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Abstract
The study is an exploration into the types of evidence used in interpersonal influence. Respondents described either an interpersonal episode where they gave evidence or where they challenged another to give evidence. The respondents then rated the degree of intimacy in the relationship, the persuasive result, types of evidence used, and the influence the other person had. A factor analysis of types of evidence resulted in three factors: external evidence, narrative accounts, and common information. Respondents thought they used external types of evidence while others relied more on narrative accounts. Personal testimony and narrative accounts were regarded as more common in persuasive encounters than in non-persuasive encounters. Further, influential others were thought to use a greater variety of evidence types.

1. Introduction

This paper represents an exploration into the way that people incorporate evidence into their conversations in interpersonal relationships and how they process that evidence. Numerous conversational arguments take place over the life of a relationship. The level of care and concern that exists in the dynamics of particular dyads probably has an impact on the way the arguments are carried out (Brockriede,1972). Authors such as Alberts (1989), Benoit and Benoit (1990), Hample, Benoit, Houston, Purifoy, VanHyfte, and Wardell (1999), Jackson and Jacobs (1981), Johnson and Roloff (1998), Sprecher (1986; 2001), Weger (2001) and others, have chosen to investigate argument and how it is processed from an interpersonal communication perspective. Unique insights about evidence need to be pursued in light of the fact that most of the research about evidence has been done in the more traditional forensic and deliberative settings. The decision about the need to incorporate evidence into conversations has not received enough attention over the years to enable researchers to create an accurate picture of how this process takes place.

Various questions about how better relationships are characterized have been

looked at in somewhat limited ways. Benoit and Benoit (1990) looked at the ways that respectful partners were careful to present full reasoning and evidence. Others have explored arguments where they are coupled with a commitment to resolvability of conflicts (Johnson & Roloff, 1998) or how the arguments are performed in a way unique to the couple (van Eemeren, & Grootendorst, 1991). Recent work on narratives as evidence inspires the thought that there may be differences in the forms of evidence common in interpersonal communication versus policy discourse. In the past there has been inconsistency when statistical and narrative (or story) evidence effects have been compared. Baesler (1997) and Baesler & Burgoon (1994) found that a meaningful story in support of an argument appears to be as persuasive as meaningful statistics for a moderately involved audience. But Allen and Preiss (1997) indicated that statistical data wins out over pithy tales in the persuasion arena. O'Keefe (1998) looked at how specific quantification needs to be. Slater and Rouner (1996) found effects to vary with the initial position of the message recipients. Kopfman, Smith, Ah Yun, and Hodges (1998) claimed that "a main effect for evidence type [was found] such that statistical evidence messages produced greater results in terms of all the cognitive reactions, while narratives produced greater results for all of the affective reactions"(p. 279). In short, it appears that the advocate is best advised to use both statistical and narrative evidence. Could it be, however, that the effects of different forms of evidence varies with the relationship between the advocate and the audience?

This study is an effort to evaluate message strategies in the context of the interpersonal relationship and the message reception environment. Specifically, the idea of interpersonal influence and dominance was added to the equation to try to understand the dynamic of interpersonal persuasion. This dominance was viewed as a relational state that includes behavioral and interactional aspects and that reflects influence over others actions (Burgoon, Johnson & Koch, 1998).

The following research questions were formulated:

RQ1.   Are there clear dimensions of types of evidence?

RQ2.   What types of evidence will people claim are used in interpersonal interactions?

RQ3.   Does the use of types of evidence vary with the perceived persuasive result?

RQ4.   What is the relationship between evidence use and the degree the other person is judged to be influential?

RQ5.   How influential will the other person be judged when the relationship is intimate?

2. Method
2.1 Participants
A survey was distributed to sections of communication courses of a private university in the western United States. Some students recruited "a person over 30" to participate in the study. Students received extra course credit for their participation. There were 216 participants. Consistent with the demographics of the institution and the courses, a major proportion of the participants were female (73%). Participant age ranged from 17 to 50 years old with an average age of 20 years. Only 19 percent of the participants had taken an argumentation and debate class or had participated in debate.

2.2 Procedures
Initially respondents were asked to "describe a specific conversation account where they "felt the need to challenge someone to support (give evidence for) a claim that the person was making" or "felt challenged to provide support or evidence." They had to describe the specific issue, tell how and why they challenged or were challenged and quote as much as possible the specific data or support that was used.

2.3 Measurement
Intimacy of the relationship. Participants rated the degree of intimacy of their relationship with the other person in the episode on a fairly standard set of relational terms: Stranger, Acquaintance, Colleague/Peer, Close relative, Best friend, Lover.

Persuasive result. Participants were asked to indicate simply yes or no on if the support convinced them (or the other person) of what they (or you) were trying to say?

Frequency of evidence use. Participants rated how often they encountered the type of situation where there was a challenge for support to back a claim. The response categories were: more than once a day, about once a day, about once a week, about once a month, about once a year. The participants were also asked the degree to which they were third party witnesses to challenges for evidence.

Types of evidence. Participants read descriptions of types of support and indicated the degree to which they thought their example described the support used.

Other's influence. They then scored the degree of dominance or influence that they felt the other person had. This scale was adopted from items used by Burgoon, Johnson, and Koch (1998). The reliability of the influence measure was ∀.84.

Table 1. Factor Analysis of Types of Evidence.

Table 3. Correlation Coefficients Between Evidence Use and Influence.

Table 2. Use of Types of Evidence by Persuasion Classifications.

3. Results and Discussion

RQ1. Are there clear dimensions of types of evidence? A factor analysis of the types of evidence was done which resulted in three factors (see Table 1). The first factor represents evidence that is external to the advocate that would presumably require extensive investigation (including library research and interviewing). The second factor involved account giving by the advocate and apparently involves one's own personal experience or expertise. The third factor involved appeals to common sense understandings of the events in question as well as references to third parties with some network connections to the people involved with the issue in dispute.

RQ2. What types of evidence will people claim are used in interpersonal interactions? Means were tabulated for the types of evidence used. They ranged from 1.97 to 4.00 on a possible range of 1 (low) to 5 (high). Personal testimony was the evidence type most commonly reported to be used in the interactions described. Expert testimony was the evidence type least commonly reported. See Table 2.

RQ3. Does the use of types of evidence vary with the perceived persuasive result? Personal testimony, narrative accounts, and common knowledge forms of evidence were given higher use scores in situations where the target of the persuasive evidence was classified as having been persuaded by the evidence. The rank order of evidence use scores were virtually identical for episodes where the evidence was seen as resulting in persuasion and episodes where persuasion was thought to have not been obtained. See Table 2.

RQ4. What is the relationship between evidence use and the degree the other person is judged to be influential? The influence of the other person had more of an effect on evidence use when the evidence is demanded from the other (see Table 3). Apparently, the more influential the other is the more the advocate will

attempt to use personal testimony. Influential others who are challenged to present evidence, however, are likely to use a larger repertoire of evidence types.

RQ5. How influential will the other person be judged when the relationship is intimate? When the participants felt compelled to give evidence, the correlation between the influence of the other and the intimacy of the relationship was $r = .26$. When the participants demanded evidence from others, the correlation between the influence of the other and the intimacy of the relationship was $r = .38$. It may well be that when people think about whom they have challenged to present evidence, they tend to think of more intimate others. Such a conclusion is consistent with research showing that we are more likely to challenge or burden intimate others (Snapp & Leary, 2001).

Limitations and Future Research. No doubt, the extent of interpersonal argumentative experience among the participants was limited. An older sample population with more extensive interpersonal trials and traumas might yield different results. Indeed, while trust was placed in the participants' judgments about their own experiences, argumentative experts would likely disagree with the participants about the actual existence of evidence in many of the episodes described. Experts would also probably question the participants' classification of types of evidence used from the descriptions provided. Finally, it may well be that evidence use in interpersonal settings is more likely to occur in second or third "rounds" of a serial interaction (see Roloff & Ifert, 1998) where interactants have taken an opportunity to reflect, research, and reason before re-engaging. Subsequent studies may better tap the uses of evidence by asking participants to describe events where there was a second or third meeting of the minds on the issue.

Conclusion.
This study begins to reveal strategies and the different levels of cognition that are called for in different kinds of interpersonal arguments. Further work needs to address how relational partners might address types of evidence needed in advance and how they might go about acquiring the evidence needed to build strong interpersonal arguments.

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