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Persuasion in Antiquity: A Content Analysis of Ptahhotep's Maxims and Lao Tzŭ's Tao Te Ching

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Persuasion in Antiquity:

A Content Analysis of Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*

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PERSUASION IN ANTIQUITY:

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Abstract

This study investigated persuasive strategies used in ancient Egypt and ancient China. In an effort to attain a better understanding of the utilization of persuasive tools from these two ancient societies, this study was completed by examining Ptahhotep's *Maxims* from Egypt and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching* from China. A thematic analysis revealed the most common themes found in Ptahhotep's *Maxims* (e.g., humility) and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching* (e.g., comparison). A content analysis examined persuasive tactics within passages of both texts. It was found that Ptahhotep principally utilized negative expertise and loss-framed messages while Lao Tzŭ utilized positive expertise and gain-framed messages. An analysis of the results revealed no significant differences of persuasive tactics between both ancient texts.

Keywords: Ptahhotep, Lao Tzŭ, The Teachings of Ptahhotep, Maxims, Tao Te Ching, persuasion, ancient Egypt, ancient China, thematic analysis, content analysis

Persuasion in Antiquity:

A Content Analysis of Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*

Very little communication-oriented research has been done examining communication patterns in texts belonging to ancient Egypt. This study is a foundational look into ancient Egyptian persuasion and its potential effects on ancient Egyptian society and culture. Further, this study offers a comparative look at an ancient Chinese text as groundwork. This study investigated two ancient tools of persuasion: Ptahhotep's ancient Egyptian *Maxims* (~24th century BCE) and Lao Tzŭ's ancient Chinese *Tao Te Ching* (~3rd century BCE). These ancient texts are similar in scope and function as they both served to provide wisdom to their respective cultures (Hilliard III, Williams, & Damali, 1987; Jacq, 1999; Jacq 2010; Lao Tzŭ, 2012; Nelson, 2009; Oliver, 1969). Investigating persuasive strategies from cultures in antiquity might help form new knowledge about these ancient civilizations as well as discover something new in the vein of persuasive research. For example, we know the effects the *Tao Te Ching* had on China—then and now—but it is not known what effects Ptahhotep's *Maxims* had on ancient Egyptians. To compare: Modern Chinese individuals incorporate the teachings of the *Tao Te Ching* into many aspects of their lives. This understanding might give scholars an idea about how Ptahhotep's *Maxims* may have influenced the ancient Egyptians' lives. Perhaps this study might begin to reveal that information.

Persuasion is, at its core, the attempt to convince an audience of something—or to elicit a desired response from one's audience (Perloff, 2003). Ptahhotep's *Maxims* are the world's first recorded attempt at persuasion (Taylor, 1973). Lao Tzŭ's persuasion in the *Tao Te Ching* influenced ancient China greatly and it can be theorized that Ptahhotep's persuasion influenced

ancient Egypt similarly (Oliver, 1969). An objective of this study was to understand how Lao Tzŭ and Ptahhotep utilized persuasion as they attempted to provide their respective societies with wisdom, ethics, and morality (Hilliard III et al., 1987; Jacq, 1999; Jacq, 2010; Lao Tzŭ, 2012; Nelson, 2009; Oliver, 1969).

Historically, how have thinkers and philosophers thought about bettering their respective societies? An answer might be found by conducting an investigation of texts of wisdom and persuasion from both ancient Egypt and ancient China—specifically, in this case, the writings of the Egyptian sage Ptahhotep and the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzŭ. Ptahhotep tried to better ancient Egyptian society through a series of instructions, or maxims, that were meant for all of Egypt's citizens. Similarly, Lao Tzŭ created the *Tao Te Ching* (*dao* "way"; *de* "virtue"; *jing* "book": in English syntax, The Book of the Way and the Virtue) that became the basis for a religious, philosophical, and spiritual system known as Taoism (pronounced *Daoism*). Ptahhotep and Lao Tzŭ sought to transform their respective societies by persuading their readers to think and act in ways the authors thought to be ethical and moral. What specific themes and persuasive tactics were utilized to persuade the readers of a better way? We already know Taoist rhetoric has had effects that reverberated across time: Taoism still exists as a spirituality, religion, and philosophy (Lao Tzŭ, 2012; Oliver, 1969). By conducting an in-depth content analysis on basic forms of persuasion and theme usage in these two ancient texts, we will begin to understand how these two authors worked to better their ancient societies.

Hocking, Stacks, and McDermott (2003) believed communication research should be done in an effort to change the world, to change the way people think and feel about certain things. As such, it is imperative to investigate both Egyptian and Chinese texts through the

disciplinary lens of communication. Because very little communication-oriented research exists on ancient Egyptian texts, including the *Maxims*, it would not have been ideal to only use the *Maxims* for this study as there would be little supporting research. By using the *Tao Te Ching*, a Chinese text that is similar in scope and function as support for this foray into ancient Egyptian persuasion, this study was better equipped to understand how Ptahhotep's *Maxims* worked to persuade. Because both of these works were intended to provide wisdom, ethics, and morality to their respective cultures, they share similar functions. By investigating the persuasive techniques contained within these texts, ancient persuasive strategies might be unveiled, adding to current research on persuasion.

Since very little communication-oriented research exists on ancient Egypt, this research is important to lead future investigations into more complex ancient Egyptian communication practices, including a deeper study of their rhetorical practices. Additionally, studying the effects of Ptahhotep's work would be a logical next step into the complexities of ancient Egyptian communication studies.

Review of Literature

Ptahhotep's *Maxims*

History. Ptahhotep's *Maxims* are simultaneously the world's oldest textbook (Hilliard III et al., 1987) and the world's first recorded text of persuasion (Taylor, 1973), first written circa 2388 BCE during ancient Egypt's fifth dynasty (Hilliard III et al., 1987). Lichtheim (2006) said of the *Maxims*: "[T]he thirty-seven maxims do not amount to a comprehensive moral code, nor are they strung together in any logical order. But they touch upon the most important aspects of human relations and they focus on the basic virtues" (p. 62). This revealed a very important fact

about ancient Egyptian sages like Ptahhotep: they wanted to better their societies and felt they were in a position of influence to change the ancient Egyptians' behavior for the better.

> [T]he [ancient Egyptians] set out poetic and persuasive words in speech and writing – underpinned, of course, by fantastic visual imagery – that declaimed material wealth and at the same time encouraged the development of uprightness. It would appear that the ancient Egyptian rhetoricians were concerned above all to encourage ethical or good behavior amongst all people, but especially good behavior by the rich towards the poor. (Ababio, 2006, p.110)

The humanistic virtues Ptahhotep focused on are "self-control, moderation, kindness, generosity, justice, and truthfulness tempered by discretion" (Lichtheim, 2006, p. 62). Some themes recur, and this was a testament to how important they were in the overall scheme of values (Lichtheim, 2006). The historical significance of Ptahhotep's *Maxims*, by default, had deeply rooted impacts within ancient Egyptian society and culture.

Impact. Jacq (1999) alleged Ptahhotep's *Maxims* are what kept the ancient Egyptians' culture alive through the centuries. This was accomplished through the use of mythology. Ptahhotep wasn't the only great sage of ancient Egypt, but his work was instrumental in preserving ancient Egyptian culture (Jacq, 1999; Jacq, 2010). The mythology behind this is that all of the ancient Egyptian sages allowed the goddess known as Maat, who resembled everything positive—truth, justice, righteousness, balance, and order—to reveal herself through the sages' wisdom (Hilliard III et al., 1987; Jacq, 1999). Ancient Egyptians sought—and valued—wisdom above all else and, as such, valued their sages; these sages personified Maat's virtues and kept

her alive through their wisdom (Hilliard III et al., 1987). By keeping Maat alive, the sages of ancient Egypt were able to keep ancient Egyptian culture together (Jacq, 1999; Jacq, 2010).

> It is because Egyptian civilisation knew how to mould people of this quality [that is, sages] that it has successfully conquered the ravages of time, of barbarism, of hostile invasions and destruction. Despite the troubles and hardships this people faced, their underlying wisdom continues even now to shine through, to touch our lives in many significant ways. And it is undoubtedly this wisdom that is the true secret and legacy of the Ancient Egyptians. (Jacq, 2010, para. 3)

The important historical and mythological impacts of the ancient Egyptian sages—especially Ptahhotep—allowed this ancient civilization to persevere, but this text had an impact that reverberated past the Egypt of antiquity. This ancient text played a key role in the development of rhetoric.

Research. Ababio (2006) staked the following claim: "There can be little doubt that the ancient Egyptians have a better claim [than the Greeks] to being the originators of rhetoric or what they called 'good speech' " (p. 109). The ancient Egyptians' society consisted of a complex hierarchy, and by default, they dealt with wealth paradigms: poor versus rich (Ababio, 2006). Ptahhotep's rhetoric pertaining to the "dangers of desire" (p. 111) has not been surpassed by other contemporary civilizations (Ababio, 2006). Though there were other sages that sought to bring balance and order to Egyptians through Maat (Jacq, 2010), Ptahhotep's wisdom was intentionally rhetorical in nature, designed to stir the hearts of the ancient Egyptians (Ababio, 2006). It is important to note that although Ptahhotep and other ruling ministers (and pharaohs) crafted ethical rhetoric for ancient Egyptians to treat one another with humanity, this ancient

culture had no qualms with the owning of slaves and as such, the slaves were not included in ethical rhetoric discourse (Ababio, 2006).

Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*

History. The single authorship of the *Tao Te Ching* is debated even today, but scholars agree that, at least for expediency, referring to the author by one name, Lao Tzŭ, is sufficient (Eliade, 1982). The *Tao Te Ching* is thought to have been written over the course of several centuries with texts going as far back as the third to the sixth centuries BCE (Eliade, 1982). The *Tao Te Ching* is a persuasive attempt to guide ancient Chinese individuals into ethical and moral behavior. Evidence that the *Tao Te Ching* and its Taoist thought have had a tremendous impact on ancient *and* modern Chinese can be seen in modern Chinese medicine, environmentalism, and even intercultural relations in Malaysia, a country with a significant Chinese minority. Taoism is often considered in conjunction with other ancient Chinese schools of thought, namely Buddhism and Confucianism. Because the *Tao Te Ching* was written around the 3rd century BCE and the *Maxims* was written in the 24th century BCE, it is impossible to measure how much of an impact—and for how long—the *Maxims* had on the ancient Egyptians. It should be noted that the *Tao Te Ching* continues to influence Chinese culture while coexisting with other religious, philosophical, and spiritual views of the region.

Impacts and research. Regarding medicine, Taoist thought, along with Buddhism, Confucianism, and folk religions, are reflected in stigmas related to the treatment of those afflicted with mental disorders (Lam, Tsang, Corrigan, Lee, Angell, Shi, Jin, & Larson, 2010). Lam et al. (2010) provided a brief overview of Taoist influences in Chinese society: Lao Tzŭ's Taoism "is based on two principles; first, human beings must follow natural laws and the Way

(or *Tao*); and second, people must be humanistic (kind, polite, considerate) by following human laws" (p. 36). In other words, the former means people must live in harmony with nature; the latter means human beings must live in harmony with each other (Lam et al., 2010). In the realm of mental illness, these Taoist principles permeate all Chinese cultural aspects (Lam et al., 2010). One of the chief symbols of Taoism is the yin-yang, a symbol of balance and the duality it represents (Lam et al., 2010). The Chinese view the mentally ill as shattered beings, disharmonious individuals, and healing as "a process of bringing the configuration back to balance to restore harmony within the individual" (Lam et al., 2010, p. 36). While many mental health complications—Lam et al. (2010) provided the example of depression—are seen as a weakness in one's "spiritual strength" (p. 36), in the Taoist view, mental illnesses are seen as repairable imbalances of one's being (Lam et al., 2010).

Regarding environmentalism, the Taoist way is, once again, all about harmony and balance, the exemplification of the yin and yang (Nelson, 2009). Nelson (2009) contended that the popular environmentalist thought that "only modern Western approaches can solve modern Western problems" is erroneous and potentially globally catastrophic. Nelson (2009) presented readers with ancient Chinese philosophers and sages who had spoken about environmental damages: Zhuangzi, who spoke of the "utilitarian consumption of trees and animals" and Mengzi, who used environmental imagery to speak of the demoralization of an individual by saying, "Deforestation and the 'using up' of Ox Mountain" is equal to an individual's demoralization (p. 296). Additionally, Nelson (2009) presented key environmental issues contained within the Taoist texts of the Warring States and Han Dynasty periods, namely, "Degradation associated with the growth of mass agriculture, deforestation, the control of rivers,

overgrazing, and so on" (p. 296). Modern environmental thought and activism can learn from ancient instruction that supports a receptive and reverent approach to all "things residing between sky and earth" (Nelson, 2009, p. 296). Nelson (2009) was primarily concerned with the modernist thinking as it pertains to ecology and environmentalism. Nelson's (2009) chief argument was that we can utilize the teachings of Taoism and the harmonious message it employs in all matters pertaining to the environment. The *Tao Te Ching* isn't only a guideline on how to manage mental illnesses or human-environment relationships. This text is also interpreted from a business point of view.

Malaysia is a country in which three cultures coexist: Chinese, Indians, and Malay (Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008). The *Tao Te Ching* influences the Chinese of Malaysia in such a way that an intercultural and business interpretation of this text has bolstered the Chinese of Malaysia to gain a significant economic foothold (Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008). Pertaining to leadership, Lao Tzŭ believed a leader ought to be a facilitator, facilitating the processes of the group, not his own; therefore, a wise leader would follow the course of "least resistance in leading [an] organization" (Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008, p. 698). While the Overseas Chinese (the Chinese that migrated to Malaysia) are a minority at 26 percent of the population, the Overseas Chinese control a stark 61 percent of the economy (Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008). It could be argued that the interpretation of the *Tao Te Ching* as it applies to business communication and intercultural communication has helped the Chinese in Malaysia gain such a foothold in the Malaysian economy because many of the Chinese managers emulated behaviors of the *Tao Te Ching*.

Significance. Taylor (1973) described Ptahhotep's *Maxims* as the world's oldest text of persuasion, yet very little communication research has been done on this text. Ptahhotep's *Maxims* were written in the 24th century BCE, effectively making this text much older than Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*, which was written between the third and sixth centuries BCE. As is shown above, much research exists on the impact of the *Tao Te Ching* into modernity while the exact impacts of the *Maxims* remain unknown, save for the possible beginnings of rhetorical style and practice. By using the *Tao Te Ching* as a cornerstone to help supplement this foray into ancient Egypt, this study might help to answer future research questions pertaining to how the ancient Egyptians received the *Maxims*. As shown, the Chinese, even today, incorporate the Tao into many aspects of their lives. This insight might give scholars an idea about how Ptahhotep's text may have influenced the ancient Egyptians' lives.

The discussion of the *Tao Te Ching*, above, and its impact across a variety of sectors within Chinese (and Malay) life is instrumental in understanding how the *Maxims* might have influenced the ancient Egyptians. By analyzing different aspects of life that were influenced—either directly or indirectly—by the *Tao Te Ching*, this discussion showed that the *Tao Te Ching* had a tremendous impact on future Chinese growth. The impact of Ptahhotep's *Maxims* might have eventually led to the development and fine-tuning of the practice of rhetoric as we now know it, according to research done by Ababio (2006). In order to begin to understand how the *Maxims* might have persuaded the ancient Egyptians, this study needed to take on two approaches to the text.

This study is divided into two parts: a thematic analysis and a content analysis. The first part of this study is the extrapolation of themes contained within both Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and

Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*. This thematic study was done to clarify patterns in the *Tao Te Ching* and *Maxims* in order to draw on those patterns to frame the content analysis. Without having done the thematic analysis, this study would have had no clear direction to study the patterns of persuasion and the patterns would not have been clear. Before analyzing persuasive tactics within these texts, it was necessary to find patterns of themes and clarify them. Once the themes were extracted, the differences between the texts were examined in order to answer the following research questions for this thematic study.

RQ1: What are the most common themes found in Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*?

RQ2: How do the most common themes of Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching* differ?

Pilot Study Method

The units of analysis for this study are the entirety of Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*. Texts that have been translated to English were used in this study. Both texts are comprised of passages that are anywhere from one sentence to several paragraphs in length. Ptahhotep's *Maxims* is comprised of 37 passages while the *Tao Te Ching* is comprised of 81 chapters with one to seven passages each for a grand total of 236 passages. Braun and Clarke's (2006) research helped guide and structure the thematic study.

The first step was to read the entirety of the texts at least once to become familiar with the data. Notes were taken to generate a general idea of possible themes and the texts were read a second time at least twenty-four hours from the first reading. The texts were read a third time

to decipher some particularly troublesome passages to allow for easier thematic identification later on.

After the third reading, initial codes based on the data in the texts were produced. This was accomplished by taking notes and giving each passage equal, full attention while looking for key words and phrases of interest. Some passages were difficult to decipher or had hints of more than one theme; these passages were given extra attention due to their complexity—this issue was more prevalent in the *Tao Te Ching*, but there were some passages in the *Maxims* that were difficult to decipher. This difficulty was resolved by reading two passages before the difficult passage and two passages after the difficult passage, including the problem passage itself, to see if any general theme developed across these five passages. This was helpful for the *Maxims*; for the *Tao Te Ching*, it was helpful to simply read the entire chapter as a collective, not individually. This strategy allowed the development of thematic narratives that helped with theme difficulties, particularly in the *Tao Te Ching* in which problem passages were often contained in the same chapter, which usually had a singular overarching theme. This led to the third step, looking for a set of candidate themes contained within the texts based on the notes from the second step.

The candidate themes were then reviewed, continuously going back to the complicated passages to make better decisions for theme placement. This was a two-pronged process. First, a determination whether the coded extracts formed a theme was made. If coded extracts did not have a theme, several options were available: fitting them into an already-existing theme, creating a new theme, or discarding them from the analysis in that order of priority. Many candidate themes have been eliminated from the analysis because they could not be fitted into

existing themes, nor could they stand as a theme by themselves due to their very small number of incident (one or two)—these non-themes are thus referred to as incidents. After deciding to dismiss certain passages, they were not revisited. The second part of this step was to make sure there was a comprehensive overarching theme and that themes were not just randomly assigned. In other words, the themes needed to tell a comprehensive narrative of their respective texts. It was also necessary to re-code some passages, particularly the difficult, complex passages with either no clear theme or several vague themes. By continuously rereading these passages and going back to their corresponding notes, the decision of which theme these best belonged to became much easier.

The final steps involved further revisions of the thematic categories by continuously going back to the extracted data sets and organizing and reorganizing them into narratives. Some of these narratives, as mentioned, were difficult to decipher, but the above process allowed us to clearly define to which themes these difficult passages belong. The findings of this analysis follow.

Pilot Study Findings

Ptahhotep's *Maxims*

The first part of research question one is: What are the most common themes found in Ptahhotep's *Maxims*? After analysis, six clear themes emerged from Ptahhotep's *Maxims* (see Table A1 for a full list). The most common themes were *responsibility* at six hits, *self-control* at six hits, *respect* at seven hits, and *humility* at 12 hits. Examining these themes is important to understanding Ptahhotep's persuasive attempts, which are discussed in a later portion of this study.

The fourth most common theme of responsibility (6) was seen in several contexts: responsibility for one's power, one's responsibility to relay messages without bias, and responsibility for those one governs. An example of this is in Passage 28 where Ptahhotep wrote, "If you are an official of high standing, and you are commissioned to satisfy the many, then hold to the straight line" (Hilliard III et al., 1987, p. 29). This passage clearly shows an official's responsibility to "hold the straight line" in his duties to the many, to be unwavering in his responsibility to the many.

The third most common theme of self-control (6) was seen in several contexts: controlling oneself in matters of lust, controlling oneself in anger, controlling oneself when confronted by another in anger, and controlling oneself in the discipline of one's inferiors. An example of self-control is in Passage 36 where Ptahhotep wrote, "Punish firmly and chastise soundly, then repression of crime becomes an example. But punishment except for crime will turn the complainer into an enemy" (Hilliard III et al., 1987, p. 31). This passage alludes to controlling oneself in matters of discipline. Ptahhotep urged appropriate punishment; to excessively punish someone would be to make an enemy. In other words, one must exercise self-control when punishing or disciplining another.

The second most common theme of respect (7) was seen in several contexts: respect for one's power when in a position of control, respect for the leadership, and respect for one another. An example of this is in Passage 33 where Ptahhotep wrote, "If you examine the character of a friend, don't ask other people, approach your friend. Deal with him alone so as to not suffer from his anger" (Hilliard III et al., 1987, p. 30). This example illustrates the importance of respecting another enough to approach that person directly rather than listen to hearsay.

The most prevalent theme of humility (12) was seen in several contexts urging the ancient Egyptians to be humble in their dealings with others, particularly when one has been wronged. These passages focused on turning one's attention away from a misdeed and towards the correct things the perpetrator has done. Other passages with themes of humility directed those in positions of power to behave as if they were not in positions of power. An example of this is in Passage 29 where Ptahhotep wrote, "If you are angered by a misdeed, then lean toward a man on account of his rightness. Pass over the misdeed and don't remember it" (Hilliard III et al., 1987, p. 29). This passage clearly shows a need to be humble by forgetting another's misdeeds, focusing only on the right deeds that person has done.

Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*

The second part of research question one asks: What are the most common themes found in Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*? Analysis indicated 12 clear themes contained in the *Tao Te Ching* (see Table A2 for a full list). The most common themes were *humility* at 28 hits, *metaphor* at 49 hits, *Tao* at 50 hits, and *comparison* at 55 hits. Examining these themes further will facilitate an understanding of the persuasive portion of this study to follow.

The fourth most common theme of humility (28) was seen in several contexts: behaving in a humble manner and not being arrogant, living contently, knowing when to stop, and one with superior excellence not complaining about a lowly position. An example of humility is in Passage 8.3 in which Lao Tzŭ wrote, "And when (one with the highest excellence) does not wrangle (about his low position), no one finds fault with him" (Lao Tzŭ, 2012, p. 15). Here, Lao Tzŭ encouraged those with superior excellence to be humble in their livelihood; if those with

superior excellence happen to be in a low position, complaining about it will make others find fault with them.

The third most common theme of metaphor (49) was found in passages that made multiple allusions to unlike things. An example of this is in Passage 15.2 where Lao Tzŭ wrote,

> Shrinking looked like those who wade through a stream in winter; irresolute like those who are afraid of all around them; grave like a guest (in awe of his host); evanescent like ice that is melting away; unpretentious like wood that has not been fashioned into anything; vacant like a valley and dull like muddy water. (Lao Tzŭ, 2012, p. 22)

Here, Lao Tzŭ was making multiple allusions of unlike things to drive his point across. This passage was a particularly difficult passage in which passages in the same chapter needed to be looked at as a whole to make sense of the individual passages. In this particular passage, Lao Tzŭ was describing the Tao and the next few passages describe the benefits of embracing the Tao (clearing up muddy waters, for instance). Because Lao Tzŭ utilized metaphor in his discussion of the Tao in this particular passage, it was placed within the metaphor theme.

The second most common theme of Tao (50) was the placement of obscure references to the Tao that did not belong to the other thematic categories. Passages that had no other clear theme but described the Tao in some way were placed here. An example of the Tao reference is in Passage 21 in which Lao Tzŭ wrote,

> The grandest forms of active force from Tao come, their only source. Who can of Tao the nature tell? Our sight it flies, our touch as well. Eluding sight, eluding touch. The forms of things all in it crouch; eluding touch, eluding sight. […] How know I that it is so

> with all the beauties of existing things? By this (nature of the Tao). (Lao Tzŭ, 2012, p. 28)

The passage serves as a description of the Tao. Passages that described the Tao, such as Passage 15.2 (the example under the metaphor category, above) were not necessarily assigned to the Tao theme if these passages had a more powerful theme—usually comparison or metaphor—that stood out as more than a description of the Tao. This Tao category was, in a sense, the "Other" category, but the passages contained therein made specific references to the Tao—its physicality, its effects, and the benefits of embracing it. Therefore, it was not a generic "Other" category with a smattering of differing, unrelated themes.

The most common theme of comparison (55) was found in passages comparing like things. An example is in Passage 23.1 in which Lao Tzŭ wrote, "Abstaining from speech marks him who is obeying the spontaneity of his nature. A violent wind does not last for a whole morning; a sudden rain does not last for the whole day […]" (Lao Tzŭ, 2012, p. 30). Like the metaphor example above, this comparison category made allusions to the Tao but in a comparative manner, comparing a violent wind and a sudden rain and the shortness of both. Later passages in chapter 23 make references to the Tao and the benefits of understanding and embracing it.

Similarities and Differences

Research question two looks at how the most common themes in these two ancient texts differ from each other. Now that the most common themes of these ancient texts have been extrapolated, the question of their qualitative connection with one another must be answered. Ptahhotep's themes of responsibility, self-control, respect, and humility differ from Lao Tzŭ's

themes of humility, metaphor, Tao, and comparison. The only similarity between the two texts is the theme of humility. Both authors use humility in similar ways—being good to others and being good to oneself. This is where the thematic similarities of the *Maxims* and the *Tao Te Ching* end. Even with the similar theme, the content differed in some ways. For example, Ptahhotep framed his humility contexts in a way that created a more moral framework, "Do this because it's the right thing to do," while Lao Tzŭ framed his humility contexts in a way that suggested a more threatening tone, "Do this so bad things won't happen to you."

Ptahhotep's respect and responsibility themes spoke primarily to those in power or of some influence. Ptahhotep urged these folks to have respect for their power and responsibility for those they govern (or have some influence over). Ptahhotep's self-control messages spoke to a variety of controversial situations in which one might find oneself.

Conversely, Lao Tzŭ focused on more obscure messages to drive his points across: His passages were littered with enigmatic wordplay, particularly in the metaphor and comparison categories; both of these categories usually referenced the Tao in some manner, but, as mentioned, were assigned as they were because their metaphors and comparisons played a stronger thematic role. Metaphor and comparison were two very similar themes, separated only by their targets of allusion: metaphor compared two or more dissimilar things while comparison compared two or more similar things. The Tao theme was the assigned section for passages that had some obscure reference to the Tao with no other clear theme. Passages that had neither a clear reference to the Tao nor a clear theme at all were not included in the thematic category of Tao.

Pilot Study Discussion

The results of sorting out the theme usage in these ancient texts indicate Ptahhotep's primary thematic strategy was to appeal to his audience's humility while Lao Tzŭ's thematic strategy was to compare two or more like things to drive his point across. Ptahhotep's approach to humility was to encourage humble behavior because it was the right thing to do. Lao Tzŭ's approach to comparison was to describe some aspect of the Tao in the form of comparing similar ideas and concepts that revealed a benefit of embracing the Tao or describing the muddiness of one's spirituality before embracing the Tao. Metaphor in Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching* was found to be closely related to the comparison theme. Often, the language of the metaphor and the comparison was similar—the only telling note was whether Lao Tzŭ alluded to two or more unlike or like things.

This pilot study extrapolated themes within the *Maxims* and the *Tao Te Ching*, two ancient texts of persuasion. The goal was to understand what thematic strategies both authors used to get their points across. By analyzing their thematic strategies, it has been understood that both authors utilized themes in very different ways. For instance, Lao Tzŭ's thematic strategy was to cite pros and cons of embracing the Tao. This was seen in a multitude of contexts, especially in the comparison, Tao, and metaphor themes. On the other hand, Ptahhotep's thematic strategy was less religious and spiritual; rather, Ptahhotep's strategy was to try to convince the Egyptians to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do.

By analyzing the thematic usage within these ancient texts, this study is now equipped to analyze compliance gaining persuasion and gain- and loss-framed messages via content analysis of the passages containing the most common themes of both texts. The most common themes

that were found in this pilot study will be utilized to provide a point of reference to how the authors' persuasive strategies were streamlined in these ancient texts. By looking only at the passages containing the most common themes, this study was able to make connections between theme and persuasive strategy. This might provide a wealth of cultural information: The way persuasive tactics tie into thematic categories might illustrate cultural values and teaching tools of these ancient cultures. Scholars will learn more about ancient Egyptian and ancient Chinese persuasive tactics, adding to current persuasive research. The next step is to use the framework of the pilot study to drive this study of persuasion in a content analysis.

Review of Literature

Compliance Gaining Persuasion

Overview. The persuasive theory driving this study is compliance gaining; this main study used the most common themes extrapolated from the pilot study and applied them to a persuasive context. Compliance gaining theory stems from the popular social science belief that all behavior is goal-oriented (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). Compliance gaining persuasion is utilized by the persuader in an attempt to gain compliance from the persuader's target (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Petrow & Sullivan, 2007; Sullivan, Albrecht, & Taylor, 1990; Sullivan & Taylor, 1991; Weyant, 1996). However, compliance gaining is not just about trying to persuade one's target to do something. This persuasive strategy is also weighed with the persuader informing the target of the advantages of compliance and the disadvantages of non-compliance; this is referred to as gain- and loss-framed messages, respectively (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Nan, 2007). Sharing the advantages of compliance and disadvantages of non-compliance might

allow the persuader to bolster the platform and, as Marwell and Schmitt (1967) and Nan (2007) suggested, might elicit compliance, resulting in a successful persuasive attempt.

This discussion encompasses compliance gaining strategies as well as gain- and loss-framed messages. Further, several compliance gaining techniques used in a variety of ways—cross cultural, organizational, political speeches, and donation requests—will be discussed. It is important to frame compliance gaining strategies through many lenses to understand what compliance gaining is and how it works. By understanding how compliance gaining persuasion works to persuade in several different contexts, this study was equipped to investigate compliance gaining persuasion in Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*.

Strategies. Compliance gaining has many different strategies, according to Marwell and Schmitt (1967). Based on the extrapolation of themes within Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*, this study focused only on the specific compliance gaining strategies of positive expertise, negative expertise, moral appeal, positive self-feeling, and negative self-feeling as these strategies were the most relevant to this study; the other persuasive strategies had no relationship with the texts or it was not possible to successfully measure those strategies in these texts. For example, one omitted persuasive tactic was debt, which is a strategy in which one attempts to gain compliance by reminding the target of the debt that is owed—"You owe me compliance because of past favors" (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967, p. 357). It would not have been possible to successfully measure such a strategy as this is a one-way text of mass communication versus compliance gaining strategies utilized on an interpersonal level. The extrapolated themes and these compliance gaining strategies have an important connection: By utilizing the most common themes that were extrapolated in the pilot study, this main study is equipped to make

important observations about how these authors' use of persuasion worked with the themes they manufactured in their texts. Additionally, this study can make connections between themes and persuasive tactics and how they worked in tandem to persuade their respective audiences.

Marwell and Schmitt (1967) provided an explanation of compliance gaining tactics. Positive expertise and negative expertise work like karma—in other words, reaping what one sows. Both of these tactics are grounded in the assumption that one will be rewarded or punished, respectively, because of the "nature of things" (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967, p. 357). Moral appeal deals primarily with one being immoral if one does not comply with the persuader (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). This tactic is grounded not by offending the target but by appealing to the target's morals and ethics. Positive self-feeling and negative self-feeling work to persuade the target they will feel better after compliance or worse after non-compliance, respectively (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967).

Finally, we explore the advantages of compliance and disadvantages of non-compliance as studied by Nan (2007). Advantages of compliance (gain-framed messages) and disadvantages of compliance (loss-framed messages) are a core aspect of persuasion (Nan, 2007). Messages focusing on gain-framed consequences are wont to portray the desirable benefits to the target; conversely, messages that are laced with loss-framed consequences focus more on the undesirable consequences of not complying with the persuasion (Nan, 2007). Nan (2007) asserted extensive studies have been done that show both gain- and loss-framed messages are equally successful. Marwell and Schmitt (1967) made some allusions to this fundamental property of persuasion in their description of compliance gaining tactics. Specifically, the allusions were made in the following dimensions: moral appeal, positive self-feeling, negative

self-feeling, positive esteem, and negative esteem (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). The persuader, in each of these dimensions, utilizes gain-framed messages to gain compliance in the following ways: positive expertise, positive self-feeling and positive esteem. That is, the persuader will inform the target that, upon compliance, the target will be rewarded because of the nature of things, feel better about themselves, and people will think better of the target, respectively. This is a benefit of compliance. Alternatively, negative expertise, moral appeal, negative self-feeling, and negative esteem all attempt to persuade the target on the basis of the undesirable effects of non-compliance (respectively: the target will be punished because of the nature of things, the target is immoral, the target will feel worse about himself, and others will think worse of the target).

Compliance gaining persuasion pertains to several different fields (cross cultural, organizational, political speeches, and donation requests) in which one seeks to gain compliance from one's audience. There are several different strategies based on a variety of factors that include culture and objective. Each of the discussions that follow enables a broader understanding of compliance gaining persuasion and how it works to gain compliance.

Organizational strategies. Sullivan and Taylor (1991) wanted to understand how universal compliance gaining is; their study was focused on Japanese managers' behavior, noting the differences in communication practices between Japan and America. The authors noted a similarity with American, British, and Australian managers: Japanese managers use reasoning as a tactic to elicit compliance from key subordinates (Sullivan & Taylor, 1991). Another key compliance gaining strategy utilized was friendliness, but the authors noted that when a Japanese manager is secure in his tenure, he tends to be more assertive and less friendly.

Sullivan, Albrecht, and Taylor (1990) also studied compliance gaining strategies used by superiors in an organizational setting, albeit in a different vein. Sullivan et al. (1990) discussed subordinate resistance to compliance: "[T]he nature and amount of resistance which a manager expects from a subordinate are the major determinants of compliance message selection" (p. 336). Sullivan et al. (1990) discovered reasoning is the most common compliance gaining strategy with friendliness and assertiveness trailing not far behind. The rationale behind this is when superiors expect minimal resistance, they would resort to reasoning and friendliness; however, when superiors expect a lot of resistance, they resort to sanctions and assertiveness. Other compliance gaining strategies employed by superiors were coalition, bargaining, and higher authority (Sullivan et al., 1990).

Political speech strategies. Petrow and Sullivan (2007) explored compliance gaining persuasion in political speech. An important political compliance gaining strategy Petrow and Sullivan (2007) pointed out is that politicians might remind "members that eventually they would need administrative help" to persuade the people to support an administrative action (p. 41-42). Additionally, Petrow and Sullivan (2007) wrote that political persuasion—and politician compliance gaining—rely on shared values. Compliance gaining succeeds when politicians and their constituents, with shared values, engage one another (Petrow & Sullivan, 2007). Finally, Petrow and Sullivan (2007) indicated when one has facts, one has merit; gaining compliance would be easier for the speaker who has facts and is knowledgeable.

Charity donation strategies. Weyant (1996) explored the application of compliance gaining strategies to donation requests by charities used in their direct mail. Two compliance gaining strategies Weyant (2007) brought up are foot in door and door in face. Foot in door is a

strategy in which the persuader makes a minor request. Once compliance has been made for this request, the persuader is then free to escalate his next request; generally, the target would be more receptive to the second request after complying with the first (Weyant 2007). The second compliance gaining strategy Weyant discussed is door in face. In this tactic, the persuader makes an outlandish request that is certain to be rejected and the target refuses. Later, the persuader would return with a milder request. Usually, the target won't comply with the outlandish request, but when approached with the milder request, compliance is often gained, as that is what the persuader really wanted (Weyant, 2007). Compliance for door in face techniques was found to occur more often when the milder request is made moments after the outlandish request (Weyant, 2007). Weyant (2007) pointed out that both strategies are wont to elicit stronger reactions when utilized for prosocial behavior (e.g., donating blood, charity) than with self-motivated gains (e.g., for-profit marketing, health insurance).

Significance. As mentioned, this study utilized several compliance gaining strategies in its analysis of the most common themes in the *Maxims* and *Tao Te Ching*. It is important to apply the themes extrapolated in the pilot study to this study of compliance gaining persuasion in order to understand how the persuasive strategies worked in tandem with the thematic strategies to persuade the audiences of these ancient civilizations. It is especially important to apply the gain- and loss- framed messages of persuasion to these themes because these specific strategies add to the overarching persuasive efforts of Ptahhotep and Lao Tzŭ by appealing to feelings and morals while specifically stating what the target has to gain from complying (and how they might be punished by not complying). By connecting compliance gaining strategies to theme,

we might have a better understanding of how these ancient sages utilized both theme and persuasion in their efforts to better their respective societies.

As shown, compliance gaining persuasive strategies exist for a variety of arenas. This discussion has allowed us to understand some of the many different perspectives of compliance gaining—as well as the central power behind this tool of persuasion. This study utilized five compliance gaining strategies in this analysis of Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*. An essential element of compliance gaining, gain- and loss-framed messages, was also incorporated—these allowed for a better, more profound understanding of ancient persuasion.

Rationale

With this study, scholars might gain a better understanding of ancient Egypt and how this civilization utilized persuasion. As the present study is a foundation-building into ancient Egypt, future research opportunities might include a deeper investigation into ancient Egyptian rhetoric or perhaps the effects Ptahhotep's *Maxims* had on the ancient Egyptians. The results of these future studies would allow communication scholars to understand ancient Egypt in a new way. Too little communication-oriented research has been done on this great civilization. Historians and anthropologists are still unearthing some of ancient Egypt's greatest mysteries; it's time for communication scholars to unearth ancient Egypt's communication mysteries, going beyond linguistics. The following research questions serve to be a foundational look into persuasion in antiquity.

Research Questions

In addition to the first two research questions, this study investigated the following:

RQ3: What compliance gaining strategies exist in Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*?

RQ4: How frequent are the compliance gaining tactics in Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*?

RQ5: How do the compliance gaining strategies differ between Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*?

RQ6: How frequent do gain- and loss-framed messages appear in Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*?

RQ7: How do the gain- and loss- framed messages differ between Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*?

Method

This content analysis was based on the results of the pilot study. Texts that have been translated to English were used in this study. The eight most common themes (responsibility, self-control, respect, and humility from the *Maxims*; humility, metaphor, Tao, and comparison from the *Tao Te Ching*) have been extrapolated to drive this study.

Matching themes with compliance gaining categories and gain- and loss-framed categories are mutually exclusive—that is, one passage does not have two compliance gaining strategies. Likewise, any given passage has only one indicator regarding whether the passage is gain- or loss-framed—or neither.

For compliance gaining strategies, the nominal codes in Table 1 applied.

Table 1

Compliance Gaining Codes

Code	Definition
1	Positive expertise
2	Negative-expertise
3	Moral appeal
4	Positive self-feeling
5	Negative self-feeling
6	Not applicable

Positive expertise and negative expertise are grounded in the assumption that one will be rewarded or punished, respectively, because of the "nature of things" (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967, p. 357). This appears to work very similarly to the concept of karma—or reaping what one sows. Moral appeal primarily connects with the target being immoral by not complying (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). This strategy has an attack stance rooted in it by accusing the target of being immoral if compliance is not gained. Positive self-feeling and negative self-feeling work to persuade the target they will feel better after compliance or worse after non-compliance, respectively (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). Compliance might be easier by appealing to the target's innate goodness. These strategies appeal to the target's goodness to continue with compliance and the target's apparent lack of goodness to elicit compliance, respectively.

For gain- and loss-framed messages, the nominal codes in Table 2 applied.

Table 2

Gain- and Loss-framed Codes

Code	Definition
1	Gain-framed
2	Loss-framed
3	Not Applicable

The variables applicable to gain- and loss-framed messages are aspects of persuasion in which the persuader very specifically states what benefits await the target after compliance and what punishments await the target after non-compliance.

The units of analysis for this study are the passages that contain the most common themes extrapolated from the previous pilot study. There are a total of 31 passages from the *Maxims* and 182 passages from the *Tao Te Ching* that contained the most common themes in these ancient texts. All of the passages containing the most common themes from the *Maxims* will be coded for compliance gaining strategies and gain- and loss-framed messages. However, due to the sheer number of passages from the *Tao Te Ching*, the following random sampling was instituted: a random number generator was utilized so 31 passages containing the most common themes from the *Tao Te Ching* were randomly selected for analysis.

During the first round of coding, it was discovered that many passages in the *Tao Te Ching* that were randomly selected were relegated to the not applicable category; the random sampling method was shifted accordingly. Because Ptahhotep's *Maxims* is significantly shorter than Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*—containing only 31 passages for analysis—it was necessary to create a semblance of equality; as mentioned, many of the passages selected via random

sampling pointed to a large number of passages in the *Tao Te Ching* that fell under the not applicable category. It was necessary to restructure the approach to the *Tao Te Ching* in this way to bring about equal perception of these texts by performing random sampling only on passages that fell into a persuasive category. This required an additional step to eliminate all passages that fell into the not applicable category and to re-run the random sampling to choose only passages that fell into a persuasive context. The random number generator was utilized repeatedly until it landed on a passage containing some clear persuasive message to avoid the oversaturation of passages in the not applicable category. This method allowed this analysis to focus exclusively on passages containing a persuasive statement by operationally eliminating passages that did not contain any compliance gaining strategies from the pool of *Tao Te Ching* passages containing the most common themes. This was done repeatedly until 31 passages from the *Tao Te Ching* containing a persuasive message were selected for analysis. This extra step explained the discrepancy between the *Maxims* and *Tao Te Ching* results and why it was acceptable to have the *Maxims* return some passages into the not applicable category while it was unacceptable with the *Tao Te Ching*.

The presence of these compliance gaining strategies and gain- and loss-framed messages were counted and tallied. This served to bridge an important gap between fitting themes with their compliance gaining counterparts and statistical differences. The software package Minitab was utilized for all statistical tests.

Results

Reliability

Because there was one coder, intracoding reliability was important to maintain. Reliability was measured by having the coder code the same passage twice. Time between coding session one and coding session two was a period of 48 hours or more.

After the eight analyses were completed, the following reliability coefficients were calculated. The *Maxims* compliance gaining study revealed $\alpha = 0.92$ while the *Maxims* gain- and loss-framed study revealed $\alpha = 0.90$. The *Tao Te Ching* compliance gaining study revealed $\alpha = 0.80$ while the *Tao Te Ching* gain- and loss-framed study revealed $\alpha = 0.77$. These lower numbers might be attributed to the way the *Tao Te Ching* was broken up—individual passages instead of chapter-by-chapter. Another factor might be the fact that there were many problematic passages within the *Tao Te Ching* that might have led to contradictions between the first and second rounds.

Research question three asked about the strategies Ptahhotep and Lao Tzŭ utilized in their texts. Research question four asked about the frequencies of these strategies (see Appendix B for the corresponding table). These strategies differ only marginally. Ptahhotep utilized the following compliance gaining strategies: *positive expertise* (8), *negative expertise* (8), *moral appeal* (4), and *positive self-feeling* (4). Seven of Ptahhotep's passages had no applicable compliance gaining strategy. Lao Tzŭ utilized the following compliance gaining strategies: *positive expertise* (17), *negative expertise* (8), *positive self-feeling* (5), and *negative self-feeling* (1). The only difference between the two is Ptahhotep utilized moral appeal while Lao Tzŭ did not; Lao Tzŭ utilized negative self-feeling while Ptahhotep did not. Illustrating the differences

between compliance gaining strategies contained in these ancient texts, as with themes, helps us understand where each author placed significance in their respective tools.

In the *Maxims*, a passage in which positive expertise was utilized is Passage 15:

> Report the thing that you were commissioned to report without error. Give your advice in the high council. If you are fluent in your speech, it will not be hard for you to report. Nor will anyone say of you, 'Who is he to know this?' As to the authorities, their affairs will fail if they punish you for speaking truth. They should be silent upon hearing the report that you have rendered as you have been told. (Hilliard III et al., 1987, p 23)

In this example, the positive natural outcome of reporting with truthfulness is attaining credibility.

A passage in which negative expertise was utilized is Passage 18:

> If you want friendship to endure in the house that you enter, the house of a master, of a brother or of a friend, then in what ever place you enter beware of approaching the women there. Unhappy is the place where this is done. Unwelcome is he who intrudes on [the women]. A thousand men are turned away from their good because of a short moment that is like a dream, and then that moment is followed by death that comes from having known that dream. Anyone who encourages you to take advantage of the situation gives you poor advice. When you go to do it, your heart says no. If you are one who fails through the lust of women, then no affair of yours can prosper. (Hilliard III et al., 1987, p. 24-5).

In this passage, the natural negative outcome of not adhering to Ptahhotep's advice to not bother the women of a place one visits is the wearing out of one's welcome, the bringing about of unhappiness, and the inability of one's affairs to prosper.

A passage in which moral appeal was utilized is Passage 19:

> If you want to have perfect conduct, to be free from every evil, then above all guard against the vice of greed. Greed is a grievous sickness that has no cure. There is no treatment for it. It embroils fathers, mothers and the brothers of the mother. It parts the wife from the husband. Greed is a compound of all the evils. It is a bundle of all hateful things. That person endures whose rule is rightness, who walks a straight line, for that person will leave a legacy by such behavior. On the other hand, the greedy has no tomb. (Hilliard III et al., 1987, p. 25)

In this passage, Ptahhotep argues that a greedy individual is an immoral individual unworthy of even a tomb.

Finally, a passage that utilized positive self-feeling was Passage 35:

> Know your friends and then you prosper. Don't be mean towards your friends. They are like a watered field and greater than any material riches that you may have, for what belongs to one belongs to another. The character of one who is well born should be a profit to him. Good nature is a memorial. (Hilliard III et al., 1987, p. 31)

In this passage, Ptahhotep is attempting to persuade the readers that they will feel good about themselves, achieve prosperity, and enjoy the richness of friendship by complying with this message.

In the *Tao Te Ching*, positive expertise appeared in Passage 22.1 in which Lao Tzŭ wrote "The partial becomes complete; the crooked, straight; the empty, full; the worn out, new. He whose (desires) are few gets them; he whose (desires) are many goes astray" (Lao Tzŭ, 2012, p. 29). In this example, the positive natural consequence of having few desires is the attainment of these desires.

> A passage that utilized negative expertise was Passage 44.1 in which Lao Tzŭ wrote: Or fame or life, Which [sic] do you hold more dear? Or life or wealth, To [sic] which would you adhere? Keep life and lose those other things; Keep [sic] them and lose your life—which brings Sorrow [sic] and pain more near? (Lao Tzŭ, 2012, p. 53)

In this example, Lao Tzŭ is illustrating the natural negative consequence of not heeding his advice: losing one's life and causing more pain.

> An example of positive self-feeling was in Passage 33.1 in which Lao Tzŭ wrote, He who knows other men is discerning; he who knows himself is intelligent. He who overcomes others is strong; he who overcomes himself is mighty. He who is satisfied with his lot is rich; he who goes on acting with energy has a (firm) will. (Lao Tzŭ, 2012, p. 40)

In this example, Lao Tzŭ wrote that those who do all of these things will feel better about themselves and this leads into richness and having a firm will.

> Finally, an example of negative self-feeling was in Passage 24 in which Lao Tzŭ wrote: He who stands on his tiptoes does not stand firm; he who stretches his legs does not walk (easily). (So), he who displays himself does not shine; he who asserts his own views is not distinguished; he who vaunts himself does not find his merit acknowledged; he who

> is self-conceited has no superiority allowed to him. Such conditions, viewed from the standpoint of the Tao, are like remnants of food, or a tumour [sic] on the body, which all dislike. Hence those who pursue (the course) of the Tao do not adopt and allow them. (Lao Tzŭ, 2012, p. 31)

In this example, negative self-feeling was utilized in a way which Lao Tzŭ assured one would feel worse about oneself if one does not pursue the course of the Tao.

Research question five asked about the differences between compliance gaining strategies within Ptahhotep's *Maxims* and Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*. A chi-square test was conducted to determine the difference between strategy usage between the two texts. No significant differences were found in the frequency of strategies, χ^2 (12) = 7.30, $p > 0.5$, between the two texts. This shows both authors' utilization of compliance gaining strategies was not significantly different from one another; however, the way each author incorporated these compliance gaining strategies within their texts differed. Because of the statistically insignificant differences between the *Maxims* and the *Tao Te Ching*, it was necessary to calculate the correlation coefficient. This was done to measure the relationship between the two texts' methods of compliance gaining. The correlation coefficient was calculated at 0.04, which shows that no significant relationship exists between the two texts' use of compliance gaining strategies.

Research question six asked about the frequency of gain- and loss-framed messages contained within the texts (see Appendix B for a complete table of gain- and loss-framed frequencies for both texts). Through analysis, it was revealed the frequency of gain- and loss-framed messages appeared about equal in Ptahhotep's *Maxims* at 11 hits for gain-framed content and thirteen hits for loss-framed content. Seven passages had neither a gain- nor a loss-framed

message. Lao Tzŭ favored gain-framed messages at 19 hits while loss-framed messages were counted at nine hits. Three passages had neither a gain- nor a loss-framed message.

Research question seven asked about the statistical differences between gain- and loss-framed messages between the *Maxims* and the *Tao Te Ching*. A chi-square test was conducted to determine the different gain- and loss-framed strategies utilized in the two texts. No significant differences were found in the frequency of strategies, χ^2 (4) = 1.78, $p > 0.5$, between the two texts. This showed the differences between both authors' usage of gain- and loss-framed within their texts were minor. Due to the statistically insignificant differences between gain- and loss-framed strategies between the *Maxims* and *Tao Te Ching*, it was necessary to calculate the correlation coefficient—this test helped this study recognize the statistical relationship between both ancient texts' use of gain- and loss-framed messages. The correlation coefficient was calculated at -0.19. This indicated a very small negative linear relationship exists between the *Maxims* and *Tao Te Ching*'s gain- and loss-framed strategies.

Discussion

To tie both studies together, the texts' passages containing their most common themes, as discussed in the pilot study, were paired with their corresponding compliance gaining strategies and gain- and loss-framed strategies (see Appendix C for complete tables). The connection between the themes and persuasion is that, generally, one theme significantly applied to one persuasive strategy and one gain- or loss-framed message. Some themes had an equal distribution between persuasive strategies or compliance gaining strategies; almost all themes had some distribution between all strategies. For example, in the *Maxims*, Ptahhotep's humility theme applied equally to the compliance gaining strategies of negative expertise and moral

appeal as well as loss-framed messages. Conversely, in the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzŭ's humility theme applied significantly to positive expertise and gain-framed messages. This illustrates how differently both authors utilized the humility theme.

Research questions three and four look at the type and frequency of compliance gaining strategies. Ptahhotep's two favored compliance gaining strategies appeared to be positive expertise (8) and negative expertise (8). Positive expertise and negative expertise work similarly to karma—or reaping what one sows. In other words, positive expertise works in the following way: If you comply with me, you will be rewarded because of the nature of things (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). Negative expertise works the opposite of that: If you do not comply, you will be punished because of the nature of things (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967).

Research question six looks at the frequency of gain- and loss-framed messages within the texts. Ptahhotep's principal gain- and loss-framed strategy appeared to be gain-framed persuasion (11). This went hand-in-hand with positive expertise. Gain-framed messages are designed to gain compliance by telling the target what would be gained from compliance. Lao Tzŭ's favored compliance gaining strategy appeared to be positive expertise (17). As mentioned, positive expertise works by instructing the targets they will be rewarded for their compliance because of the nature of things (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). Lao Tzŭ's favored gain- and loss-framed strategy was to utilize gain-framed messages (19)—or informing the targets what would be gained from compliance. This information helps us understand the way these ancient authors attempted to influence their respective audiences.

The goal of this study was to understand how two ancient societies utilized persuasion in order to attempt to better their people's behavior. Through the information that was uncovered

during this study—from themes to compliance gaining and gain- and loss-framed strategies—we have found works of persuasion that signified no significant difference in persuasion strategy between the ancient Egyptian and the ancient Chinese authors. The more concrete findings indicated both texts did not differ statistically significantly from one another in regards to their compliance gaining and gain- and loss-framed strategies. Likewise, the relationship between the methods employed by the authors was insignificant between their compliance gaining strategies and they had a very small negative linear relationship between their gain- and loss-framed strategies.

Lao Tzŭ's utilization of compliance gaining and gain- and loss-framed messages was not too different from Ptahhotep's strategies; in fact, from research questions five and seven regarding statistical differences between compliance gaining strategies and gain- and loss-framed strategies, respectively, we have inferred the statistical difference between the two texts' strategies is not significant. This indicates both authors' use of persuasion is somewhat similar. The compliance gaining strategies utilized are similar; however, the overarching language and theme of each author indicates different attitudes exhibited by these authors. Though Lao Tzŭ and Ptahhotep have utilized humility, for instance, Ptahhotep's usage of humility combined with its compliance gaining and gain- and loss-framed strategies differed from that of Lao Tzŭ's.

An interesting observation within the *Tao Te Ching* was many passages could be taken one way or the other—gain-framed with positive expertise or loss-framed with negative expertise. An example of a passage that can be taken both ways is Passage 22.1: "The partial becomes complete; the crooked, straight; the empty, full; the worn out, new. He whose (desires) are few gets them; he whose (desires) are many goes astray" (Lao Tzŭ, 2012, p. 29). The gain-

framed and positive expertise message is reflected in the former part of the passage (he who has few desires gets them) while the loss-framed and negative expertise message is reflected in the latter part of the passage (he who has many desires goes astray). Passages that could be taken both ways were consistently under the comparison theme; a few belonged to the metaphor theme.

Marwell and Schmitt (1967) wrote that all behavior is goal-oriented. This study of the *Maxims* and the *Tao Te Ching* helps support this theory: Ptahhotep wanted the Egyptians to change their behavior because it was the right thing to do; Lao Tzŭ wanted his people to adopt the Tao, which would lead to a natural behavior shift, according to many of the Tao themes within the *Tao Te Ching*. Based on the results of this study, the content of both texts advocated change. In many of Lao Tzŭ's passages, Lao Tzŭ described the Tao in some way, citing the struggles one faces before acceptance and the clarity that comes only after acceptance of the Tao. Lao Tzŭ's gain- and loss-framed strategy was heavily gain-framed as he cited the benefits of complying with the Tao. Ptahhotep often wrote loss-framed messages—or what unwanted consequences might occur if his advice was not taken. Both authors started with a goal—to bring wisdom to their respective civilizations. The context of both texts signifies a desire to change behavior. This theory of behavior being goal-oriented is reflected in both texts' use of compliance gaining strategies.

Marwell and Schmitt's (1967) and Nan's (2007) work on compliance gaining strategies and gain- and loss-framed messages are reflected within this study. Gain-framed messages work closely with positive expertise and positive self-feeling in that the persuader uses two compliance gaining strategies in their messages: The targets will be rewarded because of the

nature of things and the targets will feel better about themselves after compliance, respectively. The negative contrast was seen as well. Loss-framed messages worked with negative expertise, moral appeal, and negative self-feeling to persuade the targets that if compliance is not secured, they will be punished because of the nature of things, they are immoral, and they will feel worse about themselves.

Limitations

A limitation with this study is it cannot gauge the effects of these persuasive messages on their audiences (another study will be necessary for that). Moreover, this study's main task is to describe the persuasive messages themselves. No interpretations or inferences may be done with the data (other than interpreting the data as they relate to the research questions). Again, this study would serve to open the door for future research, such as studying the effects of these texts on their respective cultures.

Another important limitation to note pertains to the thematic study of Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*. While some passages stood independently, many did not, and it was found that many chapters had an overarching theme that was repeated in their passages, which might have inflated theme counts as this study counted and tallied individual passages rather than chapters (e.g., Chapter 1 has four passages; each of these was looked at individually rather than Chapter 1 as a whole). Themes of specific passages were often made clear only when viewing the chapter as a whole. This study might have been condensed if this pilot thematic analysis included only the broad themes of each chapter of the *Tao Te Ching* rather than the often confusing micro-themes (and indeed, the non-themes) contained in the chapters' passages.

One of the difficulties encountered during the main study was the realization that many individual passages of the *Tao Te Ching* made little sense in a persuasive vein because of the decision to break up the chapters instead of looking at each of the chapters as a singular, overarching message. One example of this frustration was in 72.3: "It is by avoiding such indulgences that such weariness does not arise" (Lao Tzŭ, 2012, p. 81). The references to *what* indulgences are made in 72.1 and 72.2. Because of the disjointed approach this study took, we needed to eliminate passages that contained no persuasive message from the pool of most common themes in the *Tao Te Ching* in order to force a sampling of strictly persuasive messages. This was absolutely necessary as it helped to achieve this study's goal of investigating persuasive messages contained in these ancient texts. One downside of this was that many of these eliminated passages were of the Tao theme, which contained only obscure references to the Tao and had no perceived persuasive message. Because of this, the Tao's thematic role in this persuasive study may have been lessened.

It is essential to stress this study might have had different results if *Tao Te Ching* themes and compliance gaining strategies were looked at within chapters as a whole rather than individual passages separately. As mentioned, the individual passages often made no sense in terms of persuasive strategies; thus, many individual passages had to be eliminated from the pool of passages containing the most common themes as they had no persuasive value. This study might have been able to more thoroughly study the *Tao Te Ching* in that regard if the focus was placed on the chapters of the *Tao Te Ching* as a whole rather than the individual passages within the chapters.

Future Research

It can be theorized the interaction the Egyptians had with the Greeks and Romans led to the eventual Greek development and honing of the rhetorical concept. History records the Greeks and Romans had regular contact with the Egyptians; in fact, the Greeks and the Romans had a significant impact on Egyptian religious life (Steindorff & Seele, 1957). Before any interaction occurred between the Egyptians and the Greeks and Romans, the Egyptians depicted their gods as purely animalistic in form (e.g., Anubis was a jackal).

After some initial meetings with the Greeks and Romans, though the Greeks met the Egyptians before the Romans did, the Egyptians were greeted with scorn and negativity in regards to "such primitive beliefs from such a highly respected race as [the Egyptians]" (Steindorff & Seele, 1957, p. 139). Though the change was gradual, the Egyptians modified their depictions of their gods to emulate a more humanoid form; keeping with their mythos, their gods retained their animal heads (e.g., Anubis is the jackal-headed god, Thoth is the ibis-headed god, Steindorff & Seele, 1957). Because the Romans and Greeks had such a tremendous impact on Egyptian spirituality and religion, it can be surmised the three civilizations engaged in further exchanges of ideas. While the writings of Ptahhotep occurred long before Egypt met either Greece or Rome, Ababio (2006) showed Ptahhotep was not the progenitor of rhetoric; he is simply one of the most well-known ancient Egyptian orators, or sages. Ptahhotep had to have learned the craft of ethical rhetoric from someone. A possible avenue for future research would be to closely investigate the relationship the Greeks and Romans had with Egypt as well as Greek, Roman, and Egyptian rhetorical texts of the time. This might provide more insight into

the development of rhetorical practices in Egypt as well as its development in Greece and Rome, adding significantly to the field of rhetoric.

Another important direction for future study might be to study exactly what effect Ptahhotep's *Maxims* had on Egyptians and, perhaps, for how long. How did this ancient society persuade its people? Because very little communication-oriented studies exist on ancient Egypt, such a study might unveil much about the persuasive practice and its history. Keeping in line with this research objective, as well as the fact modern-day Chinese individuals continue to be influenced by the *Tao Te Ching*, it might be pertinent to investigate whether modern-day Egyptians are influenced by Ptahhotep's *Maxims*.

This study was an investigation into ancient persuasive strategies. Perhaps the results from this study might be utilized in an effort to learn more about these ancient civilizations through their tactics of persuasion, adding significantly to the field of persuasion and communication studies.

Conclusion

This study investigated thematic and persuasive strategies contained within two texts: Ptahhotep's ancient Egyptian text *Maxims* (~24th century BCE) and Lao Tzŭ's ancient Chinese text *Tao Te Ching* (~3rd century BCE). The first portion of this study focused on theme extrapolation and qualitative interpretations and comparisons of both texts' themes with one another. This exploratory venture into these ancient texts revealed the most common themes and their frequencies: responsibility (6), self-control (6), respect (7), and humility (12) in the *Maxims*; and humility (28), metaphor (49), Tao (50), and comparison (55) in the *Tao Te Ching*. These thematic differences highlighted both authors' thematic strategies. Although both authors

emphasized humility, this theme was used very differently by these authors. These thematic strategies were a part of their persuasion—by applying their themes to persuasive strategies, this study made this connection.

In the main study, two persuasive strategies were utilized: Marwell and Schmitt's (1967) work on compliance gaining as well as Nan (2007) and Marwell and Schmitt's (1967) work on gain- and loss-framed messages. Through analysis, it was revealed the *Maxims* and the *Tao Te Ching* did not differ significantly from one another in regards to compliance gaining persuasion and gain- and loss-framed strategies. It was also revealed that neither work's compliance gaining and gain- and loss-framed strategies had a significant relationship with one another, although it was shown that the texts' gain- and loss-framed strategies had a minor negative relationship with one another. As both texts were created with similar goals in mind, it stands to reason both texts would not be so diametrically opposed to one another. The findings from this study revealed that Ptahhotep utilized positive expertise and negative expertise equally but utilized loss-framed messages the most in his *Maxims*. Lao Tzŭ utilized positive expertise and gain-framed messages the most in his *Tao Te Ching*.

From this study, we have attained significant knowledge regarding ancient Chinese and ancient Egyptian persuasion. Lao Tzŭ's persuasive and thematic strategies were more centralized on the spiritual or the religious aspect of embracing the Tao. Lao Tzŭ also cited the disadvantages of not complying with the Tao. Ptahhotep, on the other hand, utilized a different approach by urging the ancient Egyptians to do right because it was the right thing to do, though his work also contained threatening tones by describing what might happen if his advice went unheeded. The information contained in this study might open doors for further persuasive

studies into ancient Egyptian persuasion and understanding exactly how Ptahhotep's *Maxims* influenced the Egyptians of his time and for how long.

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Appendix A: Theme Findings

Table A1

Ptahhotep's Maxims*: Themes and Frequency*

Theme	Frequency
Marriage	2
Karma	4
Responsibility	6
Self-control	6
Respect	7
Humility	12

Table A2

Lao Tzŭ's Tao Te Ching*: Themes and Frequency*

Theme	Frequency
Anticipation	4
Control	4
Balance	5
History	5
Nature	5
War	5
Leadership	6
Self-betterment	8
Humility	28
Metaphor	49
Tao	50
Comparison	55

Appendix B: Persuasion Findings

Table B

Frequencies of Persuasive Strategies Utilized by both Ptahhotep and Lao Tzŭ

	Frequency	
Strategy	Ptahhotep's *Maxims*	Lao Tzŭ's *Tao Te Ching*
Compliance gaining		
Positive expertise	8	17
Negative expertise	8	8
Moral appeal	4	0
Positive self-feeling	4	5
Negative self-feeling	0	1
Not applicable	7	0
Gain- and loss-framed		
Gain-framed	11	19
Loss-framed	13	9
Not applicable	7	3

Appendix C: Theme and Persuasive Strategy

Table C1

Ptahhotep's Maxims*: Theme and Persuasion*

Strategy	Theme			
	Humility	Self-Control	Responsibility	Respect
Compliance gaining				
Positive expertise	2	3	2	1
Negative expertise	3	1	2	2
Moral appeal	3	1	0	0
Positive self-feeling	1	0	2	1
Negative self-feeling	0	0	0	0
Not applicable	3	1	0	3
Gain- and loss-framed				
Gain-framed	2	4	3	2
Loss-framed	7	1	2	3
Not applicable	3	1	1	2

Table C2

Lao Tzŭ's Tao Te Ching*: Theme and Persuasion*

Strategy	Theme			
	Humility	Metaphor	Tao	Comparison
Compliance gaining				
Positive expertise	7	5	2	3
Negative expertise	0	1	0	7
Moral appeal	0	0	0	0
Positive self-feeling	1	2	0	2
Negative self-feeling	0	1	0	0
Not applicable	0	0	0	0
Gain- and loss-framed				
Gain-framed	8	5	2	4
Loss-framed	0	2	0	7
Not applicable	0	2	0	1