

PSY 586
Attitudes

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PSY 586 Attitudes

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General Introduction and Course Objectives

A major preoccupation of social psychologists over the years is trying to understand how and when attitudes influence and or predict behaviour. It has however been established that we have opinions or dispositions towards every (attitude) object we come across and these shapes how we react or talk about such objects. It is interesting to note that people may hold contrasting perspectives about a particular object yet their attitudes would have similar underlining factors. For instance, let us consider the attitudes of two women on abortion as reported by Franzoi (2000):

At the time I thought it was the right thing to do. Afterwards, i didn't think about it, I went on with my life. Much later I became a born-again Christian and began to rethink my action of forty years ago. Today, I believed I murdered my unborn child. Abortion is the killing of human life, done out of convenience. If I don't speak out against abortion now, young girls will also carry this burden the rest of their lives. I believe a woman has a choice before she gets pregnant, but not afterwards.

Joan (Pro- life).

Having lived throughout the world and experienced war, I see a woman's choice over her body as a much broader issue than women in the Milwaukee getting into a clinic. I'm pr- life in the sense that I want to raise the quality of life of those who are born. I've had firsthand experience with others interfering with a woman's right to choose. When I lived in Egypt I was raped and became pregnant. Abortion is illegal in Egypt. I had an unsafe and illegal abortion, and I had it during the second trimester of pregnancy due to all the obstacles I faced. I

*just cannot believe that people would work
so hard to take rights away from women.*

Natasha (Pro-choice)

From the statements of the two women their attitudes toward abortion are very obvious, however, there are observed similarities in these contrasting views. One, their dispositions were based on some personal beliefs. Two, the attitudes were based on emotion (affect). Three, these attitudes seemed to be based on past behaviours. What then is attitude?

Zimbardo and Leippe (1991) defined attitude as an evaluative disposition toward some objects, an evaluation of something or someone along a continuum of like to dislike or favourable to unfavourable. In a similar definition, Eagly and Chaiken (1993) defined attitude as a relatively enduring sets of beliefs, feelings and intentions towards an object, person, event or symbol. It is a social orientation - an underlying inclination to respond to something either favourably or unfavourably. Everyone routinely forms positive and/ or negative evaluations of the people, places, objects, and ideas they encounter.

Perhaps, the questions we should ask are: Why do we bother to have attitudes? Does forming positive and negative judgements of people, objects, and ideas serve any useful purpose?

Objectives of the Course:

The objectives of the course are:

1. To introduce to you the concept of attitude and its principles;
2. Expose you to the major theories of human behaviour as it relates to attitudes;
3. Examine different ways of measuring attitude from the perspective of social psychology.
4. Offer explanations for individual differences in relation to attitudes and attitudes formation.

LECTURE ONE

The Concept and Evolution of Attitude in Psychology

Introduction

In this lecture we shall attempt to consider different definitions of attitudes by various authors and writers over the years. This exercise is meant for you to know the emphasis and historical development of attitudes.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Define and discuss attitude as a concept in human relationships
2. Explain the evolution of attitudes

Pre-Test

1. What is Attitude? How did attitude develop
2. What is the trend of development of attitude
3. Why is theory important to attitude

CONTENT

Humans are naturally opinionated. We form likes and dislikes almost from the moment we first gain consciousness. Our stances on issues and our attitudes about things are directly linked to our innermost thoughts and feelings. In modern society we are constantly bombarded by advertisements and entertainment which works hard to influence or change these thoughts and feelings. (<http://knol.google.com/k/attitudes->

and-attitude-change#)This is the art of attitude change, and it is important to understand what attitudes are and how they can be affected.

Our teachers, friends, families, etc. convey their beliefs to us on a daily basis. On television, magazines, billboards, and even people's cars and bodies-- advertisements are everywhere. But to what degree do these things change the attitudes and behaviour of people? To answer these questions it is important to understand what an attitude is.

What is Attitude? Let me start by giving you some definitions of attitudes; An attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related. (Allport, 1935)

A learned orientation, or disposition, toward an object or situation, which provides a tendency to respond favourably or unfavourably to the object or situation. (Rokeach, 1968)

Attitudes have social reference in their origins and development and in their objects, while at the same time they have psychological reference in what they inhere in the individual and are intimately enmeshed in his behaviour and psychological make-up. (Warren and Jahoda, 1973).

The term attitude should be used to refer to a general, enduring positive or negative feeling about some person, object, or issue. (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981).

An *attitude* is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for something. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person, place, thing, or event— this is often referred to as the **attitude** object. People can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object, meaning that they simultaneously possess both positive and negative attitudes toward the item in question.

According to Rosenberg and Hovland (1960), attitudes are “predispositions to respond to some class of stimuli with certain classes of response”. These classes of response are:

- **Affective**: what a person feels about the attitude object, how favourable or unfavourable it's evaluated
- **Cognitive**: what the person believes the attitude object is like, objectively

- **Behavioural (sometimes called 'conative')**: how a person actually responds, or intends to respond, to the attitude object.

According to Eagly & Chaiken, (1998) Attitudes are judgments. They develop on the ABC model (affect, behaviour, and cognition). The *affective* response is an emotional response that expresses an individual's degree of preference for an entity. The *behavioural* intention is a verbal indication or typical behavioural tendency of an individual. The *cognitive* response is a cognitive evaluation of the entity that constitutes an individual's beliefs about the object. Most attitudes are the result of either direct experience or observational learning from the environment.

An attitude is a psychological tendency we express when we evaluate someone or something. It may be positive, negative, or neutral. Attitudes often have less influence on behaviour than we might expect. Correlations between attitudes and such behaviours as signing petitions or writing letters to government officials are often quite small. This may be due in part to the fact that opportunities to behave in accordance with our attitudes are not always available; *subjective norms* (beliefs about what other people think you ought to do) may also interfere with acting upon our attitudes. In some situations, however, behaviour and attitudes are more consistent, particularly when people are knowledgeable about the issues involved. (<http://www.csun.edu/~vcpsy015/social.htm>) The focus of one's attitude, or what they are evaluating, is called the *attitude object*. According to Martin et al. (2007) attitudes can be broken down into three different parts which together create an evaluation of the attitude object.

1. **Affective Component**: This consists of the emotional reactions people have to attitude objects. For instance, if you have a favourite football team and the team won a match you might have feelings of happiness or excitement. If there is a team you do not like you might feel annoyed when the team plays or wins a match.
2. **Behavioural Component**: These are actions or observable behaviour that is the resulting from an attitude object. If you hear a song you like on the radio then you might go home and research the singer so you can buy their album. You might then spend all your free time listening to this album. The attitude object has changed your behaviour and actions.

3. **Cognitive Component:** These are the thoughts and beliefs people have about an attitude object. For instance, you might like a footballer because of his or her hairstyle. You might also believe that the footballer is a lot like you are which makes his or her style easier to relate to.

When these three components are combined they work to create an overall attitude about an attitude object.

Studies have suggested that attitudes might be linked to one's genetic makeup. For example, it has been reported that identical twins share many of the same attitudes, while fraternal twins differ in opinion. Temperament and personality are formed in part by our genetics, and these factors can influence the attitudes we form. For instance, someone who is born with a mellow, easy-going personality might prefer listening to soft rock rather than heavy metal. However, it should be noted that such findings are not entirely conclusive because studies have also shown the influence of environmental factors on attitude and attitude formation.

Meaning that, attitudes are not only the result of genetics, but are also formed because of social experiences that involve the affective, behavioural, and cognitive components.

Summary

The students have learnt the following:

1. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person, place, thing, or event— this is often referred to as the **attitude** object.
2. The different components of attitudes

Post-Test

1. What are the different definitions of attitudes?

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LECTURE TWO

Attitude Bases

Introduction

In this lecture we shall attempt to consider the different attitude bases

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Define and discuss the different attitude bases

Pre-Test

1. What are Attitude bases? How are they connected to attitude development?
2. What is the trend of development of attitude bases?
3. How are they important to attitude

CONTENT

Cognitively Based Attitudes

When a person's opinion about something is based primarily on the beliefs or facts they have, then it is called a cognitively based attitude. These kinds of attitudes allow people to classify an attitudinal object by its pluses and minuses. By doing this, it is easier to decide whether or not a person likes and wants to have anything to do with an object, idea, or person. Such attitudes rely on logic since a person effectively weighs the good and bad before drawing conclusions. An example of a cognitively based attitude might be thinking that the house you just bought is great because it is moderately sized and located near some good schools

http://www.psychology-lexicon.com/lexikon/cognitively_based_attitude.htm

Affectively Based Attitudes

Affectively based attitudes are opinions based on emotions and values, rather than objective beliefs. A boy might like a girl just because of the way she makes him feel. A girl might love her car because it runs smoothly, fuel efficient, and has served her well over a period of time. Researchers have alluded to the fact that attitudes about sex, politics, and religion are likely to be affectively based since they often pull at a person's heart strings rather than stimulate the logical mind. Affectively based attitudes can come from religious and moral beliefs, such as whether or not women should have the right to an abortion. (Aronson *et al* 2006) Such attitudes are formed not through logic so much as on inner feelings and values. Affectively based attitudes can also result from conditioning.

1. **Classical Conditioning:** Sometimes smells, colours and other sensory information can elicit strong emotional response. Such emotional responses are probably created through classical conditioning. When a stimulus elicits an emotional response it is accompanied by a neutral stimulus which does not cause an emotional response. If the stimuli continue then eventually the neutral stimulus will be able to cause the emotional response without the need of the original, actual stimulus. For instance, if when you were young you often went to a field that smelled strongly of roses, then chances are the smell of roses will make you recall memories of your time in that field. This is the process of classical conditioning, and it can create attitudes about things that our based on stimuli(<http://www.as.wvu.edu/~sbb/comm221/chapters/pavlov.htm>)
2. **Operant Conditioning:** When people choose to engage in behaviours, those behaviours will be reinforced when followed by a reward. If punishment follows an action then it is being negatively reinforced and the person will perform that action less often. If a young girl were to try and play with a boy she met at school, but her parents frequently punished her for it, telling her that "boys are bad", then she will most likely develop the same

negative attitude toward boys as her parents have. If her actions were reinforced positively by her parents, then she might not develop a negative attitude about boys (<http://psychology.about.com/od/behavioralpsychology/a/introopcond.htm>)

All affectively based attitudes have three key things in common. They don't result from rational evaluations, they are not governed by logic, and they are often linked to people's values.

Behaviourally Based Attitudes

These attitudes come from observations of behaviour toward something. Sometimes people don't know how to feel until they see how they behave. This is one of the arguments in Daryl Bem's (1967) *self-perception theory*. An example of this would be if someone were not to realize that the reason they walk through the park every morning on their way to school is because the trees and grass make them happy or peaceful. This attitude was formed after they had developed a routine that they hadn't been consciously considering or wondering about. Such attitudes are based on observation of behaviour and not on cognitions or affect. (http://www.psychology-lexicon.com/lexikon/behaviorally_based_attitude.htm)

Behaviourally based attitudes only form when a person's initial attitude toward something was weak or ambiguous. If someone already knew that they liked walking through nature then he or she wouldn't need to observe the behaviour to realize their attitude about nature. According to ---Bem, 1967-----people also infer their attitudes from the behaviour only if there aren't any other explanations for their behaviour. For instance, a girl who is always trying to spend time with a boy might infer later on that she actually has a romantic crush on the boy as a way to explain her behaviour. If she had to spend time with this boy as part of a school activity then she would need to have no further explanation for her action.

Explicit and Implicit Attitudes

When a person consciously endorses and easily reports an attitude, then that attitude is explicit. These are the opinions that are most accessible, or at the top of people's heads. For instance, if one person asked another their favourite kind of restaurants is like then the person answering should be able to access their explicit attitudes on the subject by

thinking about their favourite restaurants. On the other hand there are implicit attitudes, which are involuntary, uncontrollable, and sometimes unconscious evaluations people make. Many implicit attitudes are based on values that are deeply ingrained into our psyche. For instance, someone who was raised to respect women and wait until marriage to have sex might automatically dislike a movie he watches where all of the main characters are misogynistic and having promiscuous sex. This attitude comes involuntarily and there is nothing the person can do about it since it is coming from an unconscious part of the mind (<http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsidt=18330365>)

Summary

The students have learnt the following:

1. Cognitively Based Attitudes, Affectively Based Attitudes
2. Classical Conditioning, Operant Conditioning, Behaviourally Based Attitudes, Explicit and Implicit Attitudes,

Post-Test

1. What are attitude bases?

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LECTURE THREE

Theories of Attitudes

Introduction

In this lecture we shall attempt to consider different definitions of theories by various authors and writers over the years. This exercise is meant for you to know the different theories and how it explains attitudes.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Define and discuss the theories of attitude
2. Explain the evolution of attitudes theories
- 3.

Pre-Test

1. What are Attitude theories?
2. What is the trend in the development of attitude theories?
3. Why is theory important to attitude

CONTENT

A theory is an organised system of ideas that seeks to explain why variables are related. Attitude theories in essence attempt to explain the underlying factors in the development of attitudes and attitude change. Prominent among the theories of attitude are consistency theories which imply that we seek to be consistent in our beliefs and values. The most famous example of such a theory is Dissonance-reduction theory, associated with Leon Festinger. According to Festinger's (1957) theory, when we perceive a discrepancy between our attitudes and behaviour,

between our behaviour and self-image, or between one attitude and another, a frustrating state of anxiety, or "dissonance," results. For example, a person may successfully overcome a childhood racial prejudice but may experience unpleasant emotional arousal at the sight of a racially mixed couple. The person experiences a conflict between the belief in his own lack of prejudice and the evidence of prejudice from his behaviour. This internal conflict produces cognitive dissonance, which is aversive. According to Festinger, a crucial source of a person's motivation is dissonance reduction: The aversive state of dissonance motivates a person to reduce it. Because dissonance reduction involves the removal of an aversive stimulus, it serves as a negative reinforcer.

A person can achieve dissonance reduction either by reducing the importance of the dissonant element (Strategy 1) or by adding consonant elements (Strategy 2), or by changing one of the dissonant elements (Strategy 3). For example, a student believes she is very intelligent but she invariably gets bad grades in her courses. Because the obvious prediction is that intelligent people get good grades, the discrepancy causes the student to experience dissonance. To reduce this dissonance, she might decide grades are unimportant and intelligence is not closely related to grades. This is using Strategy 1, reducing the importance of one of the dissonant elements—the fact that she got bad grades in her courses. Or she can dwell on the belief that her professors have been unfair or that her job leaves her only little time to study. In this case, she is using Strategy 2, reducing dissonance by adding consonant elements—those factors that can account for her poor grades and hence explain the discrepancy between her perceived intelligence and actual grades. Finally, she can use Strategy 3 to change one of the dissonant elements. She can either start getting good grades or revise her opinion of her own intelligence.

Self-perception theory

Self-perception theory is an account of attitude change developed by psychologist Daryl Bem (1967). The theory states that we only have that knowledge of our own behaviour and its causation that another person can have, and that we therefore develop our attitudes by observing our own behaviour and concluding what attitudes must have caused them.

Self-perception theory differs from cognitive dissonance theory in that it does not hold that people experience a "negative drive state" called "dissonance" which they seek to relieve. Instead, people simply "infer" their attitudes from their own behaviour in the same way that an outside observer might. In this way it combines dissonance theory with attribution theory.

Bem (1967) ran his own version of Festinger and Carlsmith's (1959) famous cognitive dissonance experiment. Subjects listened to a tape of a man enthusiastically describing a tedious peg-turning task. Some subjects were told that the man had been paid ₦3000 for his testimonial and another group was told that he was paid ₦150. Those in the latter condition thought that the man must have enjoyed the task more than those in the ₦3000 condition. Bem argued that the subjects did not judge the man's attitude in terms of cognitive dissonance phenomena, and that therefore any attitude change the man might have had in that situation was the result of the subject's own self-perception. Cognitive dissonance theory cannot explain attitude change that occurs when there is no upsetting dissonance state. Whether cognitive dissonance or self-perception is a more useful theory is a topic of considerable controversy and a large body of literature, with no clear winner. There are some circumstances where each theory is preferred, but it is traditional to use the terminology of cognitive dissonance theory by default.

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion (ELM; proposed by Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986) is a model of how attitudes are formed and changed. Central to this model is the **elaboration continuum**, which ranges from low elaboration (low thought) to high elaboration (high thought). Depending on the extent of elaboration, different processes can mediate persuasion.

The ELM distinguishes between two routes to persuasion: the "Central Route" and the "Peripheral Route." Central route processes are those that require a great deal of thought, and therefore are likely to predominate under conditions that promote high elaboration. Central route processes involve careful scrutiny of a persuasive communication (a speech, an advertisement, and so forth) to determine the merits of the arguments. Under these conditions, a person's unique cognitive responses

to the message determine the persuasive outcome (the direction and magnitude of attitude change).

Peripheral route processes, on the other hand, require little thought, and therefore predominate under conditions that promote low elaboration. These processes often rely on judgmental heuristics (such as “experts are always right”) or surface features of a message (the number of arguments presented) or its source (their attractiveness).

Which route is taken is determined by the extent of elaboration. Both motivational and ability factors determine elaboration. Motivational factors include (among others) the personal relevance of the message topic, accountability, and a person’s Need for Cognition (their innate desire to enjoy thinking). Ability factors include the availability of cognitive resources (e.g., the presence or absence of time pressures or distractions) or relevant knowledge needed to carefully scrutinize the arguments. Under conditions of moderate elaboration, a mixture of central and peripheral route processes will guide information processing.

Social judgment theory

The **Social Judgment theory** of attitude change was proposed by Carl Hovland and Muzafer Sherif (1961). This theory attempts to explain how attitude change is influenced by judgmental processes. The key idea of Social Judgment theory can be understood and explained in terms of "attribution" and other "communication processes." "Attribution" is the process by which people decide why certain events occurred or why a particular person acted in a certain manner. The following factors influence the person's attribution: internal versus external causes of own behaviour and the behaviours of others, consistency consensus, and a certain person's role as an "actor" or a "receiver" in a particular situation.

A study of weight perception illustrates the theory. Participants are asked to categorize several small weights by weight class based only on lifting each one in turn. A control group **C** categorized the weights roughly evenly across six weight classes, while another group **A** was asked to lift a much heavier weight before each test weight. This group categorized most weights in the lowest weight class, with decreasing quantities in each successively higher weight class. The third group **B** lifted a weight only as heavy as the highest weight class before judging each other weight; this group categorized most weights into the

highest weight class, with decreasing quantities in successively lower classes; the opposite result of group A, and contrary to predictions of the contrast effect. Hovland and Sherif called this effect, where things start to seem more like their context (the heavy weight), the assimilation effect. In terms of anchoring and adjustment, when an anchor (the heavy weight) approaches the range of possible judgments (the six weight classes), the categorization or judgment shifts from contrast to assimilation. When applied to social judgments, these effects show that the most effective position to advocate for changing another's attitude judgment is the most extreme position within that person's "latitude of acceptance," within which assimilation effects will make your position seem more like their own. Beyond this latitude lies the latitude of rejection, within which any position will be seen as more different from one's own due to contrast effects.

Summary

The students have learnt the following:

1. Dissonance-reduction theory, Self-perception theory, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Social judgment theory

Post-Test

1. Compare and contrast the various theories of attitude

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LECTURE FOUR

Functions of Attitudes

Introduction

In this lecture we shall attempt to consider different functions of attitudes.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Explain the different functions of attitudes

Pre-Test

1. What are the functions of attitude?
2. How do these functions shape our behaviour?

CONTENT

Attitudes serve a number of different psychological functions. Different people might hold the same attitude for different reason, and a person might hold a particular attitude for more than one reason. The functions flounce how consistent it is with his or her other attitudes and how easily it can be changed. Over the years, attitude theorists have identified several functions of attitudes (Hearek, 1986; Katz, 1960; Smith, Bruuner, & White, 1956). We will discuss five of them here;

The Instrumental Function: attitudes that we hold for practical or utilitarian reasons are said to serve an instrumental function. They express specific instances of our general desire to obtain benefits or rewards and avoid punishment. For example, most Americans favour more government

services but oppose higher taxes. As this example indicates, such attitudes are not necessarily consistent. To change such attitudes, the person needs only to be convinced that an alternative would bring more benefits.

The Knowledge Function: Attitudes that help us make sense of the world, that bring order to the diverse information we must assimilate in our daily lives, are said to serve a knowledge function. Such attitudes are essentially schemas that permit us to organize and process diverse information efficiently without having to attend to its details. For example, before 1990, negative attitudes toward the Soviet Union helped many Americans organize and interpret world events in terms of the cold war. The belief that Democrat just want to “tax and spend” or that Republicans care only for the wealthy provides a quick schematic way of interpreting and evaluating the proposals and candidates offered by the two parties. Like other schemas, such attitudes often oversimplify reality and bias our perception of events.

The Value-Expressive Function: Attitudes that express our values or reflect our self-concepts are said to serve a value-expressive function. For example, a person might have positive attitudes toward gay people because of deeply held values about diversity, personal freedom, and tolerances; another person might have negative attitudes because of deeply held religious convictions that condemn homosexuality. Because value-expressive attitudes are derived from the person’s under-lying values or self-concept, they tend to be consistent. As noted earlier, broad political values, such as liberalism or conservatism, can serve as a basis for value-expressive can serve as a basis for values-expressive attitudes. Such attitudes do not change easily; the individual has to be convinced that alternative attitudes would be more consistent with his or her underlying values or self-concept.

The Ego-Defensive Function: attitudes that protect us from anxiety or from threats to our self-esteem are said to serve an ego-defensive function. The concept of ego-defensive mechanism comes from Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. One of the mechanisms of ego defence described by Freud is projection: The individual represses his or her own unacceptable impulses and expresses hostile attitudes toward others who

are perceived to possess those who are perceived to possess that impulse. For example, a person who is fearful of his or her own possible homosexual feelings is likely to deny have such feelings and display hostility toward gay people. In one study, students at a liberal California University were asked to write essays describing their attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. A content analysis of the essays revealed negative attitudes serving an ego-defensive function in about 35% of the essays (Herek, 1987).

The notion that negative attitudes toward minority groups can serve an ego-defensive function is called the scapegoat theory of prejudice, because the person's hostility often takes the form of blaming those groups for both personal and societal problems. This theory was tested in the late 1940s by a group of psychologists at the University of California at Berkeley. The researchers sought to discover whether psychoanalytic theory could explain the kind of anti-Semitism and fascist ideology that had emerged in Nazi Germany and whether one could identify individuals who would be particularly susceptible to such an ideology. The research, described in a book titled *The Authoritarian Personality*, has become a classic in social psychology (Adorno et.al., 1950).

Using attitude questionnaires, the investigators first confirmed their hypothesis that individuals who were anti-Semitic were also likely to be prejudiced against many groups other than their own—that is, against “out groups”. In interviews such individuals recalled rigidly moralistic parental discipline, a hierarchical family structure, and concern about the family's socioeconomic status. According to the investigators, such home environments produce individuals with “authoritarian personalities”—individuals who are submissive and obedient to those they consider their superiors (including authority figures) but contemptuous of and aggressive toward those they consider inferior. As the psychoanalytic theory of prejudice predicts, authoritarian individuals repress knowledge of their own undesirable characteristics, projecting them instead onto members of “inferior” out groups.

Although the authoritarian personality study has been criticized for a number of shortcomings (Christie & Johoda, 1954), many of its original conclusions have withstood the test of continued research. In particular, there does appear to be an authoritarian personality type that seems particularly susceptible to a fascist ideology with hostility toward out groups at its core. More recent research suggests, however, that prejudice

and authoritarian attitudes may be acquired more directly through normal learning processes rather than through the more involved psychoanalytic processes described in the original research (Altemeyer, 1988). Also, the specific political content of an authoritarian outlook can differ from one society to another. A survey conducted in 1991 found that highly authoritarian Russians tended to oppose individualism but supported equality (such as free and equal medical care for everybody), a pattern opposite that displayed by authoritarian individuals in the United States (McFarland, Ageyev, & Abalakina-Paap, 1992).

The Social Adjustment Function: Attitudes that help us feel that we are part of a social community are said to serve a social adjustment function. The “opinion molecules” discussed earlier provide one example. Other examples can be seen in people who hold the prescribed beliefs and attitudes of a particular church or political party because their friends, families, and neighbours do; the actual content of the beliefs and attitudes is less important than the social bonds they provide. To the extent that attitudes serve primarily to social adjustment function, they are likely to change if social norms change.

This was demonstrated in striking fashion in the American South during the 1950s, when legalized racial segregation was being dismantled. Surveys showed that Americans in the South were generally opposed to desegregation and were more likely than American in the North to express negative attitudes toward African-Americans. Some psychologists suggested that southern Americans might be more authoritarian than northern Americans-that racial attitudes in the South were serving an ego-defensive function. But Thomas Pettigrew, a social psychologist who specializes in race relations, argued that racial attitudes in the South were being sustained primarily by simple conformity to the prevailing social norms of the region-a social adjustment function (Pettigrew, 1959).

Using the questionnaire developed for measuring authoritarianism, Pettigrew found that southerners were no more authoritarian individuals in both regions were more prejudiced against African-Americans than nonauthoritarian individuals). Moreover, southerners who were prejudiced against African-Americans were not necessarily prejudiced against other out groups-which are contrary to what the theory of authoritarianism predicts. In fact, the south has historically been one of the least anti-Semitic regions in the United States, and one survey done at the time

showed southern whites to be unfavourable toward African-Americans but quite favourable toward African-Americans but quite favourable toward Jews (Prothro, 1952). Also, veterans from the South-whose military experience had exposed them to different social norms-were considerably less prejudiced than nonveterans, even though veterans from both South and North were more authoritarian than nonveterans.

The subsequent history of desegregation confirmed Pettigrew's analysis. As desegregation progressed, surveys showed that attitudes toward a particular desegregation step tended to be unfavourable just before the change had been implemented but became favourable soon afterward (Pettigrew, 1959). Thus, some communities had accepted the desegregation of public accommodations but were still opposed to school desegregation: other communities showed the reverse pattern. In one study, it was estimated that about 40% of the sample had firm opinions favouring or opposing desegregation, but that the remaining 60% favoured whatever the social norms happened to be at the time (Minard, 1952).

It is often said that one cannot legislate attitudes. In a literal sense this is obviously true. But legislation and judicial decrees change public policies and practices, and these, in turn, frequently lead to changes in social norms. To the extent that a citizen's attitudes are serving a social adjustment function, they, too will change. Under these conditions the quickest path toward changing "hearts and minds" is to first change behaviour by changing social norms.

Summary

The students have learnt the following:

1. The different functions of attitudes

Post-Test

1. What are the functions of attitudes?

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LECTURE FIVE

Component of Attitudes

Introduction

Traditionally, social psychologists have viewed attitudes as being made up of three distinct components: cognitive (beliefs), affective (feelings), and behavioral components (Breckler, 1984). This is known as multidimensional, or tricomponent view.

In this lecture we shall attempt to consider the different components of attitudes. This exercise is meant for you to know the different components and how each of the components explains attitudes.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Define and discuss the different components of attitude
2. Explain the connectedness of the different components

Pre-Test

1. List the components of attitudes
2. Explain the different components of attitudes
3. Explain how each of the component is related to the other

CONTENT

Attitude positions are the summary aggregation of three components:

- a. affective responses,
- b. cognitions, and

c. behaviours.

The *affective* component of attitude is said to consist of a person's evaluation of, liking of, or emotional response to some situation, object, or person. It is the emotional feelings stimulated by an object of thought. Affective responses reflect one's attitude with sensations of pleasure, sadness, or other levels of physical arousal- For example, for the attitude construct of *computer anxiety*, a topic of current interest, the affective component would be a person's liking of the computer and his feeling of excitement, or dread, when she or he used one.

- ▶ The *cognitive* component of attitude is conceptualized as a person's factual knowledge of the situation, object, or person, including oneself. In other words, the cognitive component refers to how much a person knows about a topic, such as computers. It is made up of the beliefs that people hold about the object of an attitude. The cognitive component of computer anxiety would be based on how much a person knows about computers and her level of understanding of computer operation.

The *behavioural* component of an attitude consists of predispositions to act in certain ways toward an attitude object. It involves the person's overt behaviour directed toward a situation, object, or person. For example, the behavioural component of computer anxiety would be related to how often a person had used a computer, and what kind of experience he had. Persons, who routinely use computers, especially if they choose to use them freely, would be more likely to have positive attitudes toward computers, and be less anxious, than would others who have fewer experiences with computers.

These three components of attitude form an attitude system. The components are not isolated but are interrelated and produce an organizing framework or mental representation of the attitude construct. Cognitive schemata provide structure to interrelated attitudes and guide the information processes of attending, interpreting, and reconstructing (Smith, 1982). Behavioural research supports the idea that actions lead to the formation of cognitive schemata, which lead to the creation of attitudes. It would seem that the opposite is also true. Attitudes help form cognitive relationships, which in turn predispose behaviours.

Situational stimuli or events in the environment directly influence behaviour and the formation of attitudes. Strict behaviourists would argue that internal events that form attitudes are the result of observable actions. A change in attitude or beliefs occurs as a result of actions that have been influenced by reinforcers. Social-learning theory expands this principle. According to social-learning theorists, it is not essential to learn behaviours directly through action and reinforcement, as traditional behavioural psychologists would propose. Indirect learning through observing a model and receiving verbal instruction has a powerful impact on behaviour and attitude formation (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991).

Situations that include a change in the behavioural component of attitude lead to changes in attitudes. But there is also a reciprocal action. Since the components of attitude systems are interrelated, a change in liking (affect) may result in a change in behaviours (Smith, 1982). For example, the currently popular concept of the cognitive apprenticeship is based on the idea of learners participating as apprentices in real-world activities with those who are more knowledgeable than they. If designed correctly, these situations are perceived by learners as important and realistic, and learners come to value them. The overt activities of cognitive apprenticeships produce in students favourable dispositions (i.e., affects), which in turn promote a sense of value and often a desire to learn more.

Some professions use computers more than others. For example, stockbrokers use computers routinely, and their use of computers, especially computer networks, is directly related to positive consequences, such as increased profits.

Students who work as apprentices with stockbrokers will most likely see the importance of computers and gain an appreciation of them (an affective reaction). They also learn a great deal about using computers (a cognitive reaction) as they navigate through various options included in the stockbroker's network of computer databases and on-line sources of information (a behavioural reaction), and certainly this real-world use of the computer is perceived as important (Maurer, 1983)

Finally, future uses (behavioural intentions) are important because the apprentice stockbroker learns quickly from the mentor that financial success may be directly related to continued use of computers and computer systems. In this case, cognitive apprenticeships are effective attitude change strategies because they often place learners in situations where an entire attitude system is influenced (Maurer, 1983)

Maurer (1983) has reported that computer anxiety is lower for those who see an observable benefit to computer use, such as stockbrokers who can use computer skills to increase productivity. Stockbrokers usually have relatively low levels of computer anxiety because their computer attitude systems are continuously and positively modified during their work.

Maurer (1983) also reported, as have others, that all groups, even computer-intensive professionals such as stockbrokers, have individuals that are more or less computer anxious than their peers. These computer-using professionals just tend to be less anxious than some other groups of people. A characteristic of attitudes is that they are variable, not discrete. Attitudes are analog, not digital. Attitudes vary among individuals.

Importance of Attitudes

Traditionally when instruction is designed, there are two categories of outcomes in mind: those directed toward cognitive goals, and those related to the attitudes of the learner. There is little necessity to argue the importance of the acquisition of knowledge by a student as a result of instruction. Achievement is the paramount objective of most instructional activities; however, it may also be important to recognize the need for establishing attitudinal goals and for planning activities designed to facilitate affective outcomes in learners as a consequence of an instructional situation. As a matter of fact, it has become increasingly apparent to those involved in educational technology research that one of the major, and possibly unique, consequences of instructional situations involving media is the likelihood of the development of positive attitudinal positions in students (Simonson, 1985).

The most powerful rationale for the need to promote attitude positions in learners would be to demonstrate a direct relationship between attitudes and achievement, or liking and learning. Numerous researchers have identified such a relationship (Fenneman, 1973; Greenwald, 1965, 1966; Lamb, 1987; Levy, 1973; Perry & Kopperman, 1973; Simonson, 1977; Simonson, 1978; Simonson & Bullard, 1978). However, most educational and psychological researchers are reluctant to claim that there is any cause and-effect linkage between these two learner variables (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). There are too many intervening forces likely to influence the relationship between how a person feels and how he or she behaves.

The impact of attitude on learning is only one reason for interest in attitudes. There are other arguments that explain why attitudes of learners are important. First, most educators would agree that there are times when it is legitimate, and important, for learners to accept the truth of certain ideas-in other words, to accept an attitudinal position. The importance of voting is an attitude position that most would agree is important. Civics teachers routinely "teach" this attitude (Simonson, (1985)

Second, while the strength of the relationship between attitudes and achievement is unclear, it seems logical that students are more likely to remember information, seek new ideas, and continue studying when they react favourably to an instructional situation or like a certain content area. Students who like chemistry will tend to stay after class to work on experiments, read about chemistry outside of class, and be more likely to elect to take a chemistry course than will those who do not like chemistry. Learners tend to do what they like, not what they do not like. They gravitate toward their interests (Simonson, 1985)

Third, there are some instances when influencing student's attitudes is not desirable, so educators should be aware of which techniques affect attitudes. In this way, possible bias can be recognized and eliminated. The gender biases found in textbooks are considered partially responsible for gender biases in people. For example, the use of the generic *he* was long considered appropriate by textbook authors and publishers. Now it is obvious that the use of this term helped form an inappropriate attitude position in both boys and girls that males were more important (Simonson, 1985)

Last, student attitudes toward a situation can tell the teacher a great deal about the impact of that situation on the learning process. Obviously, attitudes need to be measured in order to know if they have been influenced. As a result of quantitatively and qualitatively assessing the opinions of students toward the learning activities in which they are participating, it may be possible to improve the quality of procedures. One of the most important techniques of evaluation is to ascertain attitudes toward some event, object, or person. End-of-course evaluations of attitude toward courses and course content are a standard activity in schools and training centres (Simonson, 1985)

In summary, attitudes could be complex phenomena. They have been studied for decades by social scientists and educators and are beginning to be understood as organizers related to learning processes and outcomes.

Attitudes are learned "predispositions to respond" held by individuals that make them likely to act in certain ways. Attitudes are not observable, but they do serve to help produce observable actions in people.

Social psychologists, and others, have proposed a number of theories of attitude change. Many of the theories are related, so there has been considerable effort to categorize them. Because of the comprehensiveness of the attitude change literature, it is considered important to review the theories of attitude change as a foundation for proposing guidelines for persuasion.

Summary

The students have learnt the following:

1. That attitude has three component; affective, cognitive and the behavioural
2. That these three components do not necessarily stand alone, rather, they are interconnected.
3. The importance of attitudes

Post Test

1. What are the different components of attitudes?
2. In what are these different components interconnected?

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LECTURE SIX

Measurement of Attitudes

Introduction

In this lecture we shall attempt to consider different methods of measuring attitudes. We shall also consider the disparities in the measuring tools.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Define and discuss the different measures of attitudes
2. Be able to develop an attitude scale
3. Explain their differences

Pre-Test

1. What are attitude measures?
2. What are their differences?
3. Why are the different measures important to attitudes?

CONTENT

Attitude Measurement

Perhaps the most straightforward way of finding out about someone's attitudes would be to ask them. However, attitudes are related to self-image and social acceptance (i.e. attitude functions).

In order to preserve a positive self-image, people's responses may be affected by social desirability. They may not well tell about their true attitudes, but answer in a way that they feel socially acceptable (McLeod, 2009)

Given this problem, various methods of measuring attitudes have been developed. However, all of them have limitations. In particular the different measures focus on different components of attitudes – cognitive, affective and behavioural – and as we know, these components do not necessarily coincide.

Attitude measurement can be divided into two basic categories:

1. Direct Measurement (likert scale and semantic differential)
2. Indirect Measurement (projective techniques)

The semantic differential technique of Osgood et al. (1957) asks a person to rate an issue or topic on a standard set of **bipolar adjectives** (i.e. with opposite meanings), each representing a seven point scale.

To prepare a semantic differential scale, you must first think of a number of words with opposite meanings that are applicable to describing the subject of the test. For example, participants are given a word, for example 'car', and presented with a variety of adjectives to describe it. Respondents tick to indicate how they feel about what is being measured.

In the picture, you can find Osgood's map of people's ratings for the word 'polite'. The image shows ten of the scales used by Osgood. The image maps the average responses of two groups of 20 people to the word 'polite'.

The semantic differential technique reveals information on three basic dimensions of attitudes: evaluation, potency (i.e. strength) and activity.

- **Evaluation:** is concerned with whether a person thinks positively or negatively about the attitude topic (e.g. dirty – clean, and ugly - beautiful).
- **Potency:** is concerned with how powerful the topic is for the person (e.g. cruel – kind, and strong - weak).
- **Activity:** is concerned with whether the topic is seen as active or passive (e.g. active – passive).

Using this information we can see if a person's feeling (evaluation) towards an object is consistent with their behaviour. For example, a person might like the taste of chocolate (evaluative) but not eat it often (activity). The evaluation dimension has been most used by social psychologists as a measure of a person's attitude, because this dimension reflects the affective aspect of an attitude.

Evaluation of Direct Methods

An attitude scale is designed to provide a valid, or accurate, measure of an individual's social attitude. There are various problems that affect the validity of attitude scales. However, the most common problem is that of social desirability.

Socially desirability refers to the tendency for people to give "socially desirable" response to the questionnaire items. People are often motivated to give replies that make them appear "well adjusted", unprejudiced, open minded and democratic. Self report scales that measure attitudes towards race, religion, sex etc. are heavily affected by socially desirability bias (Mcleod,2009)

Respondents who harbour a negative attitude towards a particular group may not wish be admit to the experimenter (or to themselves) that they have these feelings. Consequently, responses on attitude scales are not always 100% valid.

Projective Techniques

To avoid the problem of social desirability, various indirect measures of attitudes have been used. Either people are unaware of what is being measured (which has ethical problems) or they are unable consciously to affect what is being measured.

Indirect methods typically involve the use of a projective test. A **projective test** involves presenting a person with an ambiguous (i.e. unclear) or incomplete stimulus (e.g. picture or words). The stimulus requires interpretation from the person. Therefore, the person's attitude is inferred from their interpretation of the ambiguous or incomplete stimulus (Mcleod,2009)

The assumption about these measures of attitudes it that the person will "project" his or her views, opinions or attitudes into the ambiguous situation, thus revealing the attitudes the person holds. However, indirect methods only provide general information and do not offer a precise measurement of attitude strength since it is qualitative rather than quantitative. This method of attitude measurement is not objective or scientific which is a big criticism.

Examples of projective techniques include:

- Rorschach Inkblot Test
- Thematic Apperception Test (or TAT)
- Draw a Person Task

Thematic Apperception Test

Here a person is presented with an ambiguous picture which they have to interpret. The thematic apperception test (TAT) taps into a person's unconscious mind to reveal the repressed aspects of their personality. Although the picture, illustration, drawing or cartoon that is used must be interesting enough to encourage discussion, it should be vague enough not to immediately give away what the project is about. TAT can be used in a variety of ways, from eliciting qualities associated with different products to perceptions about the kind of people that might use certain products or services.

The person must look at the picture(s) and tell a story. For example:

- What has led up to the event shown?
What is happening at the moment?
- What the characters are thinking and feeling, and?
What the outcome of the story was?

Draw a Person Test

Figure drawings are **projective diagnostic techniques** in which an individual is instructed to draw a person, an object, or a situation so that cognitive, interpersonal, or psychological functioning can be assessed. The test can be used to **evaluate children** and adolescents for a variety of purposes (e.g. self-image, family relationships, cognitive ability and personality) (Mcleod,2009)

A projective test is one in which a test taker responds to or provides ambiguous, abstract, or unstructured stimuli, often in the form of pictures or drawings.

While other projective tests, such as the Rorschach Technique and Thematic Apperception Test, ask the test taker to interpret existing pictures, figure drawing tests require the test taker to create the pictures themselves. In most cases, figure drawing tests are given to

children. This is because it is a simple, manageable task that children can relate to and enjoy.

Some figure drawing tests are primarily measures of cognitive abilities or cognitive development. In these tests, there is a consideration of how well a child draws and the content of a child's drawing. In some tests, the child's self-image is considered through the use of the drawings. In other figure drawing tests, interpersonal relationships are assessed by having the child draw a family or some other situation in which more than one person is present. Some tests are used for the evaluation of child abuse. Other tests involve personality interpretation through drawings of objects, such as a tree or a house, as well as people. Finally, some figure drawing tests are used as part of the diagnostic procedure for specific types of psychological or neuropsychological impairment, such as central nervous system dysfunction or mental retardation (McLeod, 2009)

Despite the flexibility in administration and interpretation of figure drawings, these tests require skilled and trained administrators familiar with both the theory behind the tests and the structure of the tests themselves. Interpretations should be made with caution and the limitations of projective tests should be considered.

It is generally a good idea to use projective tests as part of an overall test battery. There is little professional support for the use of figure drawing, so the examples that follow should be interpreted with caution.

The **House-Tree-Person (HTP)** test, created by Buck in 1948, provides a measure of a self-perception and attitudes by requiring the test taker to draw a house, a tree, and a person. The picture of the house is supposed to conjure the child's feelings toward his or her family. The picture of the tree is supposed to elicit feelings of strength or weakness. The picture of the person, as with other figure drawing tests, elicits information regarding the child's self-concept.

The HTP, though mostly given to children and adolescents, is appropriate for anyone over the age of three.

Evaluation of Indirect Methods

The major criticism of indirect methods is their lack of objectivity. Such methods are unscientific and do not objectively measure attitudes in the same way as a Likert scale. There is also the ethical problem of deception as often the person does not know that their attitude is actually being

studied when using indirect methods. The advantages of such indirect techniques of attitude measurement are that they are less likely to produce socially desirable responses, the person is unlikely to guess what is being measured and behaviour should be natural and reliable.

Summary

The students have learnt the following:

Attitude measurement can be divided into two basic categories

1. Direct Measurement (likert scale and semantic differential)
2. Indirect Measurement (projective techniques)

Examples of projective techniques include

1. Rorschach Inkblot Test, thematic Apperception Test (or TAT), Draw a Person Task

Post Test

1. What is attitude measurement
2. What are the different methods of measuring attitude
3. Distinguish between the direct and indirect methods of attitude measurement.

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LECTURE SEVEN

Attitudes and Behaviour

Introduction

In this lecture we shall attempt to consider the relationship between attitudes and behaviour.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. discuss the relationship between attitudes and behaviour

Pre-Test

1. Why do we study the relationship between attitudes and behaviour?
2. Does attitude predict behaviour?

CONTENT

The relationship between attitudes and behaviour

Once we've established people's attitudes, can we then accurately predict how they'll behave? Rosenberg & Hovland's (1960) three-components model (The ABC model: affective – behavioural – cognitive) implies that the behavioural component will be highly correlated with the cognitive and affective components. An early study which shows the inconsistency of attitudes and behaviour is that of LaPiere (1934).

LaPiere's study

Beginning in 1930 and for the next two years, LaPiere travelled around the USA with a Chinese couple (a young student and his wife), expecting

to encounter anti-Oriental attitudes which would make it difficult for them to find accommodation. But in the course of 10,000 miles of travel, they were discriminated against only once and there appeared to be no prejudice. They were given accommodation in 66 hotels, auto-camps and 'Tourist Homes' and refused at only one.

However, when each of the 251 establishments visited was sent a letter six months later asking: 'Will you accept members of the Chinese race as guests in your establishment?', 91 per cent of the 128 which responded gave an emphatic 'No'. One establishment gave an unqualified 'Yes' and the rest said 'Undecided: depends upon circumstances'(LaPiere, 1934).

Influences on behaviour

It's generally agreed that attitudes form only one determinant of behaviour. They represent *predispositions* to behave in particular ways, but how we actually act in a particular situation will depend on the immediate consequences of our behaviour, how we think others will evaluate our actions, and habitual ways of behaving in those kinds of situations. In addition, there may be specific *situational factors* influencing behaviour. For example, in the LaPiere study, the high quality of his Chinese friends' clothes and luggage and their politeness, together with the presence of LaPiere himself, may have made it more difficult to show overt prejudice.

Compatibility between attitudes and behaviour

The same attitude may be expressed in a variety of ways. For example, having a positive attitude towards a particular political party doesn't necessarily mean that you will become a member, or that you attend public meetings. But if you don't vote the party in a general election, people may question your attitude. In other words, an attitude should predict behaviour to some extent, even if this is extremely limited and specific.

Indeed, Azjen & Fishbein (1977) argue that attitudes can predict behaviour, provided that both are assessed at the same level of generality. There are needs to be a high degree of *compatibility* (or *correspondence*) between them. They argue that much of the earlier research (LaPiere's study included) suffered from either trying to predict specific behaviours from general attitudes, or vice versa, and

this accounts for the generally low correlations. A study by Davidson and Jaccard (1979) tried to overcome this limitation.

Attitudes can predict behaviour if you ask the right questions (Davidson & Jaccard, 1979)

Davidson and Jaccard analysed correlations between married women's attitudes towards birth control and their actual use of oral contraceptives during the two years following the study. When 'attitude towards birth control' was used as the **attitude** measure, the correlation was 0.08. Clearly, the correspondence here was very low. But when 'attitudes towards oral contraceptives' were measured, the correlation rose to 0.32, and when 'attitudes towards using oral contraceptives' were measured, the correlation rose still further to 0.53. Finally, when 'attitudes towards using oral contraceptives during the next two years' was used, it rose still further, to 0.57. Clearly, in the last three cases, correspondence was much higher.

According to Ajzen and Fishbein, every single instance of behaviour involves four specific elements:

- ✓ a specific action
- ✓ performed with respect to a given target
- ✓ in a given context
- ✓ at a given point in time.

According to the *principle of compatibility*, measures of attitude and behaviour are compatible to the extent that the target, action, context and time element are assessed at identical levels of generality or specificity (Ajzen, 1988).

For example, a person's attitude towards a 'healthy lifestyle' only specifies the target, leaving the other three unspecified. A behavioural measure that would be compatible with this global attitude would have to aggregate a wide range of health behaviour across different contexts and times (Stroebe, 2000). Elaborating the psychological processes underlying the principle of compatibility, Ajzen (1996) suggested that to:

'... the extent that the beliefs salient at the time of attitude assessment are also salient when plans are formulated or executed,

strong attitude-behaviour correlations are expected'.

The reliability and consistency of behaviour

Many of the classic studies which failed to find an attitude-behaviour relationship assessed just *single instances of behaviour* (Stroebe, 2000). As we noted earlier when discussing the LaPiere study, behaviour depends on many factors in addition to the attitude. This makes a single instance of behaviour an unreliable indicator of an attitude (Jonas *et al.*, 1995). Only by sampling many instances of the behaviour will the influence of specific factors 'cancel out'. This *aggregation principle* (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974) has been demonstrated in a number of studies.

According to Hogg & Vaughan (1995), what has emerged in the 1980s and 1990s is a view that attitudes and overt behaviour aren't related in a simple one-to-one fashion. In order to predict someone's behaviour, it must be possible to account for the *interaction* between attitudes, beliefs and behavioural intentions, as well as how all of these connect with the later action. One attempt to formalise these links is the *theory of reasoned action* (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1970; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

The strength of attitudes

Most modern theories agree that attitudes are represented in memory, and that an attitude's accessibility can exert a strong influence on behaviour (Fazio, 1986). By definition, strong attitudes exert more influence over behaviour, because they can be automatically activated. One factor that seems to be important is direct experience. For example, Fazio & Zanna (1978) found that measures of students' attitudes towards psychology experiments were better predictors of their future participation if they'd already taken part in several experiments than if they'd only read about them. This can be explained by the *mere exposure effect* (Zajonc, 1968), according to which the more contact we have with something or somebody, the more we like them.

So attitudes don't predict behaviour: what's the problem?

The so-called attitude-behaviour problem, that is, the failure to find a reliable relationship between attitudes and behaviour, threatened to

undermine the entire study of attitudes. As we saw in the *Introduction and overview*, attitude research was a cornerstone of social psychology in general and social cognition in particular, for much of their history (Stainton Rogers *et al.*, 1995).

But from the perspective of discursive psychology, there's no reason to expect such a correlation: inconsistency between attitudes and behaviour is what we'd expect to find. Traditional, mainstream, attitude research is based on the fallacy of *individualism*, according to which attitudes 'belong' to individuals. This implies something fairly constant, and which is expressed and reflected in behaviour. From a discursive perspective, attitudes are versions of the world that are *constructed* by people in the course of their interactions with others (Stainton Rogers *et al.*, 1995).

Discursive psychology is concerned with *action*, as distinct from cognition. In saying or writing things, people are performing actions, whose nature can be revealed through a detailed study of the discourse (e.g. recordings of everyday conversations, newspaper articles, TV programmes). Social psychologists have underestimated the centrality of *conflict* in social life; an analysis of *rhetoric* highlights the point that people's versions of events, and their own mental life, are part of ongoing arguments, debates and dialogues (Billig, 1987, 1992, in Potter, 1996).

Compared with traditional attitude research, discursive psychology tries to shift the focus away from single, isolated, individuals towards interactions between individuals and groups, a more *relational* or *distributed* focus (Potter, 1996).

Summary

The students have learnt the following:

1. Attitudes could predict behaviour if the right questions are asked.

Post Test

1. Are attitudes and behaviour related?
2. Does attitude always predict behaviour?

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LECTURE EIGHT

Formation of Attitudes

Introduction

In this lecture we shall attempt to discuss how attitudes are formed

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Explain the formation of attitudes

Pre-Test

1. How are attitudes formed?

CONTENT

In Social Psychology attitudes are defined as positive or negative evaluations of objects of thought. Attitudes typically have three components. The **cognitive component** is made up of the beliefs people hold about the object of the attitude, the **affective component** consists of the emotional feelings stimulated by the object of thought, and the **behavioural component** consists of predispositions to act in certain ways toward an attitude object.

- The object of an attitude can be a person (your mother, President Jonathan, Dr. Olapegba), groups of people (our leaders, environmental activists, pro-life groups), an institution (City College, the Supreme Court, the Catholic Church), consumer products (Guess Jeans, Coca-cola, Mr. Biggs), drugs (Paracetamol, Valium, multivitamin), etc.
- Attitudes involve social judgments, they are either for or against, pro or con, positive or negative; however, it is possible to be

ambivalent about the object of thought and have a mix of positive and negative feelings about it.

- Attitudes involve a readiness (or predisposition) to respond; however, for a variety of reasons we don't always act on our attitudes.
- Attitudes vary along dimensions of strength and accessibility. Strong attitudes are very important to the individual and tend to be durable and have a powerful impact on behaviour, whereas weak attitudes are not very important. Accessible attitudes come to mind quickly, whereas other attitudes may rarely come up.
- Attitudes tend to be relatively stable over time, but a number of factors can cause attitudes to change.

In addition to discussing attitudes in general terms, social psychologists also refer to particular types of attitudes called stereotypes and prejudice. A **stereotype** is defined as a widely held belief that people have certain characteristics because of their membership in a particular group. **Prejudice** is defined as an arbitrary belief, or feeling, directed toward a group of people or its individual members. Prejudice can be either positive or negative; however, the term is usually used to refer to a negative attitude held toward members of a group. Prejudice may lead to **discrimination**, which involves behaving differently, usually unfairly, toward the members of a group.

Psychological factors involved in attitude formation and attitude change:

1. **Direct instruction:** involves being told what attitudes to have by parents, schools, community organizations, friends, etc.
2. **Operant conditioning:** is a simple form of learning. It is based on the "law of effect" and involves voluntary responses. Behaviours (including verbal behaviours and maybe even thoughts) tend to be repeated if they are reinforced (i.e., followed by a positive experience). Conversely, behaviours tend to be stopped when they are punished (i.e., followed by a negative experience). Thus, if one expresses, or acts out, a negative attitude toward some group and this is reinforced by one's peers the attitude is likely to be expressed again. The reinforcement can be as subtle as a smile or

as obvious as a raise in salary. Operant conditioning is especially involved with the behavioural component of attitudes (Eagly, 1995)

3. **Classical conditioning:** is another simple form of learning. It involves involuntary responses and is acquired through the temporal association between two stimuli. Two events that repeatedly occur close together in time become fused and before long the person responds in the same way to both events. Originally studied by Pavlov, the process requires an unconditioned stimulus (UCS) that produces an involuntary (reflexive) response (UCR). If a neutral stimulus (NS) is paired, either very dramatically on one occasion, or repeatedly for several acquisition trials, the neutral stimulus will lead to the same response elicited by the unconditioned stimulus. At this point the stimulus is no longer neutral and so is referred to as a conditioned stimulus (CS). In Pavlov's research the UCS was meat powder which led to an UCR of salivation. The NS was a bell. At first the bell elicited no response from the dog, but eventually the bell alone caused the dog to salivate. Advertisers create positive attitudes towards their products by presenting attractive models in their ads. In this case the model is the UCS and our reaction to him, or her, is an automatic positive response. The product is the original NS which through pairing (conditioning) comes to elicit a positive conditioned response. In a similar fashion positive or negative experiences with members of a particular group could lead to positive or negative attitudes toward that group. Classical conditioning is especially involved with the emotional, or affective, component of attitudes (Eagly, 1995)
4. **Social (Observational) Learning:** is based on modelling. We observe others. If they are getting reinforced for certain behaviours or the expression of certain attitudes, this serves as vicarious reinforcement and makes it more likely that we, too, will behave in this manner or express this attitude. Classical conditioning can also occur vicariously through observation of others.
5. **Cognitive Dissonance:** exists when related cognitions, feelings or behaviours are inconsistent or contradictory. Cognitive dissonance creates an unpleasant state of tension that motivates people to reduce their dissonance by changing their cognitions, feelings, or

behaviours. For example, a person who starts out with a negative attitude toward marijuana will experience cognitive dissonance if they start smoking marijuana and find themselves enjoying the experience. The dissonance they experience is thus likely to motivate them to either change their attitude toward marijuana or to stop using marijuana. This process can be conscious, but often occurs without conscious awareness.

6. **Unconscious motivation:** Some attitudes are held because they serve some unconscious function for an individual. For example, a person who is threatened by his homosexual feelings may employ the defence mechanism of reaction formation and become a crusader against homosexuals. Or, someone who feels inferior may feel somewhat better by putting down a group other than her own. Because it is unconscious, the person will not be aware of the unconscious motivation at the time it is operative, but may become aware of it at some later point in time (Eagly, 1995)
7. **Rational analysis:** involves the careful weighing of evidence for, and against, a particular attitude. For example, a person may listen carefully to presidential debates and read opinions of political experts in order to decide which candidate to vote for at election time.

Post Test

1. How are attitudes formed?
2. Compare and contrast the operant and classical approaches to attitude formation

Summary

The students have learnt the following:

Psychological factors involved in attitude formation and attitude change are:

1. Direct instruction, Operant conditioning, Classical conditioning, Social (Observational) Learning, Cognitive Dissonance, Unconscious motivation, Rational analysis

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LECTURE NINE

Attitude Change (Persuasion)

Introduction

In this lecture we shall attempt to discuss how attitude change takes place through the process of persuasion

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to know

1. The process of attitude change
2. How persuasive communication can change attitude

Pre-Test

1. How are attitudes changed and?
2. What leads to attitude change?

CONTENT

Attitudes can change for a number of reasons. It is a key interest of psychologists, advertisers, and more to understand what makes people change their beliefs or opinions. Attitudes most commonly change in response to social influence. What other people do or say can have a huge effect on our own cognitions. The whole advertising industry functions on the knowledge that people's attitudes toward products or services can be moulded through the use of imagery and/or sound. There are certain conditions that must exist for a person's attitude to change. (Katz, D. 1960).

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive Dissonance is a complex theory that explains the discomfort people feel when they hold two conflicting ideas in their head at the same time, and the subsequent cognitions and resolutions that can occur from such discomfort. Attitudes can sometimes change when people behave inconsistently or out of line with the way they normally would behave and they are unable to find external justification for such behaviour http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/cognitive_dissonance/ Cognitive dissonance usually occurs when a person does something that goes against the image they have of themselves and they are unable to blame their behaviour on external circumstances, so it is essentially dissonance that can cause attitude changes. For example, imagine you are in a job interview for your dream job and your would-be boss makes a remark about how much she loves coffee. You have always hated coffee so you refuse to take a cup when she offers. The woman looks upset and says, "What, you don't like coffee?" You feel scared that maybe this coffee thing is more important than you thought it would be, and really want to get this job. You don't want to be a liar but you also don't want this woman to have a negative image of you, so you say, "Oh no... I love coffee; I've already had a lot today already. Thanks though!" In a moment of dissonance you chose to change your attitude about coffee to fit in and make a good impression. The fact that you lied to get along with your boss provides you enough external justification for your attitude change that you don't worry too much about it. **Counter-attitudinal Advocacy** The funny thing about the lie you told is that you might start to actually believe it, and like coffee, as a way to resolve feelings of post-decision dissonance. This is called internal justification, which usually occurs when a person is unable to find any external justification for the dissonance they experienced. For instance, if you knew that the woman could care less about whether or not you like coffee and you decided to lie anyway, then you won't have any external justification for the lie. You therefore must work to bring the lie you told (behaviour) in line with your attitude (whether or not you like coffee). To make them match, you would start to drink coffee. Soon you might like it so much that you wonder why you'd ever hated coffee. This kind of phenomenon is called counter-attitudinal advocacy http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/counter-attitudinal_advocacy.htm

Counter-attitudinal advocacy is powerful in that it can effectively change a person's attitude about anything from doing drugs to stealing, as long as they experience the phenomenon in conditions with low external justification. A famous baseball player who chews tobacco may be asked to give a speech at a school about how to stay drug free. The player might feel dissonance about using a dangerous drug himself and could change his behaviour to bring it in line with the attitude he conveys to the school children http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/counter-attitudinal_advocacy.htm

Persuasive Communications

To make wide scale changes and convince a lot of people to have a certain attitude about something is very difficult. This is the problem that doctors, politicians, lawyers, and other professionals have when trying to get others to share their view. One way that mass change can be orchestrated is through the use of persuasive communication. Persuasive communication is a speech, television ad, or some kind of communication that advocates a particular side of an issue. Many persuasive communications fail to change attitudes while some are successful. There are an infinite number of tactics that can be used when making an argument. Psychological studies have been conducted to try and understand what makes a persuasive communication effective. (Aronson et al 2006)

Yale Attitude Change

Created by researchers at Yale University, this is a method of studying persuasive communications. It involves analyzing who is making the communication, the quality of the communication and what kind of people the communication is intended for. This method of study has produced a lot of information about what makes people's attitudes to change, but it is not perfect. What the Yale Attitude Change approach fails to do is say which aspects of a persuasive communication are more important than other aspects. For instance, are the arguments made in the communication more important than the person who is making the arguments, or vice versa?

Elaboration Likelihood Model

The problems with the Yale Attitude Change approach have been addressed by various researchers. One approach is called the elaboration likelihood model, which explains two ways in which persuasive communication can cause attitudinal change.

1. **Centrally:** When a person is motivated and pays attention to the persuasive communication, they are being centrally affected.
2. **Peripherally:** When a person doesn't pay attention to the arguments in the speech but is influenced by other aspects of the communication such as who is giving it, then they are being peripherally affected.

This theory says that people, who are compelled or motivated enough, will pay attention to the persuasive communication, analyzing its arguments in their heads long after they've heard the message. This is called the *central route to persuasion*. People are likely to take this route when they have little distracting them and they are truly interested in what the persuasive communication has to say.

Those who aren't motivated to pay attention to the arguments, but are interested in the surface characteristics of a message will not have an attitude change because of logic, but rather because of superficial aspects. This is called the *peripheral route to persuasion*. If people are not interested in the argument, they will take this shortcut and pay attention to things besides the argument, such as whether or not the person making the argument is prestigious.

Some people have a *need for cognition*, meaning they their personality is one that demands engaging and mind activating activities. Those with the need for cognition are much more likely to take the central route to persuasion since they like mulling over arguments and facts to reach their conclusions

http://www.ciadvertising.org/studies/student/00_spring/theory/nstrange/public_html/pagethree.html

Long Lasting Attitude Change

Both the central and peripheral routes to persuasion would mean little if they didn't leave some kind of lasting change on a person's attitudes. Studies show that those who base their attitudes on the arguments are

more likely to keep their attitudes for a long time, behave in accordance to those attitudes, and more resistant to counter-persuasion. Those who take the peripheral route to persuasion will quickly lose their new found attitudes and hardly ever behave in accordance to them. This is because the attitudes formed through peripheral routes are often based on fluff that doesn't mean much to the person, and therefore doesn't leave a lasting impression.

Playing to Emotions

To make a persuasive argument, it is helpful to create a communication that plays to the emotions of others.

Fear-Arousing Communication

A common tactic used when attempting to influence opinion is to scare people with fear-arousing communications. Examples of such communications are the advertisements made by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, which often portray the horrific consequences drugs can have on people's lives. By stirring up people's fears, these communications hope to imprint imagery or ideas in the mind that will keep people away from drugs.

Fear-arousing communications work best when the speech or advertisement instills the fear but then explains how to avoid/reduce such fear. If the advertisement simply causes fear but doesn't offer information on how to avoid it, then people will likely dismiss the purpose of the communication. It is also important that fear-arousing communications do not overwhelm people. If the message is too scary, people will become defensive and deny the importance of the threat. (Aronson, E.2006).

Heuristic-Systematic Model of Persuasion (Aronson, E. 2006) (Source)

Emotions can act as a signal for how we feel about something. The heuristic-systematic model of persuasion says that people will either use mental shortcuts or will systematically process the merits of something when they are forming an attitude. Heuristics are mental shortcuts people use so they can make judgments with little time needed for analyzing. If someone sees an advertisement on TV telling them to drink alcohol responsibly then they might conjure up a heuristic, or a simple rule to decide what their attitude toward the message is. They might quickly

think, "Responsibility is overrated." This allows them to disregard the advertisement with little thought. If they decided to process the argument in their head for awhile, weighing the good with the bad, then they might reach a different conclusion and think, "Yeah, responsibility is important. Maybe I should cut back on the amount of alcohol I drink during the weekends."

One interesting aspect of attitude change is the "How do I feel about it?" heuristic. When we are first forming an opinion of something we might quickly scan our inner feelings to decide whether or not it makes us feel good or bad. For instance, someone goes to the store to buy some cologne. They spray some in the air, sniff it, and decide it makes them feel wonderful. They purchase the cologne and later realized that they don't even like the smell. Since they used the "How do I feel about it?" heuristic, their original feelings about the cologne could have come from something completely unrelated to its smell. Perhaps they were just in a good mood when they went to the store that day. Maybe something caught their attention or drifted into their mind while they were inside the store spraying cologne, leading to a feeling of happiness. The point is that it can be hard to know whether your immediate feelings toward something are legitimate or not. It can take time before a true attitude is developed.

Choosing a Base

Some advertisements might work better on certain people but fall flat on others. As mentioned earlier, there are three kinds of attitudes, behavioural, cognitive, and affective. Studies have shown that advertisements are most effective when they target a person's attitude. If someone has an affectively based attitude, then the advertisement that will work best on that person will play to the emotions. If one had a cognitively based attitude then an advertisement that lists facts would be most persuasive. Advertisers must therefore design their ads so that it affects the majority of the people. To do this, the advertiser should decide if the product or service they are promoting has people with cognitively, behaviourally, or affectively based attitudes and go from there.

Resisting Persuasive Communications

Obviously people are able to resist advertisements, speeches, etc. since it would be impossible to accept everything and anything they ever hear and

see. But exactly how do people manage to resist persuasive messages?

Attitude Inoculation

If people expose themselves to alternative viewpoints on a subject then it will be much easier for them to fend off persuasive communications. By reading up on or making sure they see other sides of an argument then they will be able to fight any attempts people make to change one's attitude. This tactic is called attitude inoculation.

Product Placement Awareness

Companies will pay to have television shows, movies; video games, etc. somehow incorporate their product into the script or scenery. This is called product placement. As long as people keep in mind the fact that their entertainment may incorporate things to try and manipulate their behaviours and attitudes, the easier they will find it to notice such product placements for what they really are -- advertisements. Staying aware is key.

Peer Pressure Resistance

Peer pressure is an age old problem in which people, especially when they are young, are susceptible to trying new and potentially dangerous things because their friends or peers urge them to. People will sometimes do things they normally wouldn't so they can appear 'cool' in front of others and be socially accepted. Adolescents can find themselves smoking, drinking, doing drugs, or having unprotected sex because the people they hang out with believe such behaviour is fun, cool, or mature.

It seems that the most effective way to resist peer pressure is to give people practice at turning down negative influences. Once they have experienced a mock incident and successfully rejected peers, then the more likely they will be able to use such a response should a real peer pressure incident occur.

Reactance Theory

Sometimes prohibiting something can backfire and cause a person to purposefully seek out and do that which is prohibited. The stronger the prohibitions and punishments for doing something, the more likely people will want to do it because they feel their freedom is being threatened. To

get rid of any unpleasant feelings of being stifled or restricted, a person will lash out against authority and do what they are told they shouldn't. This is called reactance theory.

Attitude Influencing Behaviour

Attitude Accessibility

Sometimes we act spontaneously with little thought when it comes to act on or express an attitude. Attitude accessibility is the strength of the association between an attitude object and a person's evaluation of that object, measured by the speed with which people can report how they feel about that object. If accessibility is high, then a person will automatically have his/her attitude come to mind whenever something causes one to think about it. If the accessibility is low, the attitude might come to the mind much more slowly or sometimes not at all. Spontaneity often comes from highly accessible attitudes since these are easier for a person to immediately act on.

Theory of Planned Behaviour

(http://www.valuebasedmanagement.net/methods_ajzen_theory_planned_behaviour.html)

Behaviour is many times based on deliberations and planning. Most people don't spontaneously decide what college they want to go to, or who they want to marry. Time, research, and serious thinking are required for many of life's decisions. The theory of planned behaviour says that when people have time to think about how they are going to behave, the best predictor of their behaviour will be the intention, and can be predicted by three different things:

1. ***Their attitudes toward a specific behaviour:*** only specific attitudes toward behaviour in question can be expected to predict that behaviour.
2. ***Their subjective norms:*** beliefs about how people they care about might view the behaviour they are thinking about engaging in.
3. ***Their perceived behavioural control:*** the ease with which a person believes they can perform behaviour.

Advertising

Advertising works whether most of us know it or not. It is easy to think that you are not affected by advertisements, but with most everyone thinking that it is everyone but themselves being suckered into buying products-- we see a magic dilemma. Who, if anyone, is really being affected by advertisements? Studies have shown that advertising does work, especially for products that are new to the marketplace. Split cable market tests are studies where researchers will work in hand with cable television companies and grocery stores. These studies keep track of the items that customers buy through the use of special ID cards, which are given to a group of individuals who will go about their daily lives. Researchers know what commercials these individuals are watching as well, so they are easily able to see whether their product choices are influenced by commercials. Results from over 300 split cable market tests show that they are (Aronson E. 2006)

A large number of the advertisements made every year are emotionally based. Since there can be many similar products on the market, it does not help a company to make a cognitively based advertisement because most people will not base their choices on minor factual differences between brand names. Take Coke vs. Pepsi as an example. Most won't choose Pepsi over coke because of a slight ingredient difference, but rather because of the emotions the drink brings them. Sometimes companies find it helpful, though, to make commercials that are cognitively or behaviourally based. It all depends on the product being sold. The most successful commercials can blend facts with emotions to touch all kinds of shoppers. (<http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=ScoPsysc.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=1&division=div1>)

Subliminal Advertising

Subliminal messages are words or pictures that are not consciously perceived but may still influence a person's judgments, (http://www.ciadvertising.org/student_account/spring_01/adv391k/hjy/adv382j/1st/application.html) attitudes, and behaviour. Commercials, print advertisements, and audio have all been blamed of using subliminal messages. Such examples are hidden sexual visuals or noises that will warm into a person's subconscious and entice people to buy a product. Other subliminal messages are supposedly capable of helping people to

better them by raising self esteem or helping them to quit smoking. Do such things actually work?

Studies on subliminal messaging have provided little or no evidence which supports the idea that people can be influenced by hidden images or audio. Subliminal messages encountered in everyday life do not have any influence on people's behaviour. They can't cause us to buy products, lose weight, or quit smoking. What researchers have found, however, is that when people believe they are watching or listening to something that has subliminal messages with a specific goal, they will usually believe that the subliminal messages are helping even if they are not.

Subliminal messaging and advertising is still being researched. Though there have been some studies which seem to support the idea that such messages are effective, there will have to be many more before anything is proved conclusively.

Culture

Advertisements are powerful in that they can shape cultural values and norms. Stereotypes can often be found in advertisements. If one looks at American ads from the first half of the 20th century, they will be able to find blatantly sexist viewpoints. Even in modern times, advertisements will often show only the best looking men and women. This raises the question of whether or not what we think of as 'good looks' is orchestrated by the media. Many blame advertisements and the media for causing women to starve themselves to be 'attractive'. Up until recently, advertisements in America would not show anyone other than whites. Now that ads have branched out racially, they still neglect to show unattractive, obese, or disabled people. People are still fighting to make the media more diversified in its portrayal of the average American. (http://www.healthyplace.com/Communities/eating_Disorders/body_image_advertising.asp)

Furthermore, advertisements have the capability to form attitudes towards drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and having promiscuous sex. Constant bombardment of advertisements telling us that alcohol brings beautiful, scantily clad women to our doorsteps can be ultimately damaging. People might believe that the only reason they can get girls is because they are drunk. Also, cigarette ads show us that smoking can make men appear rugged or 'cool'. There was such a huge backlash against

cigarette smoking advertisements that they were banned from being shown on American television in 1967. People still complain about print advertising in support of cigarettes. (http://www.frankwbaker.com/tobacco_on_television.htm)

Stereotype Threat

Advertisements also carry with them the possibility of feeling a stereotype threat. Stereotype threat is defined as the apprehension experienced by members of a group because they worry that their behaviour might confirm a cultural stereotype. When people are thinking about the negative stereotypes surrounding whatever group they feel they belong to, it can hurt their ability to perform and do well. For instance, white people might believe that Asians are better at math. If a white person is reminded that many smart Asians will be taking the test with them then their test scores are more likely to go down than if they were not reminded. Similarly, women do worse on tests after they've seen a commercial that depicts women in a stereotypical way. In this way, advertising that conveys negative stereotypes can severely change the attitudes of the people who view them. (<http://www.units.muohio.edu/psybersite/primetime/THREAT.shtml>)

Conclusion

In summary, we have taken a brief look at what attitudes are and the ways they can be changed. The importance of attitudes on society cannot be overestimated. We are living in a very important time in human history, where people are witnessing more and more advertisements and persuasive communications than ever before. It will be very interesting to see how so many different viewpoints are able to successfully mingle and which values or norms win over the others.

Summary

The students have learnt the following:

There are certain conditions that must exist for a person's attitude to change.

1. Cognitive Dissonance, Counter-attitudinal Advocacy, Yale Attitude Change, Elaboration Likelihood Model

Post Test

1. What are the factors that can lead to attitude change?

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