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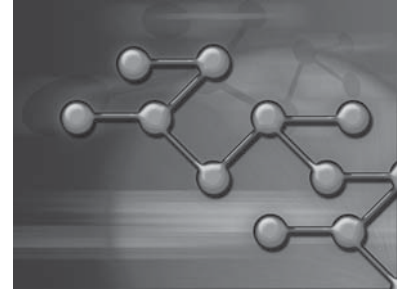
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Attitudes

5

The ultimate determinant in the struggle now going on for the world will not be bombs and rockets but a test of wills and ideas—a trial of spiritual resolve: the values we hold, the beliefs we cherish and the ideals to which we are dedicated.

—Ronald Reagan



Ida Tarbell is not a name most of us recognize. A history of American women doesn't give her even a single line (Hymowitz & Weissman, 1984). Yet, she was at the center of American life for the first three decades of the 20th century. Teddy Roosevelt hurled the mocking epithet "muckraker" at her. It was a label she eventually wore proudly, for she, perhaps more than anyone else, told the American people about the corruption, conspiracies, strong-arm tactics, and enormous greed that went into "business as usual" at the turn of the century (Fleming, 1986).

Tarbell grew up in Titusville, Pennsylvania. In the last decades of the 19th century, it was the center of the booming oil industry. It was also the town that would make Standard Oil Company and its founder, John D. Rockefeller, richer than anyone could imagine.

Tarbell grew up among derricks and oil drums, in oil-cloaked fields, under oil-flecked skies. In 1872 her father's business was threatened by a scheme devised by Rockefeller and his partners that would allow them to ship their oil via the railroads at a much cheaper fare than any other producer, thus driving their competition out of the business. Frank Tarbell and the others fought this scheme and forced the railroads to treat everyone fairly, at least temporarily. Ida was well informed about the conspiracy and, possessing her father's strong sense of justice, was outraged. She vowed that if she were given the chance, she would make people aware of the greed and dishonesty she had witnessed. At this time she was 15 years old (Weinberg & Weinberg, 1961).

In college, Tarbell was a free spirit. She became friends with whomever she wanted, ignored all the unwritten social rules, learned to be critical and disciplined in her work, and graduated with a degree in natural science. After working as a schoolteacher, she went off to Paris to become a writer.

Key Questions

As you read this chapter, find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is an attitude?
2. What is the relationship of attitudes to values?
3. What are implicit and explicit attitudes?
4. How are attitude surveys conducted?
5. What are the potential sources of bias in a survey?
6. What are behavioral measures of attitudes?
7. What is the Implicit Attitude Test (IAT)?
8. What does the IAT tell us about our prejudices?
9. How are attitudes formed?
10. Can attitudes be inherited?
11. What is agenda setting?
12. What is naïve realism, and how does it influence our political attitudes?

13. What impact do social networks have on attitude formation and change?
14. What is the relationship between attitudes and behavior?
15. What is the notion of the nonrational actor?
16. How has the controversy over the rational and nonrational actor been resolved?

For years, she wrote articles and biographies, but in 1900, she started to write about oil. She began to form an idea about a series of articles on the Standard Oil Company, which supplied almost all the oil that was used to light American homes in the days before electricity. Although Standard Oil had been investigated on charges of bribery and other illegal tactics by authorities for almost the entire 30 years of its existence, very little evidence existed in the public domain. Tarbell got around that by getting to know one of the company's vice presidents, Henry Rogers, who let her have access to private records. Rogers was unapologetic about his role. He cheerfully admitted that Rockefeller lied, cheated, double-dealt, and used violence or the threat of it to build an enormously successful, powerful, and efficient company (Fleming, 1986).

Tarbell's book, *The History of the Standard Oil Company*, published in 1904, appeared in monthly installments in *McClure's* magazine. It was a sensation. It read like a suspense story, and readers couldn't wait until the next month's issue. The book had a ready-made villain: John D. Rockefeller. He was portrayed as a money-hungry rogue without a shred of humanity, and that is the image of him that has come down to us 100 years later. After the book came out, he tried to restore his image by giving some \$35 million to charity. At the time, he was estimated to be worth over \$900 million, a sum equivalent to many billions in today's currency.

Tarbell's work had a tremendous impact on the nation. It led not only to a number of lawsuits against the oil industry for its monopolistic practices, but also to federal antitrust laws that dismantled the original Standard Oil Company. Today, we have a number of independent Standard Oil companies (Ohio, New Jersey, etc.) as a result of Tarbell's work.

Even more remarkable than what Tarbell did was the way she did it. She was entirely skeptical of all the common beliefs of her time. She did not believe in the theory of the inferiority of women, prevalent in the early years of her life, nor did she believe in the turn-of-the-century theory that women were morally superior and evolutionarily more advanced. She joined no organizations or social reform movements. Yet she took on the most powerful men in the country and became a formidable adversary (Fleming, 1986).

Tarbell was determined, controlled, and unafraid, but her attitudes and behavior were also shaped and informed by her experience. She grew up in a family that supported her in her independent ways and encouraged her to do what she thought was right. She was powerfully influenced by her father, within whom she saw a strong sense of justice. Events that occurred during her formative years motivated and inspired her and forever altered the way she viewed the world.

The attitudes that Tarbell held played a fundamental role in the way she perceived the world around her. Like other mechanisms of social cognition, they organized her experiences, directed her behavior, and helped define who she was. We begin by exploring what attitudes are and what role they play in our lives. What are the elements that go into attitudes? How do they flow from and express our deepest values? What are the processes by which we acquire or develop attitudes? And what is the relationship between attitudes and behavior in our day-to-day lives? How do attitudes express the relationships among what we think, what we feel, what we intend to do, and what we actually do? These are some of the questions addressed in this chapter.

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What Are Attitudes?

The study of attitudes has been of fundamental concern to social psychologists throughout the history of the field. Other issues may come and go, dictated by fashion in theory and research and influenced by current events, but interest in attitudes remains. This preoccupation with attitudes is easy to understand. The concept of attitudes is central to explaining our thoughts, feelings, and actions with regard to other people, situations, and ideas.

In this section, we explore the basic concept of attitudes. First we look at and elaborate on a classic definition of the term. Then we consider how attitudes relate to values, what functions attitudes serve, and how attitudes can be measured.

Allport's Definition of Attitudes

The word *attitude* crops up often in our everyday conversation. We speak of having an attitude about someone or something. In this usage, attitude usually implies feelings that are either positive or negative. We also speak of someone who has a “bad attitude.” You may, for example, think that a coworker has an “attitude problem.” In this usage, attitude implies some personality characteristic or behavior pattern that offends us.

Social psychologists use the term *attitude* differently than this. In order to study and measure attitudes, they need a clear and careful definition of the term. Gordon Allport, an early attitude theorist, formulated the following definition: “An **attitude** is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related” (1935). This is a rich and comprehensive definition, and although there have been many redefinitions over the years, Allport’s definition still captures much that is essential about attitudes (see Figure 5.1). Consequently, we adopt it here as our central definition. The definition can be broken into three parts, each with some important implications (Rajecki, 1990).

First, because attitudes are mental or neural states of readiness, they are necessarily private. Scientists who study attitudes cannot measure them directly in the way, for example, that medical doctors can measure blood pressure. Only the person who holds an attitude is capable of having direct access to it. The social psychological measures of an attitude must be indirect.

attitude A mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related.

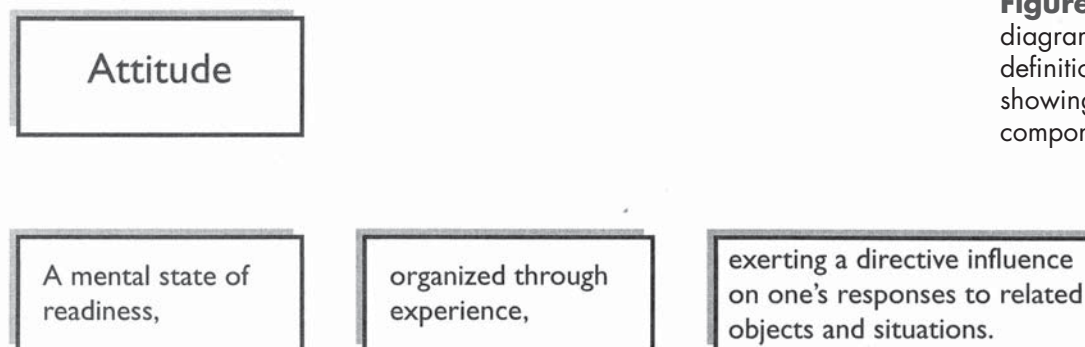


Figure 5.1 A schematic diagram of Allport’s definition of an attitude showing the important components of an attitude.

Second, if attitudes are organized through experience, they are presumably formed through learning from a variety of experiences and influences. Our attitudes about, say, appropriate roles for men and women are shaped by the attitudes passed on by our culture, especially by parents, friends, and other agents of socialization, such as schools and television. Recall that even though the wider society was not supportive of women in nontraditional roles in Ida Tarbell's time, her parents were very supportive. The notion that our attitudes arise only from experience is too limiting, however. There is also increasing evidence that some attitudes also have a genetic element (Tesser, 1993). Finally, because attitudes exert a directive or dynamic influence on a person's response to objects, people, and situations, attitudes are directly related to our actions or behavior.

Attitude Structures

An attitude is made up of four interconnected components: cognitions, affective responses, behavioral intentions, and behaviors. To understand this interconnectedness, let's consider the attitude of someone opposed to gun-control legislation. Her attitude can be stated as, "I am opposed to laws in any way controlling the ownership of guns."

This attitude would be supported by cognitions, or thoughts, about laws and gun ownership. For example, she might think that unrestricted gun ownership is a basic right guaranteed by the Second Amendment of the Constitution. The attitude would also be supported by affective responses, or feelings. She might feel strongly about her right to do what she wants to do without government interference, or she might feel strongly about protecting her family from intruders.

The attitude, and the cognitions and feelings that support it, can result in behavioral intentions and behaviors. Our hypothetical person might intend to send money to the National Rifle Association or to call her representative to argue against a gun-control bill. Finally, she might turn that intention into some real action and send the money or call her legislator.

An attitude is really a summary of an **attitude structure**, which consists of these interconnected components (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1992). Thus, the attitude "I oppose laws that restrict handgun ownership" comprises a series of interrelated thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

A change in one component of an attitude structure might very well lead to changes in the others (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1992), because an attitude structure is dynamic, with each component influencing the others. For example, if a close relative of yours lost his job because of a new gun-control law, a person who favors strong gun-control laws may change her mind. The attitude structure would now be in turmoil. New feelings about guns might lead to new thoughts; intentions might change and, with them, behaviors.

Generally, the affective component dominates the attitude (Breckler & Wiggins, 1989). When we think of a particular object or person, our initial response is usually some expression of affect, as in, "I feel women will make good political candidates." We do not simply have attitudes about war, or the president, or baseball: We like these things, or we do not. When an attitude is evoked, it is always with positive or negative feeling, although, to be sure, the feeling varies in intensity. It is likely that our most intensely held attitudes in particular are primarily affective in nature (Ajzen, 1989). Thus, you might think of an attitude as primarily a response emphasizing how you feel about someone or something, as primarily an evaluation of the person or object. But keep in mind also that this evaluation is based on all the thoughts, intentions, and behaviors that go into the structure of the attitude (Zanna & Rempel, 1988).

attitude structure

The fact that attitudes comprise a cognitive, affective, and behavioral component in their basic structure.



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Attitudes as an Expression of Values

Our attitudes flow from and express our values (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984). A **value** is a conception of what is desirable; it is a guideline for a person's actions, a standard for behavior. Thus, for example, the attitude that more women and members of different ethnic groups should be elected to office might flow from the value of equality. The attitude that public officials who lie or cheat should be punished severely might flow from the value of honesty. Ida Tarbell placed a high value on fairness and justice and was outraged by the actions of Standard Oil Company.

Notice that attitudes are directed toward objects, people, and situations; values are broad, abstract notions. Because values are more general than attitudes, there are few values but many attitudes. Just as an attitude can be seen as a system of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components, so a value can be seen as containing many interrelated attitudes. The value of equality could give rise not only to the attitude, say, that more women and members of different ethnic groups should hold office but also to countless other attitudes relating to the innumerable people, objects, issues, and ideas toward which one might direct thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Milton Rokeach, a social psychologist who spent most of his professional life studying how people organize their value systems, argued that there are two distinct categories of values (1973, 1979). He called one category *terminal values*. Terminal values according to Rokeach (1973) refer to desired "end states." For example, equality, freedom, a comfortable life, and salvation would all be end states. The other category he called *instrumental values*. Instrumental values, which flow from our preferred end states, could be values such as being forgiving, broadminded, and responsible. According to Rokeach, two fundamental terminal values, equality and freedom, are especially predictive of a whole range of attitudes. Attitudes about the role of government, for example, often can be predicted by knowing how someone ranks these two values. A person who values equality more highly probably would want the government to take an active role in education, health, and other social welfare issues. A person who values freedom more highly probably would prefer that government stay out of the way and let everyone fend for themselves. Consider a person who rates equality higher than freedom. How might this affect her attitudes on specific issues? A high value placed on equality implies that the individual is more concerned with the common good than with individual freedoms (although freedom might still be ranked relatively highly by that person). This individual might be in favor of "sin taxes" (such as high tobacco and alcohol taxes) to raise money for national health care and also might be in favor of stronger gun-control laws. A person who considers freedom to be more desirable than equality probably would be against sin taxes ("It's none of the government's business if people want to kill themselves") and also against government regulation of gun ownership.

When asked, do people account for their attitudes by referring to specific values? And do people on opposing sides of an issue hold opposing values? In one study, researchers measured participants' attitudes toward two issues, abortion and nuclear weapons (Kristiansen & Zanna, 1988). Next, participants were asked to rank the (personal) importance of 18 values, such as freedom, equality, an exciting life, family security, and so on, and then relate each value to their attitudes on these two issues.

People with different attitudes consider different values important. People who oppose the right to abortion, for example, give a higher ranking to certain values (e.g., mature love, wisdom, true friendship, salvation, and a world of beauty) than do people who support the right to abortion. Those who support the right to abortion give

value A concept closely related to an attitude that is a standard of what is desirable for one's actions.

a higher ranking to other values (e.g., happiness, family security, a comfortable life, pleasure, an exciting life, and a sense of accomplishment) than do those who oppose the right to abortion.

At the same time, both groups shared many values. Both ranked freedom, inner harmony, and equality as the values most important to their attitude. Differences in the rankings of other values were slight. The results also suggest that people on either side of volatile issues might be much closer in their values than they realize.

Explicit and Implicit Attitudes

explicit attitude An attitude that operates on a conscious level via controlled processing.

In many cases we freely express and are aware of our attitudes and how they influence our behavior. An attitude falling into this category is known as an **explicit attitude**. Explicit attitudes operate on a conscious level, so we are aware of them—aware of the cognitive underpinnings of them—and are conscious of how they relate to behavior. They operate via controlled processing and take some cognitive effort to activate. For example, you may know how you feel toward a given political candidate and match your behavior (e.g., voting for him or her) to that attitude. It is these explicit attitudes that we often find having a directive effect on behavior.

implicit attitude An attitude that affects behavior automatically, without conscious thought and below the level of awareness via automatic processing.

Although many of our attitudes operate on this conscious level, there are others that operate unconsciously. This form of an attitude is known as an **implicit attitude**. Specifically, an implicit attitude is defined as “actions or judgments that are under control of automatically activated evaluation without the performer’s awareness of that causation” (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998, p. 1464). In other words, implicit attitudes affect behaviors automatically, without conscious thought, and below the level of awareness. For example, an individual may have a quick negative reaction toward a member of a minority group, even though the individual professes positive and tolerant attitudes toward that group. The “gut-level” reaction occurs without thought and is often distasteful to the individual (Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000).

Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler (2000) proposed a model of dual attitudes to explain the relationship between explicit and implicit attitudes. They suggested that when one develops a new attitude, the new attitude does not erase the old attitude. Instead, the two attitudes coexist. The new attitude serves as the explicit attitude; the old attitude remains in memory and takes on the role of the implicit attitude. This implicit attitude can override the explicit attitude when the situation is right. For example, a person who has changed from a racially prejudiced attitude to a nonprejudiced attitude may still have an automatic negative reaction to a member of a minority group, despite the newly formed positive attitude. In this case, the underlying unconscious implicit attitude has overridden the explicit attitude.

Researchers have usually assumed that when people develop new attitudes, they tend to override or obliterate the old attitudes. However, Petty, Tormala, Brinol, and Jarvis (2006) have found that when attitudes change, the old attitude may not only remain in memory but in fact can affect behavior. Petty and his colleagues did several experiments in which they created new attitudes in people and then changed those attitudes for some of the experimental participants and did not change them for others. The researchers found that when participants were given new attitudes via a “priming” procedure in which the people were not aware of the influence attempt, their response to the person or object was ambivalent. In other words, if you were conditioned to like Phil but then were primed with negative words about Phil (presented very quickly, just below the level of conscious awareness), your attitude should have changed from positive to negative. We might expect that the new attitude would override the old, as Wilson et al. (2000) originally suggested. However, that was not quite what happened. The new attitude

toward Phil was ambivalent; you liked him and you didn't like him. You weren't quite sure how you felt about Phil. This suggests that the old attitude hasn't disappeared and is still affecting your judgments about Phil. This also suggests that when you take a test of implicit attitudes, which are discussed later in this chapter, an older prejudicial attitude may leak and merge with a newer, nonprejudiced one. This may be why lots of people who take implicit attitude tests are surprised, even astounded, that they are as prejudiced as the test seems to say they are.

How Are Attitudes Measured?

What happens when investigators want to learn about people's attitudes on a particular issue, such as affirmative action, illegal aliens, or capital punishment? As pointed out earlier in this chapter, attitudes are private; we can't know what a person's attitudes are just by looking at her or him. For this reason, social psychologists use a variety of techniques to discover and measure people's attitudes. Some of these techniques rely on direct responses, whereas others are more indirect.

The Attitude Survey

The most commonly used techniques for measuring attitudes are attitude surveys. In an **attitude survey**, the researcher mails or emails a questionnaire to a potential respondent, conducts a face-to-face interview, or asks a series of questions on the telephone. Because respondents report on their own attitudes, an attitude survey is a self-report measure. A respondent indicates his or her attitude by answering a series of questions.

There may be several types of questions on an attitude survey. Open-ended questions allow respondents to provide an answer in their own words (Oskamp, 1991). For example, respondents might be asked, What qualifications do you think are necessary in a president of the United States? Although this type of question yields rich, in-depth information, the answers can be difficult to analyze. Consequently, most of the questions on an attitude survey are close-ended, or restricted, questions such as, Are women qualified to be president of the United States? Respondents would check a box indicating a response, e.g., yes, no, or don't know. Notice that this type of question forces respondents into making one of a limited number of choices.

Another kind of survey item is the rating scale, in which respondents indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a statement by circling a number on a scale. One of the most popular of these methods is the Likert scale. Likert items ask the person to agree or disagree with such attitude statements as the following on a 5-point scale: "I believe women are qualified to serve in national office." Likert's technique is a summated rating scale, so called because individuals are given an attitude score based on the sum of their responses.

In evaluating election preferences or other attitudes, social psychologists usually are interested in the attitudes of a large group. Because it is not possible to survey every member of the group, researchers conducting an attitude survey select a sample or small subgroup of individuals from the larger group, or population. Don't think that you need a huge sample to have a valid survey. In fact, most nationwide surveys use a sample of only about 1,500 individuals.

Although a sample need not be large, it must be representative. As you recall from Chapter 1, a representative sample is one that resembles the population in all important respects. Thus, for any category that is relevant to the attitude being measured (e.g., race and ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, age), the sample would contain

attitude survey A self-report method of measuring attitudes that involves a researcher's mailing a questionnaire to a potential respondent, conducting a face-to-face interview, or asking a series of questions on the telephone.

the same proportion of people from each group within the category (e.g., from each race and ethnic group) as does the population whose attitudes are being measured. A representative sample contrasts with a biased sample, which is skewed toward one or more characteristics and does not adequately represent the larger population.

Potential Biases in Attitude Surveys

Although attitude surveys, containing various types of questions, are very popular, they do have several problems that may make any responses made by research participants invalid. Schwarz (1999) suggested that the way a person responds to a survey question depends on a variety of factors, including question wording, the format of the question, and the context within which the question is placed.

For example, presidential candidate Ross Perot commissioned a survey in March 1993 that included the following question: Should laws be passed to eliminate all possibilities of special interests giving huge sums of money to candidates? Ninety-nine percent of the people who responded to the survey said yes. A second survey done by an independent polling firm asked the same question in a different way: Do groups have the right to contribute to the candidate they support? In response to this question, only 40% favored limits on spending. This is a textbook example of how the wording of the question can influence polling data (Goleman, 1993).

Phrasing is important, but so are the specific words used in a question. For example, in one survey commissioned some years ago by the American Stock Exchange, respondents were asked how much stock they owned. Much to everyone's surprise, the highest stock ownership was found in the Southwest. It seems that the respondents were thinking of stock of the four-legged kind, not the Wall Street type. The moral is that you must consider the meaning of the words from the point of view of the people answering the questions.

Finally, respondents may lie, or to put it somewhat differently, they may not remember what they actually did or thought. Williams (1994) and his students asked voters whether they had voted in a very recent election; almost all said they had. Williams was able to check the actual rolls of those who had voted (not how they voted) and found that only about 65% of his respondents had voted. Now, some may have forgotten, but many simply did not want to admit they had failed to do a socially desirable thing—to vote in an election (Paulhus & Reid, 1991).

Behavioral Measures

Because of the problems associated with self-report techniques, social psychologists have developed behavioral techniques of measuring attitudes. These techniques, in one way or another, avoid relying on responses to questions.

Unobtrusive measures assess attitudes by indirect means; the individual whose attitudes are being measured simply is never aware of it. For example, in one early study, investigators measured voting preferences by tallying the number of bumper stickers for a particular candidate on cars in a parking lot (Wrightsmann, 1969). Other researchers measured attitudes toward competing brands of cola by searching through garbage cans. Still others attempted to determine the most popular exhibit at a museum by measuring the amount of wear and tear on various parts of the carpet (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, Sechrist, & Grove, 1981).

Another example of unobtrusive measurement of attitudes is the lost-letter technique (Milgram, Mann, & Hartner, 1965). If a researcher wants to measure a community's attitudes toward, say, its foreign residents, she might not get honest answers on a Likert-type questionnaire. But, if she has some stamps and envelopes, she can try the lost-letter

unobtrusive measure

A method of assessing attitudes such that the individuals whose attitudes you are measuring are not aware of your interest in them.

technique. This is what the researcher does: She addresses an envelope to someone with a foreign-sounding name at a local address. She puts a stamp on the envelope and then drops it on a crowded street near the post office so that it can easily be found and mailed. As her baseline control, she drops a stamped envelope addressed to someone whose name doesn't sound foreign. She repeats the procedure as many times as necessary to get a large enough sample. Then all she has to do is count the envelopes that turn up in the mail and compare the number with the names that sound foreign to the number with names that doesn't. This is her measure of that community's attitude toward foreigners.

Cognitive Measures: The Implicit Association Test (IAT)

In recent years a new test has been developed to tap our implicit attitudes, self-concepts, and other important aspects of our cognitive system. The term *implicit* in this context refers to relatively automatic mental associations (Hofman, Gawronski, Gschwendner, Le, & Schmitt, 2005). The most well-known implicit measures test is the **Implicit Association Test (IAT)** (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>) developed by Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz (1998). Implicit attitudes, as we suggested earlier, are attitudes that we hold but are not aware of, so that you are not able to directly report that attitude. These implicit attitudes can only be measured by indirect means. The IAT aims at determining the strength of connection between two concepts. For example, the IAT asked test-takers to assign a stimulus, which can be word or pictures, as quickly as they possibly can, to a pair of targets. Consider the following example.

Implicit Association Test (IAT) The most widely known measure of implicit attitudes.

Barry Bonds vs. Babe Ruth

As I write this chapter, the controversial San Francisco Giant left fielder, Barry Bonds, has passed Babe Ruth for second place on the all-time homerun list. Bonds is an African American and Ruth was white, playing in an era when African Americans were barred from playing in the major leagues. On the IAT Web site, you are asked to respond as quickly as you can to different photos of Barry or the Babe. In addition, you are asked to respond to the pairing of the words *good* or *bad* when used with photos of the two stars. The strength of connection (associative strength) between two concepts is therefore assessed by combining a pair of categories—in this case, race (African American vs. Caucasian) and a pair of attributes (good-bad). These are combined in both association compatible (Babe—good [presumably]) and incompatible (Babe—bad). The scoring of these associations may take a number of different forms, but basically, the differences in the time it takes to respond to these pairings (mean response latencies) is the measure of the relative strength between the two pairs of concepts (Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003). The fundamental assumption behind the IAT is that we “don't always ‘speak our minds,’” and as is noted on the IAT Web site, we may not even know our own minds. The IAT is an attempt to tap into our unconscious associations. It has been used to explore the unconscious bases of prejudicial attitudes of all kinds.

What Has the IAT Taught Us about Our Racial and Ethnic Attitudes?

The results of the millions of tests on IAT Web sites showed that 88% of white people had a pro-white or antiblack implicit bias; nearly 83% of heterosexuals showed implicit biases for straight people over gays and lesbians; and more than two-thirds of non-Arab, non-Muslim volunteers displayed implicit biases against Arab Muslims.

In addition, similar results were obtained for religious, gender, and socioeconomic attitudes. The most interesting finding is that these results contrast not only with what people say about their own attitudes but also with what they actually believe about their true attitudes. Marajin Banaji, who helped develop the IAT, has said that “The Implicit

Association Test measures the thumbprint of the culture on our minds. If Europeans had been carted to Africa as slaves, blacks would have the same beliefs about whites that whites now have about blacks” (Vedantam, 2005).

How Are Attitudes Formed?

We can see now that attitudes affect how we think, feel, and behave toward a wide range of people, objects, and ideas that we encounter. Where do our attitudes come from? Are they developed, as Allport suggested, through experience? If so, just how do our attitudes develop through experience? And are there other ways in which we acquire our attitudes?

The term *attitude formation* refers to the movement we make from having no attitude toward an object to having some positive or negative attitude toward that object (Oskamp, 1991). How you acquire an attitude plays a very important role in how you use it. In this section, we explore a range of mechanisms for attitude formation. Most of these mechanisms—mere exposure, direct personal experience, operant and classical conditioning, and observational learning—are based on experience and learning. However, the last mechanism we will look at is based on genetics.

Mere Exposure

Some attitudes may be formed and shaped by what Zajonc (1968) called **mere exposure**, which means that simply being exposed to an object increases our feelings, usually positive, toward that object. The mere-exposure effect has been demonstrated with a wide range of stimuli, including foods, photographs, words, and advertising slogans (Bronstein, 1989).

In one early study, researchers placed ads containing nonsense words such as NANSOMA in college newspapers (Zajonc & Rajecki, 1969). Later, they gave students lists of words that included NANSOMA to rate. Mere exposure to a nonsense word, such as NONSOMA, was enough to give it a positive rating. In another study, participants were exposed to nonsense syllables and to Chinese characters (Zajonc, 1968). Repeated exposure increased the positive evaluations of both the nonsense syllables and the Chinese characters.

Generally, this means that familiarity, in fact, may not breed contempt. Familiar faces, ideas, and slogans become comfortable old friends. Think of the silly commercial jingle you sometimes find yourself humming almost against your will.

In fact, repeated exposures often work very well in advertising. The Marlboro man, invented to convince male smokers that taking a drag on a filtered cigarette would enhance their manhood, lasted through a generation of smokers. (The ad lasted, the original model didn't—he died of lung cancer.) When we walk down the aisle to buy a product, be it cigarettes or soap suds, the familiar name brand stands out and says, “Buy me.” And we do.

Now, there are limits to the effect, at least in the experimental studies. A review of the mere-exposure research concluded that the effect is most powerful when it occurs randomly over time, and that too many exposures actually will decrease the effect (Bornstein, 1989). A constant bombardment does not work very well.

Repeated exposures increase liking when the stimuli are neutral or positive to begin with. What happens when the stimuli are negative? It seems that continual exposure to some object that was disliked initially increases that negative emotion (Bornstein, 1989;

mere exposure The phenomenon that being exposed to a stimulus increases one's feelings, usually positive, toward that object; repeated exposure can lead to positive attitudes.

Perlman & Oskamp, 1971). Say, for example, a person grew up disliking a different ethnic group because of comments she heard her parents make. Then, on repeated encounters with members of that group, she might react with distaste and increasing negativity. Over time, these negative emotions are likely to produce hostile beliefs about the group (Drosnick, Betz, Jussim, & Lynn, 1992). Thus, negative feelings of which a person might hardly be aware can lead, with repeated exposure, to the object of those feelings, to increased negative emotions and, ultimately, to a system of beliefs that support those emotions. Stimuli, ideas, and values to which we are exposed shape us in ways that are not always obvious to us.

Direct Personal Experience

A second way we form attitudes is through *direct personal experience*. If we get mugged one Saturday night coming home from a movie, for example, we may change our attitudes toward criminals, the police, personal safety, and a range of other concerns. Or if we have a flat tire and someone stops to help, we may change our attitude about the value of going out of our way to assist others. If our father's business is put in peril because of the dirty tactics of a large corporation, like that of Ida Tarbell's, we would resent such organizations for the rest of our lives. Direct personal experience has the power to create and change attitudes.

Attitudes acquired through direct experience are likely to be strongly held and to affect behavior. People are also more likely to search for information to support such attitudes. For example, people who had experience with flu shots gathered further information about the shots and were more likely to get vaccinated each flu season (Davison, Yantis, Norwood, & Montano, 1985). People are also less likely to be vulnerable to someone trying to persuade them to abandon the attitude. If, for example, your attitude that the environment needs preserving was formed because you lived near a river and observed directly the impact of pollution, you will be less likely to be persuaded even by powerful counterarguments (Wood, 1982).

Direct experience continues to form and shape our attitudes throughout life. One study examined the effects of direct experience with government agencies on younger and older individuals' attitudes toward government (Tyler & Schuller, 1991). The experiences involved, for example, getting a job, job training, unemployment compensation, and medical and hospital care. The older people changed their attitudes following a positive or negative experience as much as, if not more than, the younger people. This finding argues against the impressionable-years model, which assumes that young people are more open to forming new attitudes, and supports the lifelong-openness model, which emphasizes that people can form new attitudes throughout their life. We should note here that in later years, Ida Tarbell came to know John D. Rockefeller's successor, Judge Gary, who caused her to write a more favorable second edition to *The History of the Standard Oil Company*.

Operant and Classical Conditioning

Most social psychologists would agree that the bulk of our attitudes are learned. That is, attitudes result from our experiences, not our genetic inheritance. Through socialization, individuals learn the attitudes, values, and behaviors of their culture. Important influences in the process include parents, peers, schools, and the mass media.

As an example, let's look at the formation of attitudes about politics. The formation of some of these attitudes begins early, perhaps at age 6 or 7. In one early study, grade-school students thought that the American system was the best and that "America is the

best country in the world” (Hess & Torney, 1967). When children are young, parents exert a major influence on their political attitudes, but later, peers and the mass media have a greater impact. In fact, by the time young adults are seniors in high school, there is a fairly low correlation between the political attitudes of children and those of their parents (Oskamp, 1991). Parents and children may identify with the same political party, but their attitudes about politics are likely to differ.

During the course of socialization, a person’s attitudes may be formed through operant and classical conditioning, two well-known learning processes. In **operant conditioning**, the individual’s behavior is strengthened or weakened by means of reward or punishment. Parents may, for example, reward their daughter with praise when she expresses the attitude that doing math is fun. Each time the child is rewarded, the attitude becomes stronger. Or, parents may punish their son with a verbal rebuke when he expresses that same attitude. In these examples, operant conditioning serves to impart attitudes.

Simply rewarding people for expressing an attitude can affect what they believe. In one study, participants took part in a debate and were randomly assigned to one or the other side of an issue (Scott, 1957). Those debaters who were told, again randomly, that they won were more likely to change their attitudes in the direction of their side of the topic than those who were told that they lost.

In **classical conditioning**, a stimulus comes to evoke a response it previously did not call up. Classical conditioning occurs by repeatedly pairing this stimulus (the conditioned stimulus) with a stimulus that does have the power to evoke the response (the unconditioned stimulus).

How might attitudes be learned through classical conditioning? In one experiment, when an attitude object (a person) was paired with positive or negative stimuli, participants came to associate the person with the positive or negative emotions (Krosnick et al., 1992). Participants were shown nine different slides in which a target person was engaged in various activities, such as walking on a street or getting into a car. Immediately before each slide there were very short exposures (13 milliseconds) of positive slides (e.g., newlyweds, a pair of kittens) or negative slides (e.g., a face on fire, a bloody shark). The participants then reported their impressions of the person. Generally, participants who had seen the person paired with warm, positive stimuli rated the person as having a better personality and as more physically attractive than did those who had seen the person paired with violent, negative stimuli.

Observational Learning

Although we often learn attitudes by getting rewarded, we can also learn simply by observing. One often hears parents, shocked by the aggressive attitudes and behavior of their child, ask, “Now, where could she have gotten that from?” Research shows that children may learn to act aggressively by watching violent movies or by seeing their friends fight (Bandura, 1977). **Observational learning** occurs when we watch what people do and then model, or imitate, that behavior. For example, a child who hears her mother say, “We should keep that kind of people out of our schools,” will very likely express a version of that attitude.

Observational learning does not depend on rewards, but rewards can strengthen the learning. In the preceding example when the child expresses the attitude she has imitated, the mother might reward her with an approving smile. Furthermore, people are more likely to imitate behavior that is rewarded. Thus, if aggressive behavior seems to be rewarded—if children observe that those who use violence seem to get what they want—it is more likely to be imitated.

classical conditioning

A form of learning that occurs when a stimulus comes to summon a response that it previously did not evoke to form an attitude.

operant conditioning

A method by which attitudes are acquired by rewarding a person for a given attitude in the hopes it will be maintained or strengthened.

observational learning

Attitude formation learned through watching what people do and whether they are rewarded or punished and then imitating that behavior.

When there are discrepancies between what people say and what they do, children tend to imitate the behavior. A parent may verbally instruct a child that violence is a bad way of solving conflicts with other children. However, if the child observes the parent intimidate the newspaper carrier into bringing the paper to the front door rather than dropping it on the driveway, the child has noticed the truth of the matter. The parent thinks she is imparting one attitude toward violence but in fact is conveying another.

The Effect of the Mass Media

Mass media play an important role in our society. For example, media heroes tend to be a very important influence in the development of our attitudes toward all manner of things: race, gender, violence, crime, love, and sex. Issues given extensive coverage in the media become foremost in the public's consciousness. For example, the saturation coverage of the 2004 presidential election elevated politics to a level not often considered by the average person. Television is a particularly pervasive medium, with 99% of children between the ages of 2 and 10 living in homes with a television, and 89% living in homes with more than one television (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1999). Research shows that children 8 to 18 years of age watch nearly 7 hours per day (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1999).

What do they see during those hours? Most get a constant fare of violence. This violence affects the attitudes of at least some children in their interactions with peers, and the more violence they see, the more aggressive their interaction style. This effect is strongest in children in neighborhoods where violence is commonplace; the TV violence evidently serves as reinforcement.

In addition to providing aggressive models, many TV programs emphasize situations that are linked to violence. People who watch a lot of TV are likely to overestimate by far the amount of violence and crime that occurs in the world (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1992). As a result, they are more likely to anticipate violence in their own lives. Anderson, Carnagey, and Eubanks (2003) studied the effects of songs with violent lyrics on both the listeners' attitudes and their feelings. In a series of five studies, Anderson and his colleagues reported that college students who listened to a violent song felt more hostile and reported an increase in aggressive thoughts compared to another group that heard a similar but nonviolent song (Anderson et al., 2003, p. 960). Of course, it may not always be the lyrics themselves that cause these changes in attitudes and feelings. Research suggests that tense, pounding musical scores provoke aggressive feelings also (Rubin, West, & Mitchell, 2001). In fact, Rubin et al. (2001) reported that college students who preferred heavy metal and rap music expressed more hostile attitudes. It's not clear what the line of causality is in this case. It is reasonable to suggest that people prefer rap because they feel hostile in the first place, and thus it is not necessarily the lyrics that cause the attitudes. However, as Anderson et al. (2003) observe, every exposure to a violent media event (TV, music, violent video games, violent movies) is a "learning trial in which one rehearses aggressive thoughts and feelings," and these repetitive events make hostile attitudes quite prominent and easy to recall and access (Anderson et al., 2003, p. 964).

By emphasizing some events and ignoring others, television, movies, and music, along with other mass media, define reality for us. They directly affect how many of us think and feel about the world. In one study, Chinese and Canadian children were asked to imagine that they were an animal and then write a story including themselves as that animal. The results showed that male children selected animals that were dangerous, strong, and wild. On the other hand, female children selected animals that were safe, weak, and tame (Harvey, Ollila, Baxter, & Guo, 1997). In another study, Trepainer and Romatowski (1985) analyzed stories written by male and female children for a "young

author's" competition. Specifically, they analyzed the stories for portrayals of male and female characters. As one might expect, male authors included more male characters in their stories, and female authors included more female characters. However, overall, male characters outnumbered female characters. Positive attributes were more likely to be attributed to male characters (74%) than to female characters (26%). Both male and female authors assigned fewer occupational roles to female characters than male characters. Additionally, males tended to have a wider variety of interesting roles assigned to them than females. Thus, the themes in children's stories reflect the content of books to which they are exposed. The media have a definite role in shaping a child's worldview of appropriate gender-based roles.

Wells and Twenge (2005) combined 530 studies that studied over a quarter of a million subjects in a "meta-analysis" and discovered not unexpectedly that sexual attitudes and behavior have undergone enormous changes from 1943 to 1999. This analysis showed that the largest changes occurred among girls and young women. Both young men and women became more sexually active over time, as indicated by a younger age of first intercourse, which was lowered from 19 to 15 years among young women, and percentage of sexually active young women, from 13% to 47% in 1999 (Wells & Twenge, 2005). Feelings of sexual guilt decreased for both men and women. Wells and Twenge observe that their data support the idea that culture has a large effect on women's sexuality.

Why the change? Wells and Twenge (2005) note the enormous cultural changes that occurred in the past 50 years. Changes in sexual attitudes and behaviors are among the most noticeable and striking of these shifts. The authors believe that the mass media had an enormous impact on sexual attitudes and behavior. They note that "television programs and movies regularly mention topics such as teenage pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, and rape, whereas 30 years ago these topics were taboo. This sexual revolution has dramatically altered American culture, especially for women" (Wells & Twenge, 2005).

How Video Games and Other Violent Media Affect Attitudes about Aggression and Violence

Exposure to violent video games has been shown to both affect attitudes about violence as well as increase aggressive behavior (Anderson, 2006; Barthelow, Sestir, & Davis, 2005). Media consumption is perhaps the favorite activity of most Americans. At least, it occupies a large chunk of time. Barthelow et al. report that the average 17-year-old spends the equivalent of two full working days a week playing video games.

The concern is not so much the time spent playing these games but rather the nature of the games themselves. The content tends to realistically, graphically violent (Barthelow, Dill, Anderson, & Lindsay, 2003). For example, Barthelow et al. (2005) had college students play violent video games and compared them to other students who played nonviolent videogames. These researches then took short- and modestly long-term measures of the effect of playing these games. The results show that those who play violent video games become less empathetic and more hostile concerning other people and are more likely to feel and act aggressively. It appears that playing these games affects the players' attitudes about violence. They become less upset by violence; it becomes more acceptable to them. This is known as *desensitization*. Being desensitized to acts of violence lowers the threshold for the commission of aggressive acts (Anderson & Carnagey, in press)

One explanation for the heightened aggressive attitudes of video game players is that the violent games bring forth a "hostile expectation bias" (Bushman & Anderson, 2002). This bias suggests that violent game players come to expect that other people will respond

to potential conflicts by responding violently. In other words, the games condition them to expect that others will also act violently. Bushman and Anderson use the General Aggression Model (GAM) to explain these findings. The GAM model suggests that playing a violent videogame promotes thinking about violence, increases the players' level of arousal, and creates angry feelings (Anderson, 2006; Bushman & Anderson, 2002).

What we do not know about the effect of violent video games is the long-term impact on the players. Experimenters have defined “long term” by hours or days, not years. Obviously, it is rather difficult to study participants over a long term of months and years. It is necessary to be able to control for the participants' earlier levels of violence to obtain a pure reading of the effects of video games. While studies have been done showing the long-term effects of violent TV shows, similar research on video games has yet to be done (Anderson, 2006).

The Role of the Media in Setting the Agenda

How is it that Michael Jackson gets more play in the media than, say, nominees to the federal courts? Does it matter? So what if those “desperate housewives” get more space in the media than a discussion of potential changes in the immigration laws? Again, does it matter?

Communication researchers have long argued that the topics most salient in the mass media tend to set the public agenda. This *agenda setting* occurs because the topics most prominent in the news shape the public's cognitions, increasing the focus on certain issues as opposed to others (Kiousis, McDevitt, & Wu, 2005). And how do these issues get into the media? Sometimes the issues get “hot” just because they sell newspapers or magazines. Did the actor Robert Blake hire someone to kill his wife or not? Who cares? Well, it appears lots of people do, so Blake had his moments of fame.

More seriously, some argue that through the process of “agenda-building,” various interest groups, policymakers, TV, and other media personalities and outlets, including newspaper and magazines, determine which issues receive the most attention (Scheufele, 2005). What is important about setting the agenda is that it may work just like priming does in a social psychological experiment—when a stimulus is primed, it becomes more salient and everything about it is more easily retrieved by the individual. People who attend to the most salient topics in the media have strong opinions about those topics and are more likely to identify with others who believe the way they believe. Issues such as abortion, immigration, and others are good examples of this (Kiousis, 2005). Indeed, these issues tend to fracture the public into several, often antagonistic, opinion groups.

The Heritability Factor

Most theories about the formation of attitudes are based on the idea that attitudes are formed primarily through experience. However, some research suggests that attitudes as well as other complex social behaviors may have a genetic component (Plomin, 1989).

When studying the origins of a trait or behavior, geneticists try to calculate what proportion of it may be determined by heredity, rather than by learning or other environmental influences involved. **Heritability** refers to the extent to which genetics accounts for differences among people in a given characteristic or behavior. For example, eye color is entirely determined by genetics; there are no environmental or learning influences. If the heritability of a characteristic is less than 100%, then other influences are involved. Height, for example, is about 90% heritable; nutrition also plays a determining role.

heritability An indicator of the degree to which genetics accounts for differences among people for any given behavior or characteristic.

Eye color and height are clearly based in one's heredity. But how can complex social structures such as attitudes have a genetic basis? The answer is that genetics may have an indirect effect on our attitudes. That is, characteristics that are biologically based might predispose us to certain behaviors and attitudes. For example, genetic differences in sensory structures, such as hearing and taste, could affect our preferences for certain kinds of music and foods (Tesser, 1993). As another example, consider aggressiveness, which, as research has shown, has a genetic component. Level of aggressiveness can affect a whole range of attitudes and behaviors, from watching violent TV shows and movies, to hostility toward women or members of other groups, to attitudes toward capital punishment (Oskamp, 1991). In this case, a biologically based characteristic affects how one thinks, feels, and acts.

Plomin, Corley, Defries, and Fulker (1990) were interested in children's attitudes and behaviors related to television viewing. Learning—particularly the influence of parents and friends—certainly plays a role in the formation of TV-viewing attitudes and behaviors. Is it possible that genetics could also play a role? If so, how could we know this? To answer these questions, Plomin studied the TV viewing of adopted children, comparing it to the TV-viewing habits of the children's biological parents and adoptive parents. The question he asked was, Would the child's behavior more closely resemble that of the biological parents or that of the adoptive parents? A close resemblance to the habits of the biological parents would argue for a biological interpretation, because the biological parents did not share the child's environment. A close resemblance to the habits of the adoptive parents, on the other hand, would argue for an environmental interpretation. Thus, the study of adoptive children made it possible to calculate the extent to which TV viewing is determined, indirectly, by genetics.

Plomin's findings were surprising. There was a very high resemblance between the TV viewing of the children and that of the biological parents. Although shared environment influenced the amount of viewing, the genetic component was much higher. This doesn't mean that children whose biological parents watch a lot of TV are doomed to be glued to the TV for the rest of their days. It simply suggests that there is something in our genetic makeup that may incline us to certain behaviors and attitudes.

Attitudes that have a high heritability factor might be expected to differ in certain ways from those that are primarily learned. Specifically, they might be expected to be more strongly held. Is this, in fact, the case? There are at least two indicators of attitude strength: A person responds quickly on encountering the object of that attitude, and the person is unlikely to give in to pressure to change the attitude. Evidence suggests that both these indicators are indeed present with attitudes that have a high heritability factor (Tesser, 1993). However, genes will be expressed differently in different environments, so speed and yielding to pressure are not perfect measures of heritability.

Bourgeois (2002) found that members of groups also show greater variability the higher the heritability of the attitude. Thus, if you are against "permissiveness" in everyday life, an attitude with a fairly high heritability factor, the less likely your neighbors will influence you to change your opinion. This explains greater variability in attitudes with high heritability components (Bourgeois, 2002). Usually, groups tend to produce pressures that make people conform, especially on important issues. But those attitudes that have a high heritability loading appear to be much more difficult to change.

The Importance of Groups and Networks

While we have so far emphasized the individual in the learning and expression of attitudes, many of our attitudes are learned and reinforced in group settings. Indeed, recent

social psychological research has shown that group influence is the most influential factor in which opinions we express.

It should not be surprising that group membership is a powerful influence on our attitudes and their expression. We know by that, as early as 12 months of age, we are influenced by the emotional expressions of those around us (Moses, Baldwin, Rosicky, & Tidball, 2001).

Geoffrey Cohen (2003), in a series of four clever and interrelated studies, demonstrated that a person's stated attitude toward a public issue was dependent solely on the stated position of the political party with which the person was aligned. This was true no matter what the objective of the policy or the person's own position on that policy. Furthermore, the individuals did not seem to be aware that the group's position was counter to what they personally believed. For example, in one study Cohen presented two versions of a welfare policy to liberal and conservative college students. One version of the plan had generous benefits, while the other version had very limited benefits. Some students read the generous plan, others the stringent plan. In addition, they were given information that the Republicans or the Democrats had taken a stand either in favor of or against the plan. Therefore, some conservative students may have read the generous plan and been told that the Republicans had endorsed that plan. Similarly some liberal students read the stringent plan and were told that the Democratic Party had endorsed that plan.

The results were striking. Both conservatives and liberal participants in this study simply followed the party line. If their party endorsed a policy, so did the liberal and conservative students, no matter their originally expressed beliefs on that issue. So, liberals supported a harsh welfare policy if their party did, and conservatives supported a generous welfare policy if their party did as well. In follow-up studies, it became clear that in the absence of any information about how their party stood on the issues, conservatives preferred the less generous plan while liberals the more generous one. Cohen also found that the effect of group information influenced both attitudes and behavior. As we will see in the later chapter on persuasion, people may undertake "biased processing" of information in order to evaluate that information in a manner that favors their group.

In another twist on the effect of group membership on our attitudes, Norton, Monin, Cooper, and Hogg (2003) found that individuals will change their attitudes when they observe other members of a group with which they identify agreeing with a point of view that the group had originally disagreed with. In this study, college students who disagreed strongly with the tuition increase overheard a supposedly spontaneous interaction between another student and the experimenter. In actuality, it was a prescribed interaction. This other student, who was actually part of the experiment, was given the choice of either expressing an opinion on the tuition increase or leaving the experiment.

If the "overheard" student was given a choice and she strongly advocated a position counter to the other students (that is, in favor of an increase in tuition), some students actually changed their opinion and favored the tuition increase. Which students? It is precisely those students who strongly identified with the student group. Why was choice important? As we will see in a later chapter, when we observe someone take an unusual position and do so by his or her own volition, we are much more likely to believe that the individual has a strong belief in that opinion. It appears that people may change their attitudes to adjust to the fact that someone they identify with (a member of their group) has changed his or her attitude on an important issue and has apparently done so freely (recall that the student had a choice of whether to express her attitude or leave).

Social Networks

We have seen the importance of groups on our evaluation of public issues. What we know, obviously, is that we do not form nor do we keep attitudes in isolation from important groups.

Visser and Mirabile (2004) showed that when you are part of congruent social networks (people with similar views), your attitude becomes more resistant to change because you have strong social support for that attitude. However, if you are embedded in a heterogeneous social network with lots of people who have different views, you are less resistant to change. It appears that when you are with people who think as you do, not surprisingly, you become more certain of your attitudes, and any doubts you may have had are removed (Visser & Mirabile, 2004).

Crandall (1988) studied the patterns of behavior of friendship groups in college sororities. Residents of two sorority houses completed questionnaires that dealt with binge eating and their social behavior. Crandall found that binge eating was caused by “social contagion.” If a student was in a sorority where there was binge eating, that behavior increased from the fall through the spring terms. That is, the longer someone was in the group, the more the individuals’ behaviors converged. Crandall further argued that reduced social influence over the summer would cause dissimilarity of binge eating in the fall, but he did not directly test this hypothesis. Of course, it is possible that students with tendencies toward binge eating may have pledged those groups that may have been known for such behavior (Crandall, 1988). Social psychologists have observed that individuals will adjust, or “tune,” their beliefs to the apparent beliefs of other people when they desire to get along with this person. This type of behavior is referred to as the *affiliative social tuning hypothesis* (Sinclair, Lowery, Hardin, & Colangelo, 2005). Often, we will modify our expressed attitudes so that social interaction in groups is smooth. Therefore, people will modify their expressed, often automatic (recall the IAT described earlier), racial attitudes within groups that contain people of different racial or ethnic groups. Sinclair et al. (2005) have shown that automatic attitudes serve a social regulatory function. That is, they regulate social interactions so as to make them less confrontational and more congenial. Thus, these automatic racial or ethnic attitudes are sensitive to the social demands of interpersonal interactions. Therefore, automatic attitudes are influenced by the desire to get along with others.

Attitudes and Behavior

Intuitively, it makes sense that if we know something about a person’s attitudes, we should be able to predict his or her behavior. In Allport’s definition of attitude given at the beginning of this chapter, attitudes exert a directive influence on the individual’s behavior. There is a rationality bias in all of this—a belief that people will act in a manner consistent with their innermost feelings and ideas. Do we, in fact, behave in accordance with our attitudes? Early researchers assumed that a close link did exist between attitudes and behavior. However, a review of attitude-behavior research revealed a quite different picture: Attitudes appeared to be, at best, only weak predictors of behavior (Wicker, 1969).

We begin this section by looking at one early study that appeared to show little correlation between attitudes and behavior. Social psychologists eventually concluded that a relationship exists but is more complex than they suspected. We look at their attempts

to unravel the complexities and to thereby show that attitudes can predict behavior. More recently, other social psychologists have argued that our behavior often is nonrational and has nothing to do with our attitudes. We conclude the section by seeing how the rational and nonrational approaches can be reconciled.

An Early Study of Attitudes and Behavior

In one well-known study from the 1930s, a young sociologist traveled around the United States with a young Chinese couple (LaPiere, 1934). They traveled 10,000 miles and visited over 200 places (Oskamp, 1991). The 1930s were a time of relatively overt expression of prejudice against many groups, including Asians. What did LaPiere and the Chinese couple encounter? Interestingly, during their entire trip, they were refused service by only one business. Several months after the trip, LaPiere wrote to every establishment he and his friends had visited and asked the owners if they would object to serving a Chinese couple. About half the establishments answered; of these, only nine said they would offer service, and only under certain conditions.

The visits measured the behavior of the business owners. The follow-up question about offering service was a measure of attitudes. Clearly, the expressed attitudes (primarily negative) and the behavior (primarily positive) were not consistent. This kind of finding led to a great deal of pessimism among attitude researchers concerning the link between attitudes and behavior. But let's consider the inconsistency more closely. Our behavior is determined by many attitudes, not just one. LaPiere measured the owners' attitudes about Asians. He did not measure their attitudes about losing money or creating difficulties for themselves by turning away customers. Furthermore, it is easier to express a negative attitude when you are not face-to-face with the object of that attitude. Think how easy it is to tell the aluminum-siding salesperson over the phone that you never want to hear about aluminum siding again as long as you live. Yet when the person shows up at your door, you are probably less blunt and might even listen to the sales pitch. In the case of LaPiere's study, being prejudiced is easy by letter, harder in person.

To summarize, LaPiere's findings did not mean there is little relationship between attitudes and behavior. They just indicated that the presence of the attitude object (in this case, the Chinese couple) is not always enough to trigger the expression of the attitude. Other factors can come into play.

There are several reasons why attitudes aren't good predictors of behavior. First, research showed that it was when investigators tried to link general attitudes and specific behaviors that the link appeared weak. When researchers looked at a specific attitude, they often were able to find a good relationship between that attitude and behavior. However, when researchers asked people about a general attitude, such as their religious beliefs, and assessed a specific behavior related to that attitude, such as praying before meals, they found only a weak correlation (Eagly, 1992).

Another reason why attitudes and behaviors may not relate strongly is the fact that a behavior may relate to more than one attitude. For example, whether you vote for a particular candidate may depend on how she stands on a range of issues (e.g., abortion, health care, defense spending, civil rights). Measuring any single attitude may not predict very well how you vote. However, if the entire range of attitudes is measured, the relationship between attitudes and behavior improves. Similarly, if only one behavior is measured, your attitude may not relate to that behavior very well. It is much better if a behavioral trend (several behaviors measured over time) is measured. Attitudes tend to relate better to behavioral trends than a single behavior.

theory of planned behavior A theory that explains attitude-behavior relationships, focusing on the relationship between the strength of our behavioral intentions and our performance of them.

Theory of Planned Behavior

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) proposed the **theory of planned behavior**. This theory sensibly assumes that the best predictor of how we will behave is the strength of our intentions (Ajzen, 1987). The theory is essentially a three-step process to the prediction of behavior. The likelihood that individuals will carry out a behavior consistent with an attitude they hold depends on the strength of their intention, which is in turn influenced by three factors. By measuring these factors, we can determine the strength of intention, which enables us to predict the likelihood of the behavior.

The first factor that influences behavioral intention is *attitude toward the behavior*. Be careful here: We are talking about the attitude toward the behavior, not toward the object. For example, you might have a positive attitude about exercise, because you believe that it reduces tension. Exercise is the object of the attitude. But you might not like to sweat. In fact, you hate to sweat. Will you exercise? The theory says that the attitude toward the behavior, which includes sweating, is a better predictor of your actions than your attitude about exercise, because it affects your intentions.

The second factor, *subjective norms*, refers to how you think your friends and family will evaluate your behavior. For example, you might think, “All my friends exercise, and they will think that it is appropriate that I do the same.” In this case, you may exercise despite your distaste for it. Your friends’ behavior defines exercise as normative, the standard. Wellness programs that attempt to change dietary and exercise habits rely heavily on normative forces. By getting people into groups, they encourage them to perceive healthy lifestyles as normative (everyone else is involved).

Perceived behavioral control, the third factor, refers to a person’s belief that the behavior he or she is considering is easy or hard to accomplish. For example, a person will be more likely to engage in health-related preventive behaviors such as dental hygiene or breast self-examination if he or she believes that they can be easily done (Ronis & Kaiser, 1989).

In summary, the theory of planned behavior emphasizes that behavior follows from attitudes in a reasoned way. If a person thinks that a particular behavior associated with an attitude will lead to positive outcomes, that other people would approve, and that the behavior can be done readily, then the person will engage in the behavior (Eagly, 1992). People essentially ask themselves if they can reasonably expect that the behavior will achieve their individual and social needs.

Let’s use the theory of planned behavior to analyze voting behavior. Assume you have a positive attitude about voting (the object). Will you actually vote? Let’s say you think that it is the duty of every citizen to vote. Furthermore, your friends are going to vote, and you believe they will think badly of you if you don’t (subjective norms). Finally, you feel that you will be able to easily rearrange your schedule on election day (perceived behavioral control). If we know all this about you, we can conclude you have a strong intention to vote and can make a pretty confident prediction that, in keeping with your attitude, you are likely to vote.

The accuracy of behavioral intentions in predicting behavior is evident in the Gallup Poll. The Gallup organization has been conducting voting surveys since 1936, the year Franklin Delano Roosevelt ran against Alf Landon, governor of Kansas. Figure 5.2 shows the record of the Gallup Poll in national elections from 1968 to 2001. In general, the polls are quite accurate. Yes, there have been a few exceptions over the past 57 years. They certainly got it wrong in 1948: The data indicated that Harry Truman did not have much of a chance to win. But rarely in history books do we hear mention of Dewey, the governor of New York who ran against Truman and who was projected as the winner.

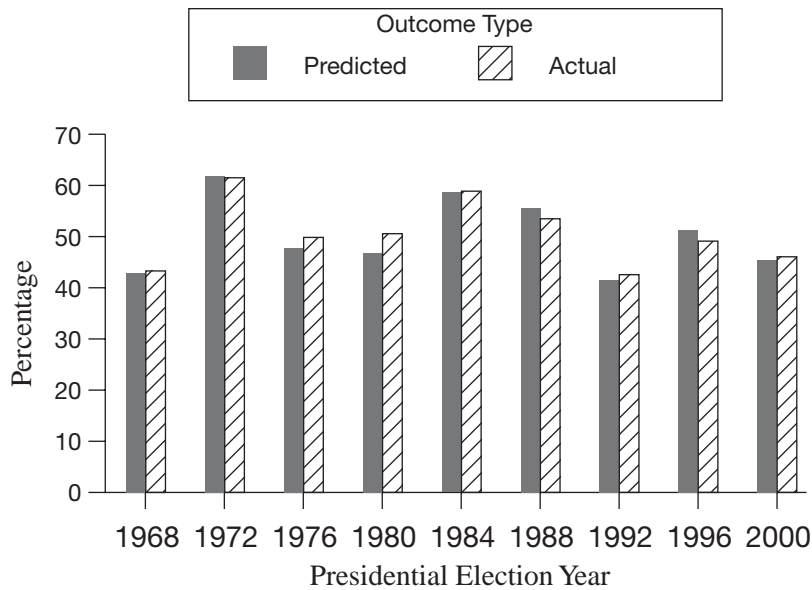


Figure 5.2 Gallup Poll data showing predicted and actual outcomes for presidential elections from 1968 to 2000. Gallup Polls are remarkably accurate in predicting not only the winner but also the margin of victory. (Note: Average error = -1.93 .)

In this case, the pollsters were wrong primarily because they stopped polling a little too early. They had not yet learned that people have other things on their minds than elections and may not start to pay serious attention to the campaign until a week or so before the actual vote. Pollsters will not make that error again.

Although the question, “For whom will you vote, candidate X or candidate Y?” might appear to be a measure of attitude, it is really a measure of behavioral intention. Voting is a single act and can be measured by a single direct question. These are the circumstances in which consistency between attitude and behavior is likely to be the highest. Pollsters often try to determine the strength of these intentions by asking such questions as: How strongly do you feel about your preferred candidate? How intense are your feelings? Although refinements like these may add to the accuracy of voting surveys in the future, what is needed is a concrete way of measuring behavioral intentions.

Recent research has reinforced the notion that emotions are crucially involved in turning attitude into behavior. For example, Farley and Stasson (2003) examined the relationship between attitudes and giving blood donations. They found that both donors’ behavioral intentions to give blood and their positive emotions about doing so were predictive of actually donating blood.

The Importance of Conviction

So what we have seen in the previous section is that the importance of some of our attitudes is a crucial determinant of how we act. Some of our attitudes are important to us; others are much less important. One reason researchers underestimated the attitude–behavior link is because they did not focus on attitudes that are important to people (Abelson, 1988). Attitudes held with conviction are central to the person holding them. Examples include attitudes of racial and gender equality, racism and sexism, patriotism, religious fundamentalism, and occultism. Attitudes held with conviction are like possessions (Abelson, 1988). Recall that one function of an attitude is that it

defines us; it tells people who we are. The person owns his or her attitudes, proudly displaying them to those who would appreciate them and defending them against those who would try to take them away. For example, someone deeply committed to one side or the other of the abortion issue will likely defend his view against the other side and show his solidarity with those on the same side. Such attitudes will be hard to change, as a change would mean a major alteration in the way the person sees the world.

Because attitudes to which people are strongly committed are hard to manipulate in a laboratory experiment, researchers tended to stay away from them. As a result, social psychologists overestimated the ease with which attitudes might be changed and underestimated the relationship between attitudes and behavior. If an attitude is important to people, they expect that behavior in agreement with that attitude will help them get what they want. Thus, important attitudes and behavior tend to be closely linked.

An attitude held with conviction is easily accessible. This means that if you discuss with someone a subject about which they feel strongly, they respond quickly and have a lot of ideas about it. Moreover, attitude accessibility—the ease with which one can bring a particular attitude to mind—is increased by constant use and application of that attitude (Doll & Ajzen, 1992). In a study several years ago, researchers measured latencies (speed of response) with respect to questions about women's rights, abortion, and racial integration (Krosnick, 1989). Whatever the issue, people who considered an attitude important responded more quickly than those who considered it unimportant. Important attitudes are more available in memory and are more likely to correspond to behavior. If your stand on abortion, women's rights, gun ownership, or the Dallas Cowboys is important, you are more likely to act in a manner consistent with that attitude.

You can get a sense of how accessible an attitude is by noting how long it takes you to recall it. For example, notice how long it takes you to recall your attitude toward the following: living wills, parent-teacher associations, the death penalty, aisle seats, snakes, water filters, political action committees, the clergy, daylight-savings time, baseball. Some of these notions brought feelings and thoughts to mind quickly; others may not have.

If attitude accessibility indicates strength of conviction, we might expect attitudes high in accessibility to be better predictors of behavior than attitudes lower in accessibility. Fazio, who has extensively studied attitude accessibility, investigated this issue in connection with the 1984 presidential election (Fazio & Williams, 1986). The summer before the election, potential voters were asked whether they agreed with each of the following two statements: "A good president for the next 4 years would be Walter Mondale (the then Democratic nominee)," and "A good president for the next 4 years would be Ronald Reagan (the elected Republican)." The respondents had to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed by pressing one of five buttons: strongly agree, agree, don't care, disagree, strongly disagree.

The researchers measured the time that passed before respondents pressed the button. The delay interval between the moment you are confronted with an object and the moment you realize your attitude is called the *latency* (Rajecki, 1990). The longer respondents took to hit the button, the less accessible the attitude. Not only were the researchers able to get a reading of the attitude toward the candidates, but also they were able to get a measure of accessibility.

On the day after the election, respondents were asked whether they had voted and, if so, for whom they had voted. Was there a relationship between latency times and voting behavior? That is, did attitude accessibility predict behavior? The answer is, yes, it did. Attitude accessibility measured in June and July 1984 accurately predicted voting

behavior in November. Those who had responded quickly for Reagan were more likely to vote for him than those who had taken longer to respond. The same relationship held, although not quite as strongly, for Mondale supporters.

The Nonrational Actor

The theories and ideas about attitudes and behavior so far tend to assume a rational, almost calculated approach to behavior. In the theory of planned behavior, if you can get measures of people's attitude toward a behavior, their perception of how important others might approve or disapprove of what they do, and their sense of control over that behavior, then you can predict their intentions and, therefore, their likely behavior. If there is a significant criticism of the theory of planned behavior, it is that when you ask people to tell you about the components of their intentions, they know that their answers should be logical. If you reported that you voted but you had no interest in the candidates and you thought all candidates were crooks, this hardly makes you look like a logical individual.

Some theories have taken the opposite approach: They assume that human beings are **nonrational actors** (Ronis & Kaiser, 1989), and our attitudes may often be totally irrelevant to our behavior. Cigarette smoking, for example, is so habitual as to be automatic, totally divorced from any attitude or behavioral intention the smoker may have. Most of our behaviors are like that (Ronis & Kaiser, 1989). We do them over and over without thought (Gilbert, 1991). You floss your teeth, but your attitude and intentions about dental hygiene are activated only when you run out of floss. Even though you believe flossing is important, and even though you remember that sign in your dentist's office that reads, "No, you don't have to floss all your teeth—only the ones you want to keep," you now have to act on your attitude. Are you willing to get in the car at 11 P.M. and drive to the store to buy more dental floss? Similarly, if your regular aerobics class becomes inconvenient, is your attitude about the importance of exercise strong enough that you will rearrange your whole schedule?

In sum, people usually behave habitually, unthinkingly, even mindlessly. They make active decisions only when they face new situations. Thus, there is a good chance of inconsistencies between our attitudes and our behavior.

Mindless Behavior in Everyday Life

Have you ever arrived home after work or school and not been able to recall a single thing about how you got there? In everyday life, we often run on a kind of automatic pilot. Our behavior becomes so routine and automatic that we are hardly aware of what we are doing. We are in a state of mind that Ellen Laner (1989) termed *mindlessness*, one that involves reduced attention and loss of active control in everyday activities. Mindlessness occurs when we're engaging in behaviors that have been overlearned and routinized. In this state, we carry out the behaviors rigidly, according to a preconceived pattern and without thought or appraisal. Mindlessness is fairly common in our everyday interactions. The cashier at a restaurant asks you, "How was everything?" You say that your steak was overcooked, your potato was cold, and the service was terrible. The cashier replies, "Here's your change, have a nice day." In this example, the cashier's question and response were automatic; she really didn't care how you enjoyed your meal.

Langer was interested in studying this state of mind (Langer, Blank, & Chanowitz, 1978). She had a researcher approach people waiting to use a copy machine in the library and ask to use it first. The request was phrased in one of several ways: "Excuse me, I have five pages to copy. May I use the machine because I am in a rush?" "Excuse me, I have five

nonrational actor A view that humans are not always rational in their behavior and their behavior can be inconsistent with their attitudes.

pages to copy. May I use the machine?" and "Excuse me, I have five pages to copy. May I use the machine because I have to make copies?" The researcher also asked to make 20 copies in these three different ways. Request 2 offers no reason for using the copier first, and request 3 offers a mindless reason ("because I have to make copies"); only request 1 provides a minimally acceptable reason ("because I am in a rush"). If the participants in this situation were dealing with the request in a mindless fashion, they would fail to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate (or ridiculous) reasons. As it turns out, any kind of excuse works as long as the request is small. When the request was to make five copies, people apparently did not appraise the quality of the excuse as long as one was offered: Having to make copies was just as good as being in a rush. People snapped out of their mindless state, however, when the request was to make 20 copies. It is clear that when the behavior (the request) had a significant impact, people paid more attention to the difference between bad and good excuses. Although we usually pay close attention to good and bad reasons for people's behavior, it may be that the request to copy five pages isn't worth the effort. When the ante is raised to 20 pages, then we are more mindful.

The fact that we hold a number of attitudes without really thinking about them means there can be some interesting consequences once we are forced to think about them. Thinking about our attitudes and the reasons we hold them can sometimes be disruptive and confusing (Wilson, Dunn, Kraft, & Lisle, 1989). More generally, the process of introspecting—of looking into our own mind, rather than just behaving—can have this effect.

Timothy Wilson's work showed that thinking about the reasons for our attitudes can often lead us to behave in ways that seem inconsistent with those attitudes (Wilson et al., 1989). For example, if you are forced to think about why you like your romantic partner, you might wind up ending the relationship in the near future. Much depends on the strength of the relationship. If the relationship is not strong, thinking about reasons might weaken it. If it is pretty strong, then reasoning might further strengthen it. The stronger our attitude or belief, the more likely that thinking about it will increase the consistency between it and our behavior (Fazio, 1986).

Why should thinking about reasons for our attitudes sometimes lead to inconsistency between our attitudes and behavior? The basic answer is that if we have never really thought about an attitude before, then thinking about it may cause us to change it (Wilson et al., 1989). If you are forced to count the ways you love your current partner, and it takes you a lot of time to use all the fingers on one hand, you have gotten some insight into how you really think about the relationship.

This explanation was supported by a study in which people were asked their attitudes about social issues, such as the death penalty, abortion, and national health insurance, in two separate telephone surveys conducted a month apart (Wilson & Kraft, 1988). In the first survey, some people were asked to give their reasons for their opinions, whereas others were just asked their opinions. A month later, those people who had been asked to give reasons proved more likely to have changed their opinion. So thinking about reasons seems to lead to change. Why? The full explanation might lie in the biased sample hypothesis, proposed by Wilson and colleagues (1989). It goes like this: If you ask people why they believe something, they are not likely to say, "I don't know." Instead, they will conjure up reasons that seem plausible but may be wrong or incomplete. That is, because people often do not know their true reasons, they sample only part of those reasons. Thus, they present a biased sample of their reasons. People then assume the reasons in the biased sample are their true reasons for holding the belief. If these reasons don't seem compelling, thinking about them may persuade people to change their belief.

The Rational and Nonrational Actors: A Resolution

Sometimes we are rational actors; sometimes we are nonrational actors. Sometimes our behavior is “coupled” to our attitudes; sometimes it is “uncoupled” from them. Isn’t this where we began? Let’s see if we can now resolve the apparent conflict. It makes sense to see attitudes and behavior as ordinarily linked, with uncoupling occurring primarily under two kinds of circumstances.

The first circumstance is when an attitude is not particularly important to you. You may not have thought about the attitude object much or have expressed the attitude very often. So in this case, you don’t really know what you think. True, capital punishment and national health care are important issues. But many of us may not have thought them through. When you are forced to consider these issues, you may be surprised by what you say. This may make you reconsider your attitude.

The second circumstance is slightly more complicated. Essentially, it is when you don’t have a clear sense of your goals and needs. Let’s go back to the theory of planned action for a moment. The theory says if you expect that a behavior can help you achieve your goals and social needs, you will do it. But people are often not clear about their goals and needs (Hixon & Swann, 1993). When you are not clear about what you want to accomplish, then your behavior will be relatively unpredictable and might well be uncoupled from your attitudes.

For example, we exercise, but only sporadically, because we are mainly concerned about looking good in front of our health-obsessed friends. Our reasons are weak, not clear to us, and therefore our exercising behavior is infrequent and unpredictable. But if we or a friend the same age has a heart attack, we develop a much stronger attitude toward exercise. We now know that our reasons for exercising are to improve cardiovascular function, to enhance our sense of well-being, and, in short, to save our lives. Now we change our schedule around to exercise every day, subscribe to *Runner’s World* magazine, invest in better exercise shoes, and so on.

In sum, then, our behavior is more likely to be consistent with our attitudes when the attitudes concern an area that is important to us and when the behavior helps us achieve clear and strong social needs. Attitudes we hold with conviction are not vulnerable to uncoupling because we have expressed those attitudes in a variety of situations and have thought deeply about them.

Why We Don’t Like Those Who Think Differently Than We Do: Naïve Realism and Attitudes

There is a confirmed tendency to question the motives of those who disagree with us, particularly when the topic is of high importance (Reeder & Tramifow, 2005, in Malle & Hodges, 2006). One big reason for this observation has to do with the power of what the great Swiss developmentalist Jean Piaget called naïve realism. For Piaget, naïve realism was the last stage of the child’s cognitive development before adulthood. It was the last remnant of egocentrism, when our thought processes are concerned first and foremost with ourselves and our own views of the world.

Naïve realism involves three intertwined processes. First is the belief that we are seeing the world objectively, and second, that other people who are rational will also see the world as we do. And finally, if those others don’t see the world as we do, then either they do not have the right information or they are not rational and harbor ulterior

naïve realism The beliefs that we see the world objectively, while others are biased, and that if others do not see the world as we do, they are not rational.

and bad motives (Reeder, Pryor, & Wohl, & Griswell, 2005). In essence, we are motivated to see ourselves as free of bias and objective, and we have what might fairly be called a “bias blind spot” (Cohen, 2003).

Therefore, if we examine any hotly contested controversial issue in the American political scene, we will see evidence of thinking that has elements of naïve realism. From the perspectives of the opponents of the Iraq War, the Bush administration is accused of cooking the intelligence books to get what they wanted (a reason to invade) and of lying repeatedly and maliciously about the situation on the ground. From the point of view of the partisans of the war, anyone with his or her eyes open could see that Saddam was a terrible man, a threat to the United States, and that bringing democracy to the Arab Middle East was a worthy goal. Anyone who disagrees with that has motive and thought processes that are not objective. Recall that from the view of the naïve realist, if your opposition had got the right information, they would see the righteousness of your view. In the event of Iraq, anyone who has not been exposed to information about the war is likely brain-dead and not worthy of a response. Thus, the only explanation left to the naïve realist is to question the rationality and the motive of one’s opponents.

Reeder et al. (2005) explored the attitudes of Americans and Canadians (who have almost uniformly been against the Iraq War from the start) toward Iraq. Please note this study was conducted in 2004. The experimenters were interested in studying the tendency (the bias, really) for people to attribute negative motive to those who disagree with them. In fact, they found that those against the Bush administration policies (primarily, but not only, Canadians) considered their opponents as having selfish and biased motives. The same general finding was true of issues such as abortion and gay marriage. Individuals on each side consider their opponents to be biased and not rational. However, as you might expect, the bias held only for those individuals highly involved in the issues. One reason we know this is that the respondents in the Reeder et al. study seem to have formed their opinions themselves first and then passed judgment on their fellow citizens who agreed or disagreed with them (p. 1505).

Our tendency to ascribe bad motives to our staunch opponents on big issues does not mean that we ignore or dismiss their views. It just means that we think they are wrong for the wrong reasons (irrationality and multiple biases). Eagly and colleagues have challenged the notion that we attend to and select information that we agree with and reject and indeed ignore information that we find uncongenial to our most strongly held beliefs (Eagly, Kuleas, Chen, & Chaiken, 2001). Eagly et al. examined a total of 70 experiments that tested the “congeniality hypothesis” (to wit, that we only examine carefully congenial information and ignore the rest). They found that the assumption was untrue. People do attend to information that disagrees with their strong view. But they examine it in a specific way. What they do is a kind of “skeptical and active scrutiny” as compared to information they agree with, which is approached with a view to confirm the congeniality of that information. Our view of arguments that offend or challenge us is to figure out what the “devil” is saying and devise counterarguments to that view. We know what they are saying, but we will not be convinced by them because that is not the purpose of our examination. We want to know how to beat the heck out of those who would hold such views. At least, some of us see it that way.

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IDA Tarbell Revisited

Today, Ida Tarbell is not a well-known historical figure, but she held her attitudes with conviction and expressed them courageously. Although she didn't like being called a muckraker at first, she realized that there was a lot of "muck" in American life that needed to be raked. President Roosevelt and the American public came to agree.

Tarbell followed her beliefs with a powerful sense of purpose. Her early experiences, her family's support, and her own strong education and temperament combined to produce a woman whose attitudes and behavior were consistently in accord. No doubt this is an unusual situation. Ida was a rational actor; the coupling of her attitudes and her life's work was fierce and unshakeable.

Chapter Review

1. What is an attitude?

An attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related.

2. What is the relationship of attitudes to values?

A value is a conception of what is desirable; it is a guideline for a person's actions, a standard for behavior. Our attitudes flow from and express our values. Freedom, equity, and similar concepts are values, and attitudes toward free speech, voting rights, and so on flow from those values.

3. What are implicit and explicit attitudes?

Explicit attitudes operate on a conscious level, so we are aware of them—aware of the cognitive underpinnings of them—and are conscious of how they relate to behavior. They operate via controlled processing and take some cognitive effort to activate. For example, you may know how you feel toward a given political candidate and match your behavior (e.g., voting for him or her) to that attitude. It is these explicit attitudes that we often find having a directive effect on behavior.

Implicit attitudes affect behaviors automatically, without conscious thought, and below the level of awareness. For example, an individual may have a quick negative reaction toward a member of a minority group, even though the individual professes positive and tolerant attitudes toward that group. The "gut-level" reaction occurs without thought and is often distasteful to the individual.

4. How are attitude surveys conducted?

The most commonly used techniques for measuring attitudes are attitude surveys. In an attitude survey, the researcher mails a questionnaire to a potential respondent, conducts a face-to-face interview, or asks a series of questions on the telephone. Because respondents report on their own attitudes, an attitude survey is a self-report measure. A respondent indicates his or her attitude by answering a series of questions.

5. What are the potential sources of bias in a survey?

Among the greatest biases in attitude surveys are badly worded questions as well as the lack of a random sample of sufficient size.

6. What are behavioral measures of attitudes?

Behavioral measures are used to overcome some of the problems inherent in attitude (paper-and-pencil) measures. The idea is that an individual's actions are the truest reflection of how he or she feels. For example, rather than asking people how they feel about a new ethnic group moving into their neighborhood, a researcher might use the "lost letter technique," in which stamped envelopes are apparently accidentally lost near mailboxes. The letters have a foreign-sounding name on them, and one compares the proportion of those mailed with other letters having more conventional names on the envelopes.

7. What is the Implicit Attitude Test (IAT)?

The IAT is an online test of implicit attitudes. The IAT measures the relationship of associative strength between positive or negative attitudes and various racial and ethnic groups.

8. What does the IAT tell us about our prejudices?

The results of the millions of tests on IAT Web sites show that a large proportion of the test-takers display unconscious biases against other social, racial, and ethnic groups.

9. How are attitudes formed?

The basic mechanisms of attitude formation are the same as those for the acquisition of other behavior: classical and operant conditioning and observational learning. In addition, the mass media have had a profound effect on our attitudes and behavior. Since its entry into American homes 50 years ago, television has altered our conception of everything from our notions of "the good life" to sexual behavior. Research has also shown that changes in music genres and the advent of video games and cellular telephones have had significant influences on what people consider to be acceptable behavior.

10. Can attitudes be inherited?

Yes, indirectly. Genetic differences in sensory structures, such as hearing and taste, could affect our preferences for certain kinds of music and foods. Also, aggressiveness, which has a genetic component, can affect a whole range of attitudes and behaviors, from watching violent TV shows and movies, to hostility toward women or members of other groups, to attitudes toward capital punishment

11. What is agenda setting?

Many researchers suggest that the topics foremost in the mass media tend to set the public agenda. This *agenda setting* occurs because the topics most prominent in the news shape the public's cognitions, increasing the focus on certain issues as opposed to others.

12. What impact do social networks have on attitude formation and change?

When you are part of congruent social networks (people with similar views), your attitude becomes more resistant to change because you have strong social support for that attitude. However, if you are embedded in a heterogeneous social network with lots of people who have different views, individuals are less resistant to change. It appears that when you are with people who think as you do, not surprisingly, you become more certain of your attitudes, and any doubts you may have had are removed.

13. What is the relationship between attitudes and behavior?

Researchers have found only a modest relationship between attitudes and behavior. One reason is that more than one attitude may be involved in deciding whether to do something or not to do it. Second, while you might like to express a particular attitude in some circumstance, other factors may stop you from doing so. For example, you may think that your best friend made a grave mistake in marrying Jane, but you would have to be an oaf to express that opinion in your wedding toast.

14. What is the notion of the nonrational actor?

Some attitude theorists have criticized the theory of planned behavior because it assumes that individuals are always rational when attitudes are concerned. Other theorists maintain that humans are nonrational actors and that sometimes attitudes are totally irrelevant to our behavior. In many cases, according to this view, people behave habitually, unthinkingly, and even mindlessly in everyday life.

15. How has the controversy over the rational and nonrational actor been resolved?

The short answer is that sometimes we are rational actors, and our attitudes are coupled with our behavior. Other times we are nonrational actors, and our behaviors and attitudes are uncoupled. Uncoupling is likely to occur when an attitude is not particularly important to us or if we don't have a clear sense of our goals and needs.

16. What is naïve realism, and how does it influence our political attitudes?

Naïve realism involves three intertwined processes. First is the belief that we are seeing the world objectively, and second, that other people who are rational will also see the world as we do. And finally, if those others don't see the world as we do, then either they do not have the right information or they are not rational and harbor ulterior and bad motives.

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