

Attitudes & Social Behavior

“ATTITUDE IS THE MOST DISTINCTIVE AND INDISPENSABLE CONCEPT IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY” -- --GORDON ALLPORT

Definition of Attitudes

- Attitudes are often defined in tortuous ways by psychologists
- But they have one thing in common: _____
 - Valence – positive or negative value
- “Attitudes are likes and dislikes” – Daryl Bem

Why study attitudes?

- Attitudes are a central topic in Social Psychology
- They are important for at least 4 reasons:
 - They are _____
 - They serve a number of functions
 - They help us interpret information
 - *They _____

Pervasiveness

- There are few things about which we feel “neutral”
- When you switch on a game (e.g., a tennis match), you quickly start rooting for one side or the other – even if you don’t know the players

Letters vs. Numbers

- Using the IAT, we tested letter strings (ATZLM) vs. numbers (47358)
- Did we find that people’s attitudes were, in fact, neutral?

Attitude Functions

Attitudes serve a number of purposes (functions) in our lives, including:

- Help us define “who we are”
 - _____ - _____ function
- Help us get along with others
 - _____ _____ function
- Help us appraise the world we live in (including other people and objects)
 - _____ function

Attitudes Guide Interpretations

- When faced with ambiguous information, we use our attitudes to decide how to evaluate it
- What about “objective” information?
- Research suggests there is no such thing

“They saw a game”

- In the 1950’s, Princeton and Dartmouth football teams played a grudge match
- Due to numerous injuries, it continues to be the worst game in the history of both schools

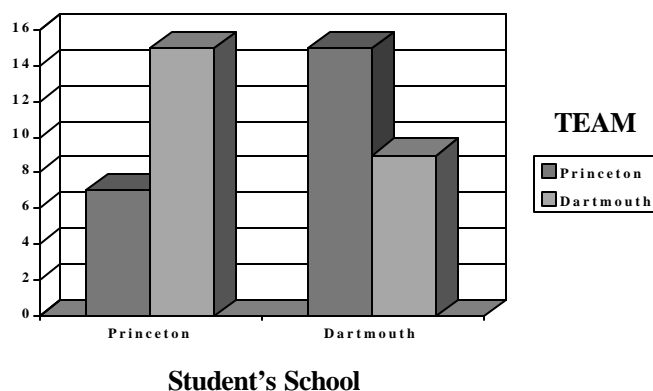
The research

- Weeks later, experimenters took a film of the game to both schools
- Students were asked to count the number of violations made by each team
- In reality, each team made about the same number
- Would students see the game “objectively”?

Summary Results

⋮

of Violations



⋮

- Subjects viewed the opposing school as the aggressor, even though in reality their own team caused as much trouble
- Although they evaluated the SAME game, subjects came to very different conclusions

- This suggests that having an “unbiased” opinion is hard to do

Student-Teacher Evaluations

- Students rate teachers at the end of every course
- They are rating the SAME instructor, but opinions vary
- Which of the following is the strongest predictor of teacher evaluations?
 - Teachers’ IQ, teachers’ friendliness, students’ IQ, students’ expected grade?

Attitudes Guide Behavior

- A primary goal of psychologists is to predict human behavior
- Although attitudes are far from perfect predictors, they are often thought to guide our behavior
- Whether or not they guide behavior, attitudes are important to study for all these other reasons
- So let’s see how we do it

How do we study attitudes?

- Direct Attitude Assessment (Self-report)
 - Questionnaires
 - Surveys

Why not just “ask” people?

- This is probably fine if you are asking about ice cream
- But what if you are asking about prejudice?
- In the 1960’s, prejudice researchers became concerned about biased responses
 - _____ bias
 - The tendency to give the socially acceptable rather than the genuine response

How would YOU answer?

Old-Fashioned Racism:

- “I would mind if a Black family moved next door”
- “Whites are more intelligent than Blacks”

Old-Fashioned Sexism:

- “Women should stay at home and not worry about having a career”
- “Men should be in charge of all major decisions”

- Often, people would refuse to answer
- When they did answer, researchers did not feel they could trust the response
 - When people respond to being questioned in a negative way, this problem is called _____
- So they started to think about different attitude assessment techniques

Methodological Changes

- Instead of just asking people about their prejudices using standard self-reports, researchers began to use other means of tapping attitudes
 - _____
- Indirect Measures
- By hooking people up to a bogus “lie detector” researchers found more prejudiced answers, compared with control groups
- Did it work? Yes – people gave more _____ responses when hooked up, compared with controls

Surveys

- Surveys are a prominent self-report method
- Typically, researchers randomly dial people across the country to ask them their opinions
- The NY Times has a recent example
- Their goal was to “take America’s pulse” on a number of social issues
- Let’s see how they did

N.Y. Times Survey

- Agree or disagree:
- “Lying is sometimes necessary, especially to protect someone’s feelings”
- Given what you know about human behavior, the vast majority should have what? Agreed or disagreed? In fact, _____% agreed
- Yes or No:
- “Have you ever cheated **just a little** on your taxes or an office expense account?”
- Given what you know about human behavior, the majority should have said what? Yes or No? In fact, _____% agreed

- This shows that any **morality question** also evokes _____ (not just prejudice)
- Another problem with surveys is that people often respond _____ to questions
- For example, questions about love and marriage produced the following pattern

Sample responses

- Agree or disagree:
- “It is extremely difficult to find true love in society today”
- _____% agreed
- Yes or No:
- “If you got married today, would you expect it to last your whole life?”
- _____% said yes!

Asked of married people

- “Are you absolutely certain your partner is faithful to you or not?”
- _____% said yes
- “Have YOU ever cheated on your partner?”
- _____% said yes

Self-serving biases

- These responses not only show inconsistency
- They also show _____
 - Believing you will not get divorced (even though it’s harder to find true love)
 - Believing your partner does not cheat (even though you do!)

Should we ask people?

- For the most part, asking people is not the best way to assess (many) attitudes
 - People lie to “look good”
 - People are _____
 - Show self-serving bias
- Luckily, researchers have other ways of asking the question

_____ Attitude Tests

- Attitudes help us to _____ information
- Researchers use this well-known finding to measure people's attitudes indirectly
- Subjects aren't asked (directly) for their attitude – instead, the attitude is inferred from other responses

Projective Tests

- Earliest indirect attitude measures came from clinical psychology:
- Rorschach Inkblot Test
- The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)
- These are less used today, due to problems with _____

The Forced Error Test

- More commonly used are reports of judgments that are thought to be biased by one's _____
- The forced error test is one example

Decide which is true

- The number of female lawyers and judges in the U.S. in 1993 was:
A. 120,000 B. 305,000 C. 148,000
- The number of nuclear power plants around the world in 1995 was
A. 225 B. 1,309 C. 437
- Ronald Reagan's GPA in college was
A. 3.5 B. 2.0 C. 2.5

Forced Error Test (FET)

- When people estimate uncertain quantities, they rely on their beliefs and attitudes
- If you are pro-women, pro-environment, or Republican you might give a higher number than people who disagree with you
- Note that no one is _____ about women, the environment, or Reagan
- But it leaks out in your judgments, nonetheless

Limitation

- One problem with the FET is that it can only be used when information is not commonly known
- The next example is more globally useful as an indirect attitude measure

The principle is that people interpret _____ behavior using their own attitude

Contrasted Opinion Test

- “Mary didn’t go to church once the whole time she was in college, but she claimed she was a religious person. She said that she prayed occasionally, and that she believed in Christian ideals. Sometimes she watched religious programs on TV like the 700 Club, or the Billy Graham Crusade.”
- How religious is Mary? (1 = not, 10 = very)

How religious is Mary?

- If you are religious yourself, you are likely to rate Mary _____
- If you are not religious yourself, you are likely to rate Mary _____
- It’s the same information, but _____ is reflected in your opinion of Mary
- You contrast your own behavior with Mary’s, and come up with a judgment

Which is better for predicting behavior?

- Predicting behavior is the main reason to study attitudes – are indirect or direct measures better?
- Often, the relationship between attitudes and behavior is low
 - Wicker (1969) found it was very low! (average $r = .15$)
 - But this research ONLY used _____ measures

Early cheating study (1930’s)

- The att→beh relationship can be especially low when the behavior is _____
- In one famous study, researchers assessed students’ attitudes toward cheating
- They then measured cheating behavior across 5 exams

Correlation = ._____

The Anagram (Cheating) Study

- Subjects filled out a questionnaire about their honesty
- They also read 6 vignettes describing other people engaging in ambiguously or moderately dishonest behaviors
- They then judged whether the person was honest or not

How honest is Pat?

(1=not honest, 10=very)

- Patricia checked out a relatively rare book from the school library. The due date had passed and she received a letter in the mail saying that she had to pay \$50 to replace the book if she didn't return it. Pat realized this was a small price to pay for this particular book. The book was out-of-print and she had always wanted a copy. She decided to pay the fine and report the book as lost.

Scoring Attitudes

- The responses to 6 vignettes were averaged to form the _____ attitude measure
- Responses to the items on the direct attitude measure (e.g., "I think cheating on exams is okay in some instances") were also averaged
- In each case, high scores indicate more positive attitudes toward cheating

The cheating behavior measure

- Subjects also completed an anagram task – ostensibly not related to the attitude measures
- They were given 12 anagrams, all which were extremely difficult to solve
- At the end of the survey, they were told to use a scoring key to correct themselves
- Cheating = the number of anagrams "solved" when there were no written marks on the test showing effort
- Mean cheating score = 3.5 (range 0-12)

The primary question was:

- Would behavior correlate better with the direct or indirect attitude measure?

Fill in the table below with the correlations between Attitude and Behavior

ATTITUDE	BEHAVIOR (Cheating at Anagrams)
Direct Attitude Measure (“I think cheating is OK sometimes”)	
Indirect Attitude Measure (“Pat is pretty honest”)	

Which type of attitude predicted behavior best? Direct or Indirect?

- Chapter 4 discusses reasons why the attitude-behavior relationship is hard to find
- Social desirability bias is one reason why
- Another problem is that your attitudes are a person-based factor
- But your behavior is based on many other factors as well

What else affects behavior?

- The _____
 - Students may have feared getting caught (less cheating)
 - Students may have felt time pressured (more cheating)
- Having a vested interest in the behavior
 - Students may have felt that the anagram task was important
- _____
 - What other people want you to do
 - Students may have feared disappointing someone they cared about
- Social norms
 - The norm “not to cheat” is strong
- Social roles
 - Next session, we’ll see a film showing the importance of roles with respect to behavior

This is a lot!

- Maybe we shouldn’t be surprised by Wicker’s criticism of the attitudes → behavior literature

Behavior → Attitudes

- But in the 1970's, the bad news about attitudes predicting behavior led some to suggest we have the relationship all wrong
- Maybe _____ predicts attitudes!
 - Self-perception theory
 - Cognitive dissonance theory
 - **Self-justification effects**

Self-perception theory

- Argues that you form your attitudes by watching your behavior, much as you infer other people's attitudes from their actions
 - “I must like David – I keep hoping to see him in class”
- Likely to be especially true when the attitude is _____ and the behavior is voluntary
 - “I must like Thai food; I keep going to Pad Thai for lunch”
- But what about when it's not voluntary?
 - “I must like Psych 321 – I keep showing up for class”?
 - Other factors bring you to class besides your attitude!

Self-perception theory

- Your text discusses this, but there are two things I want to underscore
- First, self-perception theory is limited to _____ attitudes (you already know how you feel about Taco Bell)
- Second, it takes a relatively “cold” (cognitive) approach to the behavior→attitude link
 - There isn't any motivation involved – you just watch yourself, just as if you were watching a stranger

Cognitive Dissonance

- By contrast, cog diss theory pertains more to attitudes that we already have (“old” ones) – in fact, it is more a theory of attitude change than attitude formation per se
- AND it takes a relatively “hot” (motivational/emotional) approach to the behavior→attitude link

Intro to Cog Diss Theory

- Everyday, we find ourselves in situations in which our actions and our attitudes do not necessarily match

Cognitive dissonance theory

- When our actions and attitudes are inconsistent, we feel tension (_____) that must be resolved
 - The tension results in a “drive” to reduce it, similar to thirst, hunger, sex
- The easiest way to reduce dissonance is to _____(b/c the behavior can't be revoked)

Dissonance Theory

- This is especially true when the behavior is voluntary AND you have no other good reason for your actions
- Chapter 4 covers this theory as it pertains to self-justification effects (so will I)

Self-justification effect

- If you are relatively free to do something aversive (e.g., tell a lie) you might justify your action by “realizing” you weren't really lying
- This is the heart of cognitive dissonance theory, as Festinger's classic experiment shows

Festinger & Carlsmith (1959)

- Subjects did a boring experiment
- Later, they were asked to serve as an emergency “confederate” for experimenter
- “The research is about expectancies,” E said, “and I need you to tell the next subject that the experiment is interesting”
- Subjects were paid \$_____ or \$_____ to lie (Control subjects were never asked to lie)
- Later, they were stopped by a departmental secretary and asked to fill out an “unrelated” measure
- Among the questions was, “How enjoyable was the experiment you just did”?

Who liked the experiment? – see Figure in your text

- People in the _____ condition
- Why didn't people in the _____ condition like the experiment?

• _____

- People given \$1.00 had no external justification for lying, so they had to come up with an internal excuse for their actions (_____ **-justification**)

Do we love what we suffer for?

- Aronson also researched _____ **-justification** effects of dissonance
- He was fascinated by fraternity hazings
 - People who voluntarily undergo torture and humiliation show fierce loyalty
- Here is his famous laboratory experiment, designed to model fraternity hazing
 - He used women to see if gender mattered

The Sex Discussion Group Study

- Cover story: 63 women reported to the lab for the “dynamics of group discussion” study
- They were told that the topic (chosen to attract lots of participants) was “The Psychology of Sex”
- But “because people can be shy” they had to be screened for inhibitions

Three conditions:

- Randomly assigned to one of 3 “screening” conditions
- Control – Read aloud a list of non sex-related words (toys, bench, window)
- Mild – Read aloud a list of sex-related words (bed, sheet, underwear)
- Severe – Read aloud a list of obscene, sexually graphic words
- Subjects then participated in their “first discussion group”
- In fact, all they did was listen to a previously recorded (boring) discussion of the “mating habits of birds”
- Afterwards, they rated their liking for the sex discussion group project

Predict the findings

- If cognitive dissonance theory is correct, which group should like the discussion group the most (control, mild, or severe initiation)?
- Why?

Who liked the discussion group the most? _____

Comparing Theories

- Cognitive dissonance
- Attitudes are _____
- Behavior is _____
- Unpleasant affect is _____ to change the attitude (“hot”)

- Self-perception
- Attitudes are _____
- Behavior is _____
- Affect is _____ necessary to form the attitude (“cold”)

Both theories argue that _____, not the other way around.