

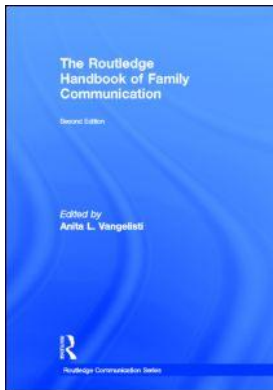
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Persuasion and Families

Steven R. Wilson, Lisa M. Guntzville,
and Elizabeth A. Munz

The persuasion literature has deep roots including a rhetorical tradition dating to the ancient Greeks (Leff & Procario, 1985) and an attitude change tradition dating to the mid 1900s (Dillard & Pfau, 2002). Both traditions typically focus on persuasion in public and mass communication contexts, such as within social movements or health communication campaigns.

Given this focus, finding a chapter on the topic in the *Handbook of Family Communication* may seem surprising. Yet two studies illustrate how common persuasive attempts are within families. In the first, 60 college students recorded over 3,000 diary entries describing people they tried to influence over a 12-week period (Cody, Canary, & Smith, 1994). Parents were the third most frequent target for the college students' persuasive attempts even though many students no longer lived in their parents' household. Common reasons for attempting to persuade a parent included seeking assistance, advocating a shared activity, and offering the parent advice.

Earlier in the lifespan, Oldershaw, Walters, & Hall (1989) analyzed persuasive episodes as 43 mothers and their pre-school children engaged in mealtime, free-play, and clean-up activities. Mothers on average made 75 requests of their children per hour, or more than one request per minute. Children did not comply with 35 percent of these requests—a rate of child noncompliance typical for nonclinical samples at this age (Chamberlain & Patterson, 1996). Mothers used a variety of strategies when attempting to persuade their child such as explaining consequences of the child's actions, expressing disapproval of perceived misbehavior, modeling desired behavior, and offering positive consequences if the child complied.

As these studies illustrate, persuasion involves an intentional attempt by a speaker, via reason giving, to influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of others who have some measure of choice about how to respond (O'Keefe, 2002). Attempts to persuade are intentional in that a speaker wants to shape, strengthen, or modify another person's beliefs or behaviors (Miller, 1980), but speakers may not consciously plan how to pursue their goals (Kellermann, 1992). The reasons speakers provide when trying to persuade may include appeals to core values, linkages with important social groups, or explanations of tangible benefits (Kelman, 1958). The boundary between persuasion and coercion can be fuzzy, such as when parents give reasons while also implying that their child ultimately must comply (Wilson, Whipple, & Grau, 1996).

In this chapter, we clarify how persuasion has been conceptualized in both parent–child and marital relationships, review what currently is known regarding a limited number of questions about persuasion and families, and suggest avenues for integrating theory and research on persuasion, parenting, and marriage. Throughout the chapter, we highlight multiple goals that both motivate and constrain family members during persuasive episodes, the relational meanings family members attribute to persuasive messages, and the interactional nature of persuasion. Keeping these objectives in mind, we turn to persuasion in parent–child relationships.

Persuasion in Parent–Child Relationships

Conceptualizing Persuasive Messages and Interactions

Defining Parental Discipline and Parenting Styles

Parents' persuasive attempts have been studied under the labels of “parental discipline” and “parenting style.” Discipline refers to “the methods parents use to discourage inappropriate behavior and gain compliance from children” (Locke & Prinz, 2002, p. 897). Discipline encompasses a broad range of behaviors that parents use to shape and regulate their children's behavior (e.g., reasoning, modeling, warning). In the context of discipline, parents may be motivated and constrained by a variety of short- and longer-term goals such as ceasing irritating child behavior, keeping a child safe, inculcating family and community values, maintaining a positive parent–child relationship, and fostering a child's autonomy, assertiveness, and potential (Grusec, Goodnow, & Kuczynski, 2000; Socha, 2006).

Scholars also distinguish parenting styles and practices. Hart, Newell, and Olsen (2003) define parenting styles as “aggregates or constellations of behaviors that describe parent–child interactions over a wide range of situations that are presumed to create a pervasive interactional climate” (p. 762). In contrast, Darling & Steinberg (1993) describe parenting practices as “behaviors defined by specific content and socialization goals” (p. 492); thus, actions such as spanking or attending parent–teacher conferences are parenting practices. Parenting styles provide a context in which particular practices occur, and the meaning and impact of particular practices may differ when they are performed by parents who typically enact different styles.

Among numerous conceptions of parenting style, two of the most influential are Hoffman's (1980) typology of discipline and Baumrind's (1973) taxonomy of parenting styles.

Hoffman's Discipline Types

Hoffman (1980) explores the effects on parental discipline on children's internalization of values. Discipline episodes often arise when children face conflicts between their own desires and prevailing moral standards. According to Hoffman, parents who repeatedly use particular forms of discipline help their child develop the inner resources (e.g., empathy) needed to behave morally. Hoffman distinguishes three forms of discipline that parents use in response to perceived child misbehavior:

- 1 power assertion, or the use or threat of physical force, control over the child's material resources, or other punitive sanctions;

- 2 love withdrawal, or the use of direct but nonphysical expressions of anger or disapproval of the child, such as ignoring the child, isolating the child, or threatening to leave the child;
- 3 induction, or providing reasons why the child must behave differently such as by appealing to the child's pride, desire to be grown up, or concern for others.

Inductive discipline, defined broadly, includes any appeal in which parents offer reasons why their child needs to change his or her behavior. "Reasoning," however, has been treated as a catch-all category that may include messages ranging from "normative statements, discussion of consequences, discussion of the feelings of others ... to noninformative and superfluous verbalizations" (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994, p. 7). Within this broad category, Hoffman (1980) argues that other-oriented induction, in which parents point out implications of their child's actions for others, is especially important in promoting the internalization of values.

Many studies of parental control or regulation are organized loosely around Hoffman's forms of discipline (e.g., Applegate, Burke, Burlison, Delia, & Kline, 1985; Oldershaw, Walters, & Hall, 1986). Oldershaw et al. analyzed maternal control strategies during videotaped free-play and clean-up activities. A control sequence began each time that a mother issued a request or command, and continued until her child complied or she gave up seeking compliance. For each sequence, the authors assessed whether the mother's initial and follow-up commands were accompanied by control strategies. Oldershaw et al. label strategies such as reasoning, bargaining, and approval as "positively oriented" because they "mainly involve dealing with the child on an intellectual level and engaging in rational discussion that excludes any implied or real threat of punishment" (p. 725). Positively oriented strategies correspond with Hoffman's broad usage of inductive discipline. In contrast, Oldershaw et al.'s "power-assertive" control strategies, such as threats to punish or humiliation, "reflect the [authoritarian] role a parent assumes over a child" (p. 725). These strategies correspond with Hoffman's power-assertive discipline, though some (e.g., humiliation) also could entail love withdrawal.

Baumrind's Parenting Styles

Baumrind's (1973) taxonomy of parenting styles also has been employed to describe parents' use of persuasion. Baumrind initially identified three groups of children rated as:

- 1 high in vitality, self-reliance, approach tendency, and self-control (Pattern I);
- 2 low in peer affiliation and vitality as well as approach tendency (Pattern II);
- 3 low in self-reliance, self-control, and approach tendency (Pattern III).

Based on videotaped mother-child interactions as well as home observations, Baumrind then compared parents of these three groups along four dimensions:

- 1 *control*, or a parent's attempts to modify their child's behavior;
- 2 *maturity demands*, or parental pressure for the child to perform up to his/her ability intellectually and socially;
- 3 *clarity of parent-child communication*, or the extent to which parents use overt rather than manipulative control strategies and give reasons to obtain child compliance;
- 4 *nurturance*, or parental acts that express warmth and involvement.

Baumrind labeled parents of Pattern I children *authoritative* because they displayed high levels of control and maturity demands combined with high levels of nurturance, relied more on positive than negative sanctions, encouraged their child to express him/herself when the child disagreed, and persisted until their child complied using power assertion if necessary. Parents of Pattern II children are called *authoritarian* in that they displayed high levels of control along with low levels of clarity and nurturance, relying on power-assertive forms of discipline and expressed less child approval than the other two groups. Parents of Pattern III children are labeled *permissive* because they displayed low levels of control and maturity demands combined with higher levels of nurturance; these parents were less likely than authoritative parents to enforce rules or structure their child's activities, but used love withdrawal (e.g., ridicule) more often when seeking their child's compliance.

Baumrind (1996) argues parenting styles vary along two dimensions. *Responsiveness* "refers to the extent to which parents initially foster individuality and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to the child's needs and demands" (p. 410). *Demandingness* "refers to the claims that parents make on children to become integrated into the family and community by their maturity expressions, supervision, disciplinary efforts, and willingness to confront a disputative child" (p. 411). Authoritative parents are responsive and demanding, whereas the other styles involve either low responsiveness (authoritarian) or demandingness (permissive). Many researchers have analyzed parental styles using Baumrind's taxonomy (e.g., Bayer & Cegala, 1992; Stephenson, Quick, & Hirsch, 2010).

Mixing and Sequencing Persuasion and Other Forms of Discipline

A simplified reading of Hoffman or Baumrind's work might suggest that parents can be neatly divided into groups such as "parents who reason with their children" versus "parents who are power assertive." Yet Hoffman maintains that most disciplinary responses, including those involving induction, also include elements of power assertion and love withdrawal (1980, p. 320). Baumrind's authoritative style also depicts parents who mix induction with power assertion (1996, p. 412).

Consistent with such thinking, parents of pre-school children often mix forms of discipline both within and across conversational turns from the same control episode (Wilson, Cameron, & Whipple, 1997). In addition, parents use different types and combinations of induction and power assertion depending on how their child has misbehaved (Wilson et al., 1996). When parents with adolescents set rules regarding risky health choices, they also mix induction (communicating expectations clearly, providing reasons) and power assertion (monitoring the child's actions, using threats of negative sanctions) (Baxter, Bylund, Imes, & Routsong, 2009). Studies suggest that the effects of induction depend on how a parent mixes and sequences it with other forms of discipline as well as whether the parent's reasoning fits the nature of the misdeed and their child's age (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Rather than focusing only the use of induction, Grusec et al. (2000) call for work that shows "more explicit interest in the agency of parents and children, that is, in the meanings they construct of each other's behavior, in their capacity for strategic action, and in their ability to act 'as if' the other also is an agent" (p. 205).

Children's Responses to Parents' Persuasive Attempts

Children, from infancy onward, are active participants during persuasive episodes, and their behavior affects parental responses at the same time at which it is influenced by them

(Wilson et al., 1997). The most common way young children's reactions to their parents' requests have been assessed is with measures of child compliance, which occurs when "the child obeyed immediately after a parental request or after a short delay" (Chamberlain & Patterson, 1996, p. 206). Rates of child compliance typically are defined as the number of instances of compliance divided by the total number of child responses (compliance plus noncompliance). Aside from assessing compliance/noncompliance as a dichotomy, a smaller number of studies investigate how children comply with parental requests.

Kochanska & Aksan (1995) distinguish two forms of child compliance with parental requests. Children at times display *committed compliance* when they comply wholeheartedly, "fully endorsing and 'embracing' the maternal agenda as their own" (p. 237). At other times children display *situational compliance* when they are "essentially cooperative with the parent and nonoppositional [but] at the same time lack sincere commitment. Such compliance would appear to be mostly ... maintained by the parent's sustained control" (p. 237). For both toddlers and preschoolers, children's rates of committed compliance are inversely associated with their rates of situational compliance (Chen et al., 2003; Kochanska and Aksan, 1995). Rates of committed compliance, but not situational compliance, are positively associated with (a) displays of mutual positive effect between the mother and child, and (b) mothers' use of induction as opposed to power assertion (Kochanska & Aksan, 1995). In a longitudinal study (Kochanska, Coy, & Murray, 2001), children's rates of committed compliance with "don't" commands (e.g., telling children not to touch attractive objects) increased substantially from toddlerhood to preschool but then leveled off, whereas rates of committed compliance with "do" commands (telling children to put away toys after playing), increased more slowly but steadily across both developmental periods. Children who displayed committed compliance when their mothers were present also were more likely to continue complying when their mother left the room. In sum, committed compliance reflects "an early form of the internalization of rules for behavior" as well as "the first step in the progress toward internal control" (Kochanska et al., 2001 p. 1108).

Aside from developing increased self-regulation, children also display increasing sophistication in their abilities to resist control as they mature. McQuillen, Higginbotham, & Cummings (1984) assessed developmental changes in how first-, fourth-, and tenth-graders would refuse a request from their mother, a friend, and a younger sibling. Children's responses to each request were coded into one of four categories adapted from McLaughlin, Cody, and Robey's (1980) typology of compliance-resistance strategies. Over half of the responses from first-graders across situations were nonnegotiation, whereas only one-third of the responses from tenth-graders fell into this category. Fourth- and tenth-graders were more likely than first-graders to vary their own compliance-resisting strategies depending on the source of the request (e.g., mother versus younger sibling) and the persuasive strategy included with the request.

Representative Findings

Having clarified how persuasion has been conceptualized in parent-child relationships, we now turn to what is known about two specific questions about persuasion and parenting.

Control Dynamics associated with Parental Physical and Verbal Aggression.

Child maltreatment is an immense, persistent social problem (Wilson, 2012). Although the etiology of child maltreatment is complex, reflecting the interplay of individual,

family, community, and cultural factors (Belsky, 1993), parent–child interactions are the immediate antecedent to most episodes of child abuse, and physically abusive parents often seek their child’s compliance in ways that heighten the risk of child maltreatment (Wilson, in press). This section focuses on control dynamics in families where parents are physically or verbally aggressive.

A growing body of research compares interactions between physically abusive parents and their children versus interactions between nonmaltreating parents and children from socio-demographically similar families (see Wilson, Norris, Shi, & Rack, 2010; Wilson, Rack, Shi, & Norris, 2008). For example, Oldershaw et al. (1986) compared the control strategies used by 10 physically abusive mothers and 10 nonmaltreating mothers matched on education and income as they interacted with one of their pre-school children. Abusive mothers:

- a issued a larger number of initial commands;
- b issued more initial commands in an effectively neutral rather than positive tone of voice;
- c issued more initial commands with no accompanying control strategy;
- d used every power-assertive strategy more often and several positively oriented strategies less often when they did use a control strategy.

Rates of child noncompliance with initial commands were much higher for abused (53 percent) than for nonmaltreated children (22 percent).

Following child noncompliance, abusive mothers differed from comparison mothers in that the former group issued more repeat commands with no accompanying control strategy or with a power-assertive strategy, and more repeat commands in a negative or neutral rather than positive tone. When their child did comply, abusive mothers: (a) were equally likely to criticize as praise their child in the conversational turn immediately following compliance, and (b) were more likely than comparison mothers to continue seeking compliance after their child complied because they did not notice their child had complied. By failing to notice or consistently praise child compliance, abusive mothers inadvertently may encourage future noncompliance.

Based on findings such as these, several scholars have proposed social-interaction models of child abuse (see Wilson, 2012). For example, Reid (1986) argues that the probability of child abuse is a function of (a) the number of discipline confrontations parents have with children and (b) the degree to which parents can resolve such confrontations quickly, without the parent resorting to physical aggression (p. 239). In a meta-analysis of observational studies comparing parent–child interactions in families with and without a documented history of child physical abuse, Wilson, Shi, Tirmenstein, Norris, & Rack (2006) found that abused children scored nearly one-half of a pooled standard deviation higher than nonmaltreated children in rates of noncompliance (mean-weighted $d = .45$, $CI_{95d} = .26$ to $.65$ based on 13 effects, $N = 743$ children). This finding may reflect that physically abusive parents, more than nonmaltreating parents, react inconsistently to aversive child behavior such as noncompliance, being more like to demand that the child comply but then to withdraw after additional child resistance to avoid further conflict (Cerezo & D’Ocon, 1999). Such a pattern results in escalating cycles of parental demands and child resistance over time, which leaves physically abusive parents simultaneously feeling angry and powerless (Bugental et al., 1989). Parents and children thus co-create patterns that put children at risk for abuse.

Similar control dynamics distinguish families in which parents are high versus low in trait verbal aggression. Trait VA refers to “the tendency to attack the self-concepts of

individuals instead of, or in addition to, their position on topics of communication” (Infante, 1987, p. 164). Parents high in trait VA tend to enact an authoritarian parenting style (Bayer & Cegala, 1992), use corporal punishment with adolescent children (Roberto, Carlyle, & Goodhall, 2007), and endorse beliefs and perceptions that put parents at risk for child abuse (Wilson, Hayes, Bylund, Rack, & Herman, 2006). Interestingly, mothers high in trait VA also display different control dynamics than low trait VA mothers even during free-play, being more likely to use commands and suggestions as well as negative physical touch to control the activities and pace at which they and their child play (Roberts, Wilson, Delaney, & Rack, 2009; Wilson, Roberts, Rack, & Delaney, 2008). Although frequent exposure to verbally aggressive messages itself is not healthy for children (Morgan & Wilson, 2005), these findings suggest that parents who are high in trait VA enact control dynamics with their children reminiscent of those displayed by physically abusive parents even when situational stimuli (e.g., child misbehavior) that might elicit verbally aggressive behavior are not present.

Comparisons of Corporal Punishment Across Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Corporal punishment has been defined as “the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain but not injury for the purposes of correction or control of the child’s behavior” (Straus, 1994, p. 4). There are mixed findings regarding whether the relationship between parenting practices such as corporal punishment and child outcomes differ for families of varying races and ethnicities. Several investigators have concluded that physical discipline as practiced by African American mothers does not result in the same types of negative child outcomes as when practiced by European American mothers (Baumrind, 1972; Lansford, Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004; McLeod, Kruttschnitt, & Dornfeld, 1994). There also is some evidence, however, to suggest similarities in associations between corporal punishment and child outcomes for diverse families. Amato & Fowler (2002) used longitudinal data from the National Survey of Families and Households to determine that harsh punishment (i.e., how often a parent reporting slapping or spanking a child or yelling at a child) was negatively associated with child adjustment variables for families of varying race, ethnicity, family structure, and socioeconomic status. Other studies also report more similarities than differences for Caucasian and African American boys’ outcomes associated with their parents’ physical discipline (Pardini, Fite, & Burke, 2008; Whiteside-Mansell, Bradley, Owen, Randolph & Cauce, 2003).

Another finding common across racial groups is that the effects of corporal punishment depend on the quality of the parent–child relationship in which such practices are embedded. McLloyd and Smith (2002) assessed 401 Hispanic, 550 African American, and 1,039 European American children and their mothers over a six-year period. For all three groups, spanking and maternal emotional support interacted in their effects on changes in rates of child behavior problems over time. For mothers who provided only low levels of emotional support, overall rates of spanking were positively associated with increased rates of reported child behavior problems over the six-year period. Spanking was not associated with increases in child behavior problems in the context of high maternal emotional support.

There are a number of possible explanations for mixed findings regarding the impact of corporal punishment in families of different races and ethnicities, including differences across studies in measurement procedures (self-report, teacher report, other parent

report, or observational measures) used to assess parenting practices and child outcomes (Berlin et al., 2009; Nelson, Hart, Yang, Olsen & Jin, 2006), Researchers also need to disentangle racial or ethnic background from socioeconomic status (SES) when explaining possible differences.

Researchers are beginning to address a need to understand the meaning of parenting styles and physical discipline in different cultural contexts outside of the U.S. with some studies suggesting differences between U.S. findings and findings in other countries, and other findings suggesting similarities across countries as contexts. Regarding differences between countries, Chao (1994) reports a positive association between authoritarian Chinese parenting styles and children's school achievement which runs contrary to the outcomes of authoritarian parenting styles for many U.S. samples. Similarities between U.S. samples and other samples are found in Alyahri and Goodman's (2008) report of correlations between corporal punishment and children's school performance and psychopathology in Yeman.

These findings from other countries highlight the importance of attending to the meanings or messages conveyed by power-assertive forms of discipline for parents and children (McLoyd & Smith, 2002). For parents, corporal punishment may be perceived to be instrumental in achieving parenting goals (e.g., teaching children right from wrong) (Taylor, Hamvas, & Paris, 2011). Parents may also view spanking as an adaptive response to risky environments. For children, the meanings conveyed by corporal punishment influence its ultimate outcomes (Gershoff, 2002). Research conducted in China, India, the Philippines, Thailand and Jamaica suggests that children's perceptions of maternal hostility mediate the relationship between corporal punishment and children's adjustment. When children perceive corporal punishment as a sign that their mothers are hostile, they are more likely to be anxious or aggressive; when children view corporal punishment as normative, they may not assign rejection or lack of love to this parenting practice and are less likely to experience the same outcomes (Lansford et al., 2010; Smith, Springer & Barrett, 2011).

There are several steps which can enhance our understanding of parents' discipline practices in a culturally informed manner. Researchers can attend to diversity within groups, rely on multiple methodologies to gain a range of participants' perspectives, and ground the measurement of parenting practices within the experiences of a given culture or co-culture (Tamis-LeMonda, Briggs, McCowry, & Snow, 2008). In other words, the ways in which parents view the parenting role and family relationships will shape their discipline strategies.

Persuasion in Marital Relationships

Conceptualizing Persuasive Messages and Interactions

Persuasion in marriage has been studied under the rubric of power strategies and tactics. Although power has been theorized in many ways, two assumptions underlie most views. First, power is reflected in the ability of those who wield it to impact others' behaviors, beliefs, and emotions. Second, power is relational in that it is a function of a target's dependence on the source for achieving desired outcomes (Stafford, 2008). To analyze power relationally, we must explore how spouses react to their partner's attempts to assert control (Millar & Rogers, 1987).

Scholars have turned attention to how power is expressed in marriage. Similar to parent-child relationships, spouses may be motivated and constrained by a variety of short- and

longer-term goals when they attempt to influence each other, such as wanting their partner to act differently, maintaining a satisfying marital relationship, respecting their spouse's and maintaining their own autonomy, and communicating caring (Caughlin & Scott, 2010; Goldsmith, Lindholm-Gumminger, & Bute, 2006). Among the many typologies of power or influence strategies in marriage, we review those developed by Falbo & Peplau (1980) and Overall, Fletcher, Simpson, & Silbey (2009). The former is one of the best-known typologies, whereas the latter has been applied to observational data of couple interactions.

Falbo and Peplau's (1980) Power Strategies

To develop a typology, Falbo and Peplau initially asked 50 college-age lesbians, 50 gay men, 50 heterosexual women, and 50 heterosexual men to write an open-ended essay on "how I get (my romantic partner) to do what I want" (p. 620). Based on themes in the data, the authors identified 13 power strategies. During phase two, nine experts rated the similarity of these strategies, and multidimensional scaling was used to interpret their ratings. Two dimensions captured experts' ratings. *Directness* refers to the degree to which speakers say what they want and overtly attempt to alter their partner's behavior. Asking, telling, stating the importance, talking, and reasoning anchor the "direct" end of this dimension, whereas suggesting (hinting), withdrawal, positive effect (putting the target in a good mood) and negative effect (guilt) anchor the "indirect" end. *Bilaterality* refers to the degree to which speakers engage their partner in a discussion about how to proceed. Persuasion, bargaining, reasoning, talking and positive effect anchor the "bilateral" end of this dimension; laissez-faire, withdrawal, telling, asking and negative effect anchor the "unilateral" end.

Researchers using Falbo and Peplau's typology to study influence in marriage usually create composite scores assessing the degree to which spouses rely on direct, indirect, bilateral, and unilateral strategies, and then explore associations between self-reported scores and gender (wives versus husbands), culture, perceived distribution of relational power, and marital satisfaction. Although marital satisfaction has been positively associated with the use of direct rather than indirect strategies in some studies with U.S. couples (Aida & Falbo, 1991; Weigel, Bennett, & Ballard-Reisch, 2006, but not Butterfield & Lewis, 2002), some evidence suggests this finding may not generalize across cultures (Belk et al., 1988; Kim & Wilson, 1994).

Overall et al.'s (2009) Regulative Strategies

Overall and colleagues created a typology of strategies individuals in intimate relationships use to regulate each other's behaviors. The authors conceptualize regulative strategies as varying along two dimensions labeled *directness* and *valence*. Direct strategies are explicit and overt in seeking change, whereas indirect strategies use passive or covert means of inducing change. Negative strategies include hostile, critical, or demanding behaviors whereas positive strategies express positive effect or demonstrate understanding of the partner's perspective. A partner's response to a regulative attempt also can vary along these same dimensions. Overall et al. initially propose a typology of six strategies that are direct/negative (coercion and autocracy), indirect/negative (manipulation and supplication), direct/positive (reasoning), and indirect/positive (soft positive).

Overall et al. (2009) had couples discuss one issue where the female desired change in her male partner and a second where the male desired change in his female partner. Coders rated the degree to which both partners (the "agent" and "target" of change) used the six

strategies. When multidimensional scaling was used to analyze these ratings, a two-dimensional solution emerged where autonomy and coercion fell into one quadrant, manipulation and supplication into a second, reasoning into a third, and soft/positive into a fourth. Ratings were collapsed to create overall scores for direct/negative, indirect/negative, direct/positive, and indirect positive strategies. Immediately afterward, both parties perceived that the discussion had been more successful when agents used more indirect/positive strategies, but less successful when agents used more direct/negative or direct/positive strategies. Yet agents who used more direct/negative and direct/positive strategies during the initial discussion subsequently perceived that their partner changed more over the 12-month period, whereas those using indirect strategies did not perceive that their partner changed. Direct strategies made the target aware of the agent's concern and in some cases motivated the target to attempt to change. Direct/negative strategies, however, also risk reciprocal spirals of negative spousal behavior that could undermine relational satisfaction. Whether this would occur may depend on the target's openness to change; indeed, targets who used more indirect/positive and fewer direct/negative strategies during the initial discussion (i.e., who were more receptive when their partner asked for change) perceived that they changed more over time.

Representative Findings

Health-Related Social Control

Rooted in sociology, the concept of social control has been used to help explain the health benefits of close relationships (Umberson, 1992). Strong interpersonal ties such as marriage are thought to reduce an individual's propensity for engaging in risky behavior and encourage health-promoting behaviors through two mechanisms. Individuals in close relationships may feel an obligation or responsibility to protect their health because others depend on them, a process referred to as indirect social control. Direct social control "involves requests, reminders, threats, or rewards from significant others that encourage engagement in a healthier lifestyle" (Tucker, 2002, p. 387). A growing literature explores the conditions under which social control attempts by spouses encourage or impede the partner's adherence to recommended lifestyle changes (e.g., diet, exercise) and subsequent health.

In an early longitudinal study, Umberson (1992) asked a nationally representative sample of adults "how often does anyone tell or remind you to do anything to protect your health?" (p. 909). Results revealed that:

- 1 Married individuals identified their spouse as the person most likely to engage in health social control attempts with them.
- 2 Husbands were more likely than wives to report being targets of health social control.
- 3 For husbands and wives, frequency of social control was associated with a reduction in some health risk behaviors (e.g., smoking) though not all (e.g., alcohol consumption) three years later.

Researchers have explored what individuals actually say or do when attempting to exert health-related social control (Goldsmith et al., 2006; Lewis, Butterfield, Darbes, & Johnston-Brooks, 2004; Tucker & Mueller, 2000). Although spouses use tactics from Falbo and Peplau's (1980) typology when trying to influence their partner's health

behavior (e.g., exercising), these newer studies show that spouses rely on other tactics as well. For example, spouses may change household routines or the couple's use of time to make it easier for their partner to perform the desired behavior (e.g., cooking meals at home rather than eating fast food). According to Lewis et al., such tactics "reflect social control as accommodation and adjustment rather than the simple exercise of power or influence" (p. 678).

As this newer research illustrates, health-related social control can be conceptualized in various ways, and the outcomes differ depending on its conceptualization. Franks, Stephens, Rook, Franklin, Keteyian, & Artinian (2006) distinguish between health-related support and control. The authors define health-related support as "spouses' ... affirmation of patients' own efforts to initiate or sustain prescribed health behavior changes" (p. 313); thus it involves behaviors such as listening to a spouse's [patient's] concerns, assisting a spouse in making the change, and encouraging a spouse to make healthy choices. In contrast, they define health-related control as "spouses' efforts to induce patients to initiate or sustain prescribed health behavior changes when [patients] have been unable or unwilling to do so on their own" (p. 313), through behaviors such as reminding a spouse to perform healthy behaviors, trying to influence a spouse's choices about how to care for his/her health, and trying to stop a spouse from performing unhealthy behaviors. When defined exclusively in terms of tactics that are intrusive or designed to cause guilt, health-related control may not result in desirable outcomes. In a longitudinal study of 94 couples, one of whom (the patient) was undergoing cardiac rehabilitation, Franks et al. show that spouse reports of support predicted better patient mental health six months later, whereas spouse reports of social control predicted reduced patient health behaviors and mental health over time.

Although these results highlight the potential for health-related control to backfire, Frank et al.'s (2006) conception of health-related support actually falls within our definition of persuasion. Following Miller (1980), we view persuasion as encompassing not only attempts to change undesired behaviors but also to reinforce desired behaviors by partners. It may be too simple to treat some behaviors as "support" but others as "control" since the same behavior (e.g., encouraging a partner to make healthy choices) may be interpreted as communicating support (e.g., caring) in one context but control (e.g., a desire to dominate) in a different context (Dillard, Solomon, & Palmer, 1999; Goldsmith et al., 2006).

A partner's reactions to a spouse's health-related social control thus may differ depending on the nature of their marital relationship (Dillard & Fitzpatrick, 1985). Several studies have found statistical interaction effects consistent with such thinking. For example, Tucker (2002) found that for older adults (65–80 years), when relationship satisfaction with spouses or adult children was low, more frequent direct social control by family members was associated with greater negative effect (e.g., resentment, irritation) and more instances of hiding the unhealthy behavior. When relationship satisfaction was high, however, increased direct social control did not elicit these negative reactions. Rook, August, Stephens, & Franks (2011) likewise concluded that "Among patients who do not expect spouses to be involved in their disease management, social control may have the unwelcome, and potentially offensive, connotation that patients are unable to manage their condition successfully" (p. 14), whereas such unwelcome connotations are less likely to occur among patients who expect greater spousal involvement.

Demand–Withdraw Communication

Viewing power as a relational concept implies that studies of persuasion need to explore the dynamics of how couples seek *and* resist compliance. Research on demand–withdraw in marriage explores a specific pattern “during which one partner attempts to engage the other in discussing an issue by criticizing, complaining, or suggesting change while the other partner attempts to end the discussion or avoid the topic by changing the subject, remaining silent, or even leaving the room” (Klinetob & Smith, 1996, p. 946).

When assessed cross-sectionally, using both self-report and observational measures, numerous studies have found that demand–withdraw is associated with relationship dissatisfaction (Baucom, McFarland, & Christensen, 2010; Christensen, Eldridge, Cattapreta, Lim, & Santagata, 2006; Reham & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2006); this finding has been replicated across several national cultures as well as with same-sex and cross-sex couples. In marriage and dating relationships, demand–withdraw is associated with anger, stress, intrusive thoughts, hyperarousal, direct/negative influence tactics, perceived irresolvability of the problem, and physical aggression (Malis & Roloff, 2006; McGinn, McFarland, & Christensen, 2009; Papp, Kouros, & Cummings, 2009; Sagrestano, Heavey, & Christensen, 1999). Demand–withdraw also is inversely associated with feeling understood by one’s spouse, and such feelings partially mediate the impact of the pattern on marital dissatisfaction (Weger, 2005).

The picture is more complicated, however, when demand–withdraw communication and satisfaction are assessed over time and/or within a larger relational context. Prospective research indicates that current dissatisfaction appears to predict future demand–withdraw as much as the opposite (Noller, Feeney, Bonnell, & Callan, 1994). The negative effects of demand–withdraw on marital satisfaction are mitigated when couples also engage in high levels of affectionate expression (Caughlin & Huston, 2002). In addition, Heavey et al. (1993) found that wife-demand/husband-withdraw predicted a decline in wives’ marital satisfaction from one year to the next, but husband-demand/wife-withdraw actually predicted an *increase* in wives’ marital satisfaction over the same time period. Heavey et al. speculate that wives may interpret demanding behavior by their husbands as a sign of the man’s commitment to their marriage, which may lead to more positive outcomes over time. Similar to our discussions of parental discipline as well as health social control, these findings highlight the importance of attending to the meanings that women and men ascribe to both demand and withdraw behaviors over time and within the larger context of their marriage.

Aside from investigating associations with marital satisfaction, researchers have posited explanations for why couples engage in demand–withdraw. Three theoretical explanations are the gender/individual difference perspective, social-structure perspective, and conflict-structure perspective. The gender/individual differences explanation asserts that women in general have greater needs for connection whereas men have greater needs for autonomy and/or are more reactive to physiological stress; thus, men withdraw more frequently in the face of persuasive attempts (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000). The social-structural explanation suggests that power dynamics favor husbands, thus the wife demands in the attempt to gain power and the husband withdraws, attempting to avoid power changes (Klinetob & Smith, 1996; Sagrestano et al., 1999). The conflict structure hypothesis asserts that topic importance determines which spouse demands and which withdraws (McGinn et al., 2009; Heavey et al., 1993). If a topic is relevant to one spouse but not the other, than the latter spouse will withdraw while the former demands.

Although each of these perspectives can explain some aspects of demand–withdraw, none completely accounts for the entire body of findings (Caughlin & Scott, 2010).

Recently, Caughlin & Scott (2010) have re-conceptualized demand–withdraw from a multiple goals framework, arguing that these seemingly contrasting explanations can be encompassed within such a perspective. An individual may have a primary goal or main purpose for an interaction, but also may be constrained by secondary goals relevant to the situation, such as maintaining the relationship or presenting oneself in a certain way (Dillard, Segrin, & Harden, 1989; Wilson, 2002). Thus, individuals may pursue multiple goals simultaneously in an interaction, approach or avoid discussions differently depending on their secondary goals, and change their goals over the course of an interaction (Caughlin & Scott, 2010). Because of the ability of a multiple goals perspective to examine differences within *and* between dyads, Caughlin and Scott argue that their perspective can explain more than which spouse is likely to occupy the roles of demanding and withdrawing. They also suggest that different constellations of goals will result in different forms of demand–withdraw, which in turn might be associated with different relational outcomes.

Future Directions

Our chapter assesses how persuasion has been conceptualized in the family, focusing on parent–child and marital relationships. Although scholars working in these two contexts rarely cite each other’s research, our review reveals many similarities. Several dimensions of persuasive appeals appear salient in both relationships. When attempting to exert influence, parents (Baumrind, 1973) and spouses (Overall et al., 2009) vary the degree to which they do so directly or indirectly. Parents (Hoffman, 1980) and spouses (Falbo & Peplau, 1980) often provide reasons when seeking behavior change, though simple requests without explicit reasoning are common in both relationships (Oldershaw et al., 1986; Tucker & Mueller, 2000). Parents (Applegate et al., 1985) and spouses (Franks et al., 2006) also differ in whether they tend to stress the positive consequences of a proposed action versus punitive sanctions, though the mixing of persuasion and coercion occurs in both contexts. Scholars have investigated resistance to persuasion in both relationships in the form of child noncompliance with parental requests (Chamberlain & Patterson, 1996), reactance to spousal health-related social control (Franks et al., 2006) and demand–withdraw patterns (Caughlin & Scott, 2010).

Scholars in both contexts have recognized that power and intimacy shape family members’ choices, interpretations, and responses to persuasive strategies. Family members who feel powerless at times employ aggressive forms of influence in an attempt to regain power, whether they are physically abusive parents (Bugental et al., 1989) or spouses embroiled in demand–withdraw patterns (Sagrestano et al., 1999). Affection shapes family members’ interpretations of what others might perceive as aggressive communication, such that the effect of parental power-assertion on child misbehavior is mitigated by parental emotional support (McLoyd & Smith, 2002), just as the effect of spousal social control on negative emotions is tempered by relational satisfaction (Tucker, 2002).

We see a need for theories that can account for regularities across parent–child and marital relationships. Although reactance theory (Burgoon, Alvaro, Grandpre, & Voulodakis, 2002) or relational framing theory (Dillard et al., 1999), might be useful in this regard, Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory is promising because politeness reflects *and* defines relational power and intimacy. Briefly, the theory assumes that speakers in all

cultures desire to maintain face, which is subdivided into *positive face* or the desire to have one's attributes and actions approved by significant others, and *negative face* or the desire to be free from unnecessary constraint. Although relational interdependence creates motives for family members to support each others' face, many speech acts threaten face. Attempts to persuade constrain the target's negative face, and by implicitly projecting presumed identities also may threaten both parties' positive face (Wilson, 2002).

Although persuasive appeals threaten face, not all do so equally. Brown & Levinson (1987) argue that in any culture, power and intimacy influence the "weightiness" of a face-threatening act (FTA), such that the same act is more face threatening as a target's power relative to a speaker increases, or the social distance between a speaker and target increases. To manage face threats, speakers often use two forms of politeness or language that attends to the target's face. *Indirectness* occurs when a speaker says something that given the circumstances implies a different or additional meaning. *Mitigation* includes redressive actions such as apologies, reasoning, or compliments. As the weightiness of an FTA increases, speakers are more likely to pursue change indirectly and to include redressive actions in their persuasive appeals.

Politeness theory offers one explanation for many similarities in persuasion in parent-child and marital relationships. Whether family members make requests indirectly, provide reasons, or avoid coercive pressure, all impact the perceived politeness of persuasive appeals. Family members may interpret resistance to their requests as a sign that their spouse or child views their desires as unimportant or lacks respect for their authority, and thus use aggressive forms of influence to regain face. Relational closeness reduces the degree of face threat communicated by demands or power assertion, and hence parental warmth or spousal affection can alter interpretations of persuasive attempts. Families who enact high levels of psychological interdependence, and hence expect more mutual involvement in health decisions, may be less reactive to social control attempts by spouses or adult children because members view such actions as less face threatening than in families with lower levels of interdependence.

It might seem ironic that politeness theory offers a useful framework for studying persuasion in families, since a good deal of the research we review indicates that family members often are not very polite to each other. Politeness theory, however, does not assume that family members always will be polite, but rather that they vary the degree to which they are polite or impolite depending on the amount of perceived threat to the target's face. "Face" also might seem less relevant in family relationships, since we might expect that individuals could "be themselves" with their families. As Cupach & Metts (1994) have argued, however:

the complexity of managing face is increased for partners in close relationships ... part of the reason a couple defines itself as intimate is that the need to "perform" ... is considered unnecessary; yet in this very act of dropping pretense arises the probability of threatening each other's face and, ultimately, sense of social competence.

(p. 2)

Thus, the way that a parent influences his/her child allows the child to have more or less "face" within their relationship, in the sense of validating the child's competence, worth, and autonomy. The same holds true in terms of whether spouses are responsive to each other's influence.

Applications of politeness theory need to be integrated with detailed analyses of family forms and structures (Wilson, 2002). Relevant questions include: What attributes do husbands and wives, gay or lesbian partners, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, stepparents and stepchildren, grandmothers and grandfathers, and so forth, desire to be seen as possessing in the eyes of other family members? What rights and obligations do these roles entail in various cultures? How do family members negotiate levels of power and distance in their family, and in what ways does persuasion reinforce or challenge existing levels? Future research inspired by frameworks that transcend specific family relationships, such as politeness theory, may lead to a more integrated understanding of persuasion and families.

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