-defense classes;
- policies on crime and criminal justice in our communities;
- buying a security system for your car or home; seat belts and automotive safety;
- or even having the right kind of tires on one's car (which is actually a viable topic for a speech).

The third level up in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, love and belongingness, deals with a whole range of human experiences, such as connection with others and friendship, involvement in communities, groups, and clubs, prioritizing family time, worship and connection to a faith community, being involved in children's lives, patriotism, loyalty, and fulfilling personal commitments.

In the speech outline at the end of the chapter about eliminating Facebook time, the speaker appeals to the three central levels of the hierarchy in her three points: safety and security from online threats, spending more time with family and friends in real time rather than online (love and belonging), and having more time to devote to schoolwork rather than on Facebook (esteem and achievement). Therefore, utilizing Maslow's hierarchy of needs works as a guide for finding those key needs that relate to your proposition, and by doing so, allows you to incorporate emotional appeals based on needs.

Up to this point in the chapter, we have looked at the goals of persuasion, why it is hard, and how to think about the traditional modes of persuasion based on Aristotle's theories. In the last section of this chapter, we will look at generating an overall organizational approach to your speech based on your persuasive goals.

13.5 – Constructing a Persuasive Speech

In a sense, constructing your persuasive speech is the culmination of the skills you have learned already. In another sense, you are challenged to think somewhat differently. While the steps of analyzing your audience, formulating your purpose and central idea, applying evidence, considering ethics, framing the ideas in appropriate language, and then practicing delivery will of course apply, you will need to consider some expanded options about each of these steps.

Formulating a Proposition

As mentioned before, when thinking about a central idea statement in a persuasive speech, we use the terms “proposition” or claim. Persuasive speeches have one of four types of propositions or claims, which determine your overall approach. Before you move on, you need to determine what type of proposition you should have (based on the audience, context, issues involved in the topic, and assignment for the class).

Proposition of Fact

Speeches with this type of proposition attempt to establish the truth of a statement. There is not a sense of what is morally right and wrong or what should be done about the issue, only that a statement is supported by evidence or not. These propositions are not facts such as “the chemical symbol for water is H₂O” or “Barack Obama won the presidency in 2008 with 53% of the vote.” They are statements over which persons disagree and there is evidence on both sides, although probably more on one than the other. Some examples of propositions of fact are:

Converting to solar energy can save homeowners money.

John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald working alone.

Experiments using animals are essential to the development of many life-saving medical procedures.

Climate change has been caused by human activity.

Granting tuition tax credits to the parents of children who attend private schools will perpetuate educational inequity.

Watching violence on television causes violent behavior in children.

William Shakespeare did not write most of the plays attributed to him.

Notice that in none of these are any values—good or bad—mentioned. Perpetuating segregation is not portrayed as good or bad, only as an effect of a policy. Of course, most people view educational inequality as a bad thing negatively, just as they view life-saving medical procedures positively. But the point of these propositions is to prove with evidence the truth of a statement, not its inherent value or what the audience should do about it. In fact, in some propositions of fact no action response would even be possible, such as the proposition listed above that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in the assassination of President Kennedy.

Propositions of Definition

This is probably not one that you will use in your class, but it bears mentioning here because it is used in legal and scholarly arguments. Propositions of definitions argue that a word, phrase, or concept has a particular meaning. Remembering back to Chapter 7 on supporting materials, we saw that there are various ways to define words, such as by negation, operationalizing, and classification and division. It may be important for you to define your terms, especially if you have a value proposition. Lawyers, legislators, and scholars often write briefs, present speeches, or compose articles to define terms that are vital to defendants, citizens, or disciplines. We saw a proposition of definition defended in the Supreme Court's 2015 decision to redefine marriage laws as applying to same-sex couples, based on arguments presented in court. Other examples might be:

The Second Amendment to the Constitution does not include possession of automatic weapons for private use.

Alcoholism should be considered a disease because . . .

A given crime did not meet the standard for first-degree murder.

Thomas Jefferson's definition of inalienable rights did not include a right to privacy.

In each of these examples, the proposition is that the definition of these things (the Second Amendment, alcoholism, crime, and inalienable rights) needs to be changed or viewed differently.

Propositions of Value

It is likely that you or some of your classmates will give speeches with propositions of value. When the proposition has a

word such as good, bad, best, worst, just, unjust, ethical, unethical, moral, immoral, advantageous or disadvantageous, it is a proposition of value. Some examples include:

Hybrid cars are the best form of automobile transportation available today.

Homeschooling is more beneficial for children than traditional schooling.

The War in Iraq was not justified.

Capital punishment is morally wrong.

Mascots that involve Native American names, characters, and symbols are demeaning.

A vegan diet is the healthiest one for adults.

Propositions of value require a first step: defining the “value” word. If a war is unjustified, what makes a war “just” or “justified” in the first place? That is a fairly philosophical question. What makes a form of transportation “best” or “better” than another? Isn’t that a matter of personal approach? For different people, “best” might mean “safest,” “least expensive,” “most environmentally responsible,” “stylish,” “powerful,” or “prestigious.” Obviously, in the case of the first proposition above, it means “environmentally responsible.” It would be the first job of the speaker, after introducing the speech and stating the proposition, to explain what “best form of automobile transportation” means. Then the proposition would be defended with separate arguments.

Propositions of Policy

These propositions are easy to identify because they almost always have the word “should” in them. These propositions call for a change in policy or practice (including those in a government, community, or school), or they can call for the audience to adopt a certain behavior. Speeches with propositions of policy can be those that call for passive acceptance and agreement from the audience and those that try to instigate the audience to action, to actually do something immediately or in the long-term.

Our state should require mandatory recertification of lawyers every ten years.

The federal government should act to ensure clean water standards for all citizens.

The federal government should not allow the use of technology to choose the sex of an unborn child.

The state of Georgia should require drivers over the age of 75 to take a vision test and present a certificate of good health from a doctor before renewing their licenses.

Wyeth Daniels should be the next governor of the state.

Young people should monitor their blood pressure regularly to avoid health problems later in life.

As mentioned before, the proposition determines the approach to the speech, especially the organization. Also as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the exact phrasing of the proposition should be carefully done to be reasonable, positive, and appropriate for the context and audience. In the next section we will examine organizational factors for speeches with propositions of fact, value, and policy.

Organization Based on Type of Proposition

Organization for a proposition of fact

If your proposition is one of fact, you will do best to use a topical organization. Essentially that means that you will have two to four discrete, separate arguments in support of the proposition. For example:

Proposition: Converting to solar energy can save homeowners money.

- I. Solar energy can be economical to install.
 - A. The government awards grants.
 - B. The government gives tax credits.
- II. Solar energy reduces power bills.
- III. Solar energy requires less money for maintenance.
- IV. Solar energy works when the power grid goes down.

Here is a first draft of another outline for a proposition of fact:

Proposition: Experiments using animals are essential to the development of many life-saving medical procedures.

- I. Research of the past shows many successes from animal experimentation.

- II. Research on humans is limited for ethical and legal reasons.
- III. Computer models for research have limitations.

However, these outlines are just preliminary drafts because preparing a speech of fact requires a great deal of research and understanding of the issues. A speech with a proposition of fact will almost always need an argument or section related to the “reservations,” refuting the arguments that the audience may be preparing in their minds, their mental dialogue. So the second example needs revision, such as:

- I. The first argument in favor of animal experimentation is the record of successful discoveries from animal research.
- II. A second reason to support animal experimentation is that research on humans is limited for ethical and legal reasons.
- III. Thirdly, animal experimentation is needed because computer models for research have limitations.
- IV. Many people today have concerns about animal experimentation.
 - A. Some believe that all experimentation is equal.
 - 1. There is experimentation for legitimate medical research.
 - 2. There is experimentation for cosmetics or shampoos.
 - B. Others argue that the animals are mistreated.
 - 1. There are protocols for the treatment of animals in experimentation.
 - 2. Legitimate medical experimentation follows the protocols.
 - C. Some believe the persuasion of certain advocacy groups like PETA.
 - 1. Many of the groups that protest animal experimentation have extreme views.
 - 2. Some give untrue representations.

To complete this outline, along with introduction and conclusion, there would need to be quotations, statistics, and facts

with sources provided to support both the pro-arguments in Main Points I-III but also the refutation to the misconceptions about animal experimentation in Subpoints A-C under Point IV.

Organization for a proposition of value

A persuasive speech that incorporates a propositions of value will have a slightly different structure. As mentioned earlier, a proposition of value must first define the “value” word for clarity and to provide a basis for the other arguments of the speech. The second or middle section would present the defense or “pro” arguments for the proposition based on the definition. The third section would include refutation of the counter arguments. The following outline draft shows a student trying to structure a speech with a value proposition. Keep in mind it is abbreviated for illustrative purposes, and thus incomplete as an example of what you would submit to your instructor, who will expect more detailed outlines for your speeches.

Proposition: Hybrid cars are the best form of automotive transportation available today.

- I. Automotive transportation that is best meets three standards. **(Definition)**
 - A. It is reliable and durable.
 - B. It is fuel efficient and thus cost efficient.
 - C. It is therefore environmentally responsible.
- II. Studies show that hybrid cars are durable and reliable. **(Pro-Argument 1)**
 - A. Hybrid cars have 99 problems per 100 cars versus 133 problem per 100 conventional cars, according to TrueDelta, a car analysis website much like *Consumer Reports*.
 - B. J.D. Powers reports hybrids also experience 11 fewer engine and transmission issues than gas-powered vehicles, per 100 vehicles.
- III. Hybrid cars are fuel-efficient. **(Pro-Argument 2)**
 - A. The Toyota Prius gets 48 mpg on the highway and 51 mpg in the city.
 - B. The Ford Fusion hybrid gets 47 mpg in the city and in the country.
- III. Hybrid cars are environmentally responsible. **(Pro-Argument 3)**

- A. They only emit 51.6 gallons of carbon dioxide every 100 miles.
 - B. Conventional cars emit 74.9 gallons of carbon dioxide every 100 miles.
 - C. The hybrid produces 69% of the harmful gas exhaust that a conventional car does.
- IV. Of course, hybrid cars are relatively new to the market and some have questions about them. **(Reservations)**
- A. Don't the batteries wear out and aren't they expensive to replace?
 - 1. Evidence to address this misconception.
 - 2. Evidence to address this misconception.
 - B. Aren't hybrid cars only good for certain types of driving and drivers?
 - 1. Evidence to address this misconception.
 - 2. Evidence to address this misconception.
 - C. Aren't electrical cars better?
 - 1. Evidence to address this misconception.
 - 2. Evidence to address this misconception.

Organization for a propositions of policy

The most common type of outline organizations for speeches with propositions of policy is problem-solution or problem-cause-solution. Typically we do not feel any motivation to change unless we are convinced that some harm, problem, need, or deficiency exists, and even more, that it affects us personally. As the saying goes, "If it ain't broke, why fix it?" As mentioned before, some policy speeches look for passive agreement or acceptance of the proposition. Some instructors call this type of policy speech a "think" speech since the persuasion is just about changing the way your audience thinks.

On the other hand, other policy speeches seek to move the audience to do something to change a situation or to get involved in a cause, and these are sometimes called a "do" speech since the audience is asked to do something. This second type of policy speech (the "do" speech) is sometimes called a "speech to actuate." Although a simple problem-solution organization with only two main points is permissible for a speech of actuation, you will probably do well to utilize the more detailed format called

Monroe's Motivated Sequence.

This format, designed by Alan Monroe (1951), who wrote a popular speaking textbook for many years, is based on John Dewey's reflective thinking process. It seeks to go in-depth with the many questions an audience would have in the process of listening to a persuasive speech. Monroe's Motivated Sequence involves five steps, which should not be confused with the main points of the outline. Some steps in Monroe's Motivated Sequence may take two points.

1. **Attention.** This is the introduction, where the speaker brings attention to the importance of the topic as well as his or her own credibility and connection to the topic.
2. **Need.** Here the problem is defined and defended. This step may be divided into two main points, such as the problem and the causes of it, since logically a solution should address the underlying causes as well as the external effects of a problem. It is important to make the audience see the severity of the problem, and how it affects them, their family, or their community. The harm or need can be physical, financial, emotional, educational, or social. It will have to be supported by evidence.
3. **Satisfaction.** A need calls for satisfaction in the same way a problem requires a solution. This step could also, in some cases, take up two main points. Not only does the speaker present the solution and describe it, but she must also defend that it works and will address the causes of the problem as well as the symptoms.
4. **Visualization.** This step looks to the future either positively or negatively. If positive, the benefits from enacting or choosing the solution are shown. If negative, the benefits of not doing anything to solve the problem are shown. There may be times when it is acceptable to skip this step, especially if time is limited. The purpose of visualization is to motivate the audience with the benefits or through fear appeals.
5. **Action.** This can be the conclusion, although if the speaker really wants to spend time on moving the audience to action, the action step should be a full main point and the conclusion saved for summary and a dramatic ending. In the action step, the goal is to give specific steps for the audience to take as soon as possible to move toward solving the problem. Whereas the satisfaction step explains the solution overall, the action step gives concrete ways to begin making the solution

happen.

The more concrete you can make the action step, the better. Research shows that people are more likely to act if they know how accessible the action can be. For example, if you want students to be vaccinated against the chicken pox virus (which can cause a serious disease called shingles in adults), you can give them directions to and hours for a clinic or health center where vaccinations at a free or discounted price can be obtained.

In some cases for speeches of policy, no huge problem needs solving. Or, there is a problem, but the audience already knows about it and is convinced that the problem exists and is important. In those cases, a format called “comparative advantages” is used, which focuses on how one possible solution is better than other possible ones. The organizational pattern for this kind of proposition might be topical:

- I. This policy is better because . . .
- II. This policy is better because . . .
- III. This policy is better because . . .

If this sounds a little like a commercial that is because advertisements often use comparative advantages to show that one product is better than another. Here is an example:

Proposition: Owning the Barnes and Noble Nook is more advantageous than owning the Amazon Kindle.

- I. The Nook allows owners to trade and loan books to other owners or people who have downloaded the Nook software, while the Kindle does not.
- II. The Nook has a color-touch screen, while the Kindle’s screen is black and grey and noninteractive.
- III. The Nook’s memory can be expanded through microSD, while the Kindle’s memory cannot be upgraded.

Building Upon Your Persuasive Speech’s Arguments

Once you have constructed the key arguments and order of points (remembering that if you use topical order, to put your strongest or most persuasive point last), it is time to move to being sure your points are well supported. In a persuasive speech, there are some things to consider about evidence.

First, your evidence should be from sources that the audience will find credible. If you can find the same essential

information from two sources but know that the audience will find the information more credible from one source than another, use and cite the information from the more credible one. For example, if you find the same statistical data on Wikipedia and the U.S. Department of Labor's website, cite the U.S. Department of Labor (your instructor will probably not accept the Wikipedia site anyway). Audiences also accept information from sources they consider unbiased or indifferent. Gallup polls, for example, have been considered reliable sources of survey data because unlike some organizations, Gallup does not have a cause (political or otherwise) it is supporting.

Secondly, your evidence should be new to the audience. In other words, the best evidence is that which is from credible sources and the audience has not heard before (Reinard, 1988; McCroskey, 1969). If they have heard it before and discounted it, they will not consider your argument well supported. An example is telling people who smoke that smoking will cause lung cancer. Everyone in the U.S. has heard that thousands of times, but 17.8% of the population still smokes, which is more than one in six (Gholipour, 2014). Many of those who smoke have not heard the information that really motivates them to quit yet, and of course quitting is very difficult. Additionally, new evidence is more attention-getting, and you will appear more credible if you tell the audience something new (as long as you cite it well) than if you use the "same old, same old" evidence they have heard before.

Third, in order to be effective and ethical, your supporting evidence should be relevant and not used out of context, and fourth, it should be timely and not out of date.

After choosing the evidence and apportioning it to the correct parts of the speech, you will want to consider use of metaphors, quotations, rhetorical devices, and narratives that will enhance the language and "listenability" of your speech. Narratives are especially good for introduction and conclusions, to get attention and to leave the audience with something dramatic. You might refer to the narrative in the introduction again in the conclusion to give the speech a sense of finality.

Next you will want to decide if you should use any type of presentation aid for the speech. The decision to use visuals such as PowerPoint slides or a video clip in a persuasive speech should take into consideration the effect of the visuals on the audience and the time allotted for the speech. The charts, graphs, or photographs you use should be focused and credibly done.

One of your authors remembers a speech by a student about using seat belts (which is, by the way, an overdone topic).

What made the speech effective in this case were photographs of two totaled cars, both of which the student had been driving when they crashed (on two separate occasions). The devastation of the wrecks and his ability to stand before them and give the speech because he had worn his seat belt was effective (although it didn't say much for his driving ability). If you wanted an audience to donate to disaster relief after an earthquake in a foreign country, a few photographs of the destruction would be effective, and perhaps a map of the area would be helpful. But in this case, less is more. Too many visual aids will likely distract from your overall speech claim.

Finally, since you've already had experience in class giving at least one major speech prior to this one, your delivery for the persuasive speech should be especially strong. Since delivery does affect credibility (Burgoon, Birk, and Pfau, 1990), you want to be able to connect visually as you make your appeals. You want to be physically involved and have vocal variety when you tell dramatic narratives that emphasize the human part of your topic. If you do use presentation slides, you want them to work in seamlessly, using black screens when the visuals are not necessary.

Conclusion

Your persuasive speech in class, as well as in real life, is an opportunity to share a passion or cause that you believe will matter to society and help the audience live a better life. Even if you are initially uncomfortable with the idea of persuasion, we use it all the time in different ways. Choose your topic based on your own commitment and experience, look for quality evidence, craft your proposition so that it will be clear and audience appropriate, and put the finishing touches on it with an eye toward enhancing your logos, ethos, and pathos.

Something to Think About

Go to YouTube and look for "Persuasive Speeches by College Students." There are quite a few. Here's one example:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNr7Fx-SM1Y>.

Do you find this speech persuasive? Why or why not? Based on the content of this chapter, what did the speaker do correctly or perhaps not so correctly that affected his or her persuasiveness?

Sample Outline: Persuasive Speech on Facebook Usage

By Janet Aguilar

Specific Purpose: To persuade my classmates to eliminate their Facebook use.

Introduction: There she was late into the night still wide awake starring at her phone's screen. In fact, she had to be at work early in the morning, but scrolling through her Facebook account kept her awake. That girl was me before I deactivated my Facebook account. I honestly could not tell you how many hours I spent on Facebook. In the survey that I presented to you all, one person admitted to spending "too much" time on Facebook. That was me in the past, I spent too much time on Facebook. Time is precious and once it is gone it does not return. So why do you spend precious time on Facebook? Time that could be spent with family, resting, or just being more productive.

Thesis/ Preview: Facebook users should eliminate their usage because Facebook can negatively affect their relationships with others, their sleeping patterns and health, and their ability to focus on school work.

I. Family relationships can be affected by your Facebook usage.

A. In the survey conducted in class, 11 of 15 students confessed to have ignored someone while they were speaking.

1. Found myself ignoring my children while they spoke.

2. Noticed other people doing the same thing especially in parks and restaurants.

B. According to Lynn Postell-Zimmerman on hg.org, Facebook has become a leading cause for divorce.

C. In the United States, 1 in 5 couples mentioned Facebook as a reason for divorce in 2009.

Transition: We have discussed how Facebook usage can lead to poor relationships with people, next we will discuss how Facebook can affect your sleep patterns and health.

II. Facebook usage can negatively affect your sleep patterns and health.

A. Checking Facebook before bed.

1. In my survey 11 students said they checked their Facebook account before bed.

2. Staying on Facebook for long hours before bed.
- B. Research has shown that Facebook can cause depression, anxiety, and addiction.
1. According to researchers Steels, Wickham and Acitelli in an article in the *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology* titled “Seeing everyone else's highlight reels: How Facebook usage is linked to depressive symptoms,” because Facebook users only view the positive of their friend’s life they become unhappy with their life and it can lead to becoming depressed and unhappy.
 2. Marissa Maldonado on psychcentral.com, concluded from recent studies that, “Facebook increases people’s anxiety levels by making them feel inadequate and generating excess worry and stress.”
 3. Facebook addiction is a serious issue, according to the article “Too much Facebook leads to anger and depression” found on cnn.com and written by Cara Reedy.
 - a. Checking Facebook everywhere we go is a sign of addiction
 - b. Not being able to deactivate your Facebook account.

Transitions: Many of you have probably never thought of Facebook as a threat to your health, but we will now review how it can affect you as a college student.

III. Facebook negatively affects students.

- A. I often found myself on Facebook instead of doing schoolwork.
- B. I was constantly checking Facebook which takes away from study time.
- C. I also found myself checking Facebook while in class, which can lead to poor grades and getting in trouble with the professor.
- D. A study of over 1,800 college students showed a negative relationship between amount of Facebook time and GPA, as reported by Junco in a 2012 article titled, “Too much face and not enough books” from the journal *Computers and Human Behavior*.

Conclusion: In conclusion, next time you log on to Facebook try deactivating your account for a few day and see the difference. You will soon see how it can bring positive changes in your family relationships, will avoid future health problems, will help you sleep better, and will improve your school performance. Instead of communicating through Facebook try visiting or calling your close friends. Deactivating my account truly helped me, and I can assure you we all can survive without Facebook.

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