

Chapter 1

Introduction

Considering that attitude is probably “the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary American social psychology” (Allport, 1968, p. 59), it is characterized by an embarrassing degree of ambiguity and confusion. In part, this may be attributable to its use as an explanatory concept in diverse areas of investigation. Under the general rubric of attitude research, attempts to explain discriminatory behaviors have typically made reference to attitudes, stereotypes, prejudice, and ethnocentrism. Similarly, research on performance, absenteeism, and turnover in industry has frequently invoked concepts like attitude, job satisfaction, and morale. Attitudes, opinions, and voting intentions have appeared as central concepts in studies of voting and other political activities. Attempts to explain various aspects of consumer behavior have focused on attitudes toward products, brand loyalty, product attributes, and brand images. Finally, concepts such as attitude, attraction, attribution of dispositions, liking, and behavioral intentions have been used to account for a wide variety of interpersonal behaviors.

All concepts mentioned above, as well as many others, have been subsumed under (or incorporated within) the general label “attitude.” This undoubtedly leads to some of the confusion and ambiguity surrounding the attitude concept, and it is hardly surprising that few investigators agree on an explicit definition of attitude (cf. McGuire, 1969; Elizur, 1970; Kiesler, Collins, and Miller, 1969). The great diversity of proposed definitions has often been made explicit in reviews of the attitude concept (e.g., Campbell, 1963; Greenwald, 1968), and reviewers have sometimes attempted to provide an integration of these different definitions (e.g., Allport, 1935; Nelson, 1939). More recently, however, they have tended to acknowledge “the diversity of attitude definitions and [despair] of finding consensus or justification for one definition as opposed to others” (Greenwald, 1968; p. 361). As McGuire (1969) has pointed out, most investigators intuitively select

a particular measurement procedure that seems to fit the purpose of their study. Support for this argument can be gained by reviewing the different measures of "attitude" that have been reported in the literature. In a review of research published between 1968 and 1970, Fishbein and Ajzen (1972) found more than 500 different operations designed to measure attitude. These operations include standard attitude scales (e.g., Likert, Guttman, Thurstone, and semantic differential scales); other indices across various verbal items; single statements of feelings, opinions, knowledge, or intentions; observations of one or more overt behaviors; and physiological measures.

Single-response measures illustrate most clearly the wide range of operations that have been employed. In all these measures, attitudes, opinions, values, intentions, or other "attitudinal" concepts are inferred from observation of a single response, whether it is a verbal form (e.g., a questionnaire response) or an overt act. Most single-response measures are verbal in nature; the subject is asked to make a judgment either about himself or about some other person, object, or event.

For instance, in a classic study of the relations between attitude and behavior, LaPiere (1939) sent letters to hotels and restaurants asking the following question: "Will you accept members of the Chinese race as guests in your establishment?" An attempt was made to relate this measure of "attitude" to actual acceptance of a Chinese couple that visited those establishments. In a more recent study, Ostrom (1969) measured three aspects of "attitude" toward the church on three 9-point scales labeled as follows: *I feel strong liking-disliking* (for the church); *I believe the church has extremely desirable-extremely undesirable qualities*; and *I act strongly supportive-strongly hostile* (toward the church). In a well-known study of attitude change, Cohen obtained judgments with respect to a confrontation between students and the police (Brehm and Cohen, 1962). The statement "Considering the circumstances, how justified do you think the New Haven police actions were in the recent riots?" was rated on a 31-point scale ranging from *completely justified* to *not justified at all*. Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) reported an experiment in which subjects performed some boring tasks. At the end of the experiment they rated the tasks on an 11-point scale ranging from *extremely interesting and enjoyable* through *neutral, neither interesting nor uninteresting*, to *extremely dull and boring*. Studying the influence of role playing on opinions, Janis and King (1954) asked subjects to make the following quantitative estimate: "How many years do you think it will be before a *completely effective* cure for the common cold is discovered?" In another classic study, Brehm and Cohen (1959) measured children's attitudes toward toys by asking the children to rate each toy on a 51-point scale ranging from *don't like it at all* to *really like very, very much*. Aronson and Cope (1968) measured positive feelings toward another person by asking subjects to volunteer to make phone calls. Specifically, subjects were asked, "Would you be willing to help Dr. Cope by making some phone calls and asking people to serve as subjects? Other people have volunteered to call anywhere from two to fifty people—would you be willing to help him out?"

The number of phone calls a subject volunteered to make served as a measure of attitude toward Dr. Cope. A final example is Fromkin's (1970) measurement of the degree to which a subject values a given environment. As an indirect measure of this "attitude," subjects were asked to indicate the amount of time they would be willing to spend in the environment.

As mentioned above, nonverbal behaviors have also been used to measure attitude. Various physiological measures, such as galvanic skin response, palmar sweating, pupillary dilation and contraction, and heart rate, have been employed. Overt behaviors as measures of attitude have included choice between alternatives; various learning, recall, and recognition tasks; eye contact; and physical distance.

Frequently an investigator will obtain two or more judgments or observations which are considered alternative measures of the same underlying concept (e.g., attitude, opinion, prejudice). Analyses are sometimes performed on each individual measure. Alternatively, an index may be computed on the basis of the different measures. Standard procedures are available that aid the investigator in determining whether different measures are indeed assessing the same underlying concept and, if so, how they can be combined to construct an overall index. The traditional attitude-scaling methods to be discussed in Chapter 3 are examples of some of these standard procedures.

All too often, however, no standard procedure is followed, and different measures are combined in arbitrary ways. The kinds of combinations that have been used are almost as numerous as the kinds of measures described above. They include such combinations as weighted or unweighted sums or averages, difference scores, similarity indices, squared differences, differences between differences, ratios, products, etc.

Although it would be desirable to have general laws that could be shown to hold across any kind of dependent measure of "attitude," the great diversity of such measures makes this goal highly unlikely. For example, changes in a person's judgment that a given action is justifiable may not be accompanied by any change in his judgment of how good or bad that action is, who should engage in the action, or any other evaluation of the behavior. Similarly, a manipulation that is shown to affect a person's judgment that an object has a given attribute (e.g., that a person is honest) may not have any effect on different judgments concerning the object, such as attributions of other characteristics (e.g., intelligence, physical attractiveness), liking for the object, willingness to perform various behaviors toward it, or the actual performance of such behaviors.

The use of different measurement procedures to assess a concept such as attitude may increase our confidence in a given empirical finding. When different measures of attitudes are found to be related to each other, to be influenced by the same factors, and to exert the same effects on other variables, the generality of our conclusions and thereby our confidence in these conclusions are increased. However, when different measures of attitude are unrelated to each other, when they are not influenced by the same factors, or when they have differential effects

on other variables, it becomes difficult to maintain that they assess the same underlying concept, i.e., attitude. Anyone minimally familiar with the attitude literature is aware that different results are frequently obtained when different measures of "attitude" are employed. Of recent studies that have reported the use of more than one attitude measure, about 70 percent have found different results (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1972). It is noteworthy that since these different measures were viewed as assessing the same underlying variables (attitude, opinion, value, etc.), there was usually no expectation that different results would be obtained.

Carlsmith, Collins, and Helmreich (1966) reported results for six questions, each of which was designed to assess attitude toward an experimental task.

1. How pleasant did you find the test?
2. Was it an interesting test?
3. Did you learn anything from the test?
4. Would you recommend the test to a friend?
5. Would you describe the test as fun?
6. What is your general overall mood at the present time?

Subjects responded to each question on an 11-point scale ranging from -5 to $+5$. For example, on question 1, the subjects were asked to indicate the degree to which the experimental task had been pleasant or unpleasant, with a -5 standing for *very unpleasant* and a $+5$ for *very pleasant*. Identical statistical analyses were performed for each item. The experimenters' hypotheses were supported with respect to questions 2 and 5, but not with respect to the other questions.

Studying the effects of physical attractiveness on dating behavior, Walster *et al.* (1966) looked at the relation between a subject's own physical attractiveness and his or her evaluation of a computer-selected date. Subjects were asked several questions about their dating partners, and their answers resulted in seven attitudinal measures. (The response format employed is not made explicit in the report, and further, some of the measures appear to be indices based on more than one question.) Specifically, the following seven measures of attitude toward the date were obtained.

1. How much the subject liked his or her date
2. How socially desirable the date seemed to be ("How physically attractive is your date?" "How personally attractive is your date?")
3. How uncomfortable the subject was on this blind date
4. How much the date seemed to like the subject
5. How similar the date's values, attitudes, and beliefs seemed to the subject's own
6. How much effort the subject made to ensure that the date had a good time, and how much effort the date made on the subject's behalf
7. Whether or not the subject would like to date this partner again

For male subjects, a significant negative relation was found between their own physical attractiveness and their "attitudes" toward their partners, when attitude was assessed by measures 1, 2, or 7, but not by the other measures. For females, the expected relation was found only on measures 2 and 7.

Many other similar examples could be described. Frequently subjects are asked to rate an object on a set of bipolar adjective scales (e.g., the semantic differential; see Chapter 3), and each item is analyzed separately. Different results are usually obtained for different bipolar scales (e.g., Berkowitz, 1969; Landy and Aronson, 1968).¹ Other studies have used indices based on several items as their measures of attitude. For example, Nemeth (1970) measured liking of another person by summing over four highly intercorrelated responses to the following questions.

1. How much do you like the other person?
2. How much would you like to work with this other person?
3. How much would you like the other person as a neighbor?
4. How much would you like the other person as a personal friend?

In addition, as a second measure of liking, Nemeth measured the number of seconds the subject spent talking to the other person. No relation between these two measures of attitude was found, and different results were obtained with respect to each. Clearly, when the same label "attitude" is attached to these different measures, the results must appear contradictory and confusing.

DEFINITION OF ATTITUDE

The examples above demonstrate that the intuitive selection of measurement procedures that seem to fit the purpose of a study can easily lead to apparently conflicting results and different conclusions concerning the relations between attitude and other variables. An explicit definition of attitude appears to be a minimal prerequisite for the development of valid measurement procedures. According to current views in philosophy of science, the meaning of a concept is defined in terms of its relations to other constructs in a theoretical network. Thus two investigators may offer different explicit definitions of attitude. However, if their attitude theories revealed that they agreed on the relationships between attitude and other concepts, such as confidence, anxiety, intelligence, age, involvement, etc., it could be argued that the term "attitude" has the same meaning for the two investigators. Although the meaning of a concept such as attitude emerges only

1. Two methodological issues are raised by this practice of separately analyzing multiple measures of attitude. First, some of the apparent inconsistency in results may be avoided if the assumption that the different items are all measuring the same concept is tested prior to conducting the study. Second, since significant results are usually obtained for only some of the measures, it appears unjustified to take such results as evidence in support of the hypothesis.

within the framework of a general theory, an explicit conceptual definition of attitude may nevertheless be valuable since it suggests procedures for measuring (or manipulating) attitudes. Adequate conceptual definitions should lead to measurement procedures that most investigators would consider acceptable quantifications of the concept in question. It may thus be suggested that conceptual definitions will be most useful when they provide an adequate basis for the development of measurement procedures without trying to elaborate on the theoretical meaning of the concept.

However, as Kiesler, Collins, and Miller (1969) have pointed out, "all too often, social psychologists have tried to make their definition of attitude both a [conceptual] definition and a theory of the concept" (p. 4). For example, most investigators would probably agree that attitude can be described as *a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object*. Consensus on this description of attitude, however, does not eliminate the existing disagreements among attitude researchers. It merely serves to obscure the disagreements by providing a description with multiple interpretations. A closer examination of the description reveals some of the underlying ambiguity. There are three basic features: the notion that attitude is learned, that it predisposes action, and that such actions are consistently favorable or unfavorable toward the object.

Consistency

Perhaps the major source of conceptual ambiguity concerns the notion of response consistency. At least three types of consistency can be distinguished. First, a person may be observed to consistently perform the same response or set of responses in the presence of a given stimulus object. This *stimulus-response consistency* may be taken as reflecting an attitude toward the object (Campbell, 1963). A definition of this type, however, fails to distinguish attitude from other concepts, such as habit, trait, drive, or motive. One can alleviate this problem in part by requiring that each response express some degree of favorableness or unfavorableness toward the object in question.

A second interpretation involves the degree of consistency between different responses with respect to the same object. Instead of the requirement that the same responses be made with respect to an object, the requirement in this case is that, whatever the responses are that are elicited by the object, they should be consistent with one another. This *response-response consistency* has also been taken as indicative of an attitude toward the object (DeFleur and Westie, 1963). It is not clear, however, what is meant by consistency in this context. Consider, for example, a person who splits his ticket and votes for a Democratic governor but a Republican senator. His behavior appears inconsistent in terms of party preferences, but it would be considered consistent if he voted for the more liberal candidate for each office. Consistency of a person's behaviors must be judged along some dimension. Two behaviors are considered to be consistent if both are

located on the same side of the dimension; they are inconsistent if they are located on opposite sides. Clearly, as in the example above, two behaviors may be consistent with respect to one dimension (liberal-conservative) but inconsistent with respect to another (Democrat-Republican).

Like stimulus-response consistency, the notion of response-response consistency fails to discriminate between attitude, trait, motive, and various other concepts. At this point let us recall that the proposed definition of attitude refers to behaviors that are consistently *favorable* or *unfavorable*. That is, response consistency should be judged with reference to an evaluative or affective dimension. Two or more behaviors are considered consistent in this sense when both are located on either the positive or negative side of the evaluative dimension. Observed consistencies of this type are taken as evidence for the existence of favorable or unfavorable attitudes.

The third type of response consistency is related to multiple behaviors at different points in time. Even in the absence of stimulus-response or response-response consistency, a set of behaviors may exhibit *evaluative consistency* over time. That is, on different occasions a person may perform different behaviors with respect to an object. The overall favorability expressed by these behaviors, however, may remain relatively constant, and in this sense they may be defined as consistent. Clearly, overall consistency of this kind could also be defined in terms of dimensions other than evaluation or affect, such as aggressiveness, liberalism-conservatism, dominance, authoritarianism, etc. Again, however, attitudes are evidenced by overall *evaluative* consistency (e.g., Thurstone, 1931; Doob, 1947). For example, canvassing for a political candidate, contributing money to his campaign fund, attending a rally in support of his candidacy, working in his campaign office, as well as voting for him, are some of the favorable behaviors with respect to the candidate that a person may perform. On a given occasion, the person may be observed to perform some of these behaviors and to refuse to perform others. Although the person may perform different behaviors on different occasions, and although these behaviors may not be consistent with one another, the degree of favorability toward the candidate expressed by his behaviors may remain constant. Thus, on a given day the person may attend a rally for the candidate and make a contribution to his campaign fund, but he may not canvass or work in the campaign office. On another occasion he may work in the campaign office during the day and canvass his neighborhood in the evening but not contribute money or attend a rally. The overall favorability expressed by these different patterns of behavior, however, remains relatively constant. It is assumed that the favorability of the person's attitude toward the candidate corresponds to the overall favorability expressed by his behavioral pattern.

This discussion of consistency points to the ambiguity inherent in the phrase "respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner." Some of the confusion surrounding the attitude concept may have resulted from the failure of most investigators to specify what they mean by response consistency. Whatever an investigator's interpretation of response consistency, however, the notion of fa-

avorable and unfavorable behavior plays a central role in all definitions. Evaluative or affective consistency is what distinguishes between attitude and other concepts, and it is therefore hardly surprising that the evaluative dimension has frequently been regarded as the most distinctive feature of attitude (e.g., Thurstone, 1931; Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, 1957; Fishbein, 1967c).

The different views of consistency discussed above imply different ways of measuring or assessing an attitude. As we shall see in Chapter 3, most attitude measurement relies on overall evaluative consistency although some measures are based on stimulus-response consistency. To the best of our knowledge, none of the common attitude-measurement techniques rely on the notion of response-response consistency.

Attitudes Are Predispositions

The second major feature of the description under consideration is the notion that attitude is a predisposition. Attitude is typically viewed as a latent or underlying variable that is assumed to guide or influence behavior. One immediate implication of this view is that attitudes are not identical with observed response consistency. Indeed, attitudes cannot be observed directly but have to be inferred from observed consistency in behavior.

We showed above that “response consistency” can be interpreted in at least three very different ways. Since predispositions must be inferred from such consistency, it follows that their interpretation depends on the definition of consistency. The stimulus-response interpretation of consistency implies that the individual is predisposed to make a particular response or set of responses in the presence of a given object. Knowledge of a person’s attitude, therefore, permits prediction of one or more specific behaviors.

Adopting the response-response interpretation of consistency implies a more general predisposition. In this case, the individual is predisposed toward performing a class of behaviors, all of which are either favorable or unfavorable with respect to the object. Thus a person holding a favorable attitude toward the object would be expected to perform any favorable behavior and not to perform unfavorable behaviors, whereas the reverse would be true for a person holding an unfavorable attitude.

Defining consistency in terms of overall evaluation implies a predisposition of an even more general nature. Here a person is seen as predisposed to a certain degree of favorability in his behavior toward the object, which may be expressed in different behavioral ways. Thus the predisposition refers neither to a particular behavior nor to a class of behaviors, but rather to the overall favorability of a behavioral pattern. Knowledge of a person’s attitude in this case does not permit prediction of any specific behavior on his part.

It is of interest to note that the early conceptions of attitude were largely restricted to specific predispositions or mental sets; the concept of attitude gained

popularity only after it was viewed as a more general behavioral disposition (cf. Fleming, 1967). Of greater importance, the notion of predispositional specificity points to some additional ambiguities with respect to the attitude concept. In the first two interpretations discussed above (i.e., stimulus-response and response-response consistency), the predisposition is linked to one or more specific responses. Once a person's predisposition (i.e., attitude) has been established, it is expected that the person will (or will not) perform the behavior in question. The stimulus-response interpretation of consistency implies that a given attitude always elicits a given response or set of responses (in terms of which the attitude was defined). Response-response consistency implies that a positive attitude will lead to the performance of positive behaviors and a negative attitude to the performance of negative behaviors. In contrast, the third view of predisposition (i.e., overall evaluative consistency) makes no such assumption. Even though an individual may have a favorable attitude, there is no expectation that he will perform any particular behavior with respect to the object, favorable or unfavorable.

These problems are compounded when the level of dispositional specificity fails to correspond to the interpretation of response consistency. In a typical example, an investigator may infer attitude by observing overall evaluative consistency but assume a predisposition to perform a specific behavior. We will show in a later chapter that this problem may have caused some of the controversies concerning the attitude-behavior relation.

Many of the disagreements concerning the definition of attitude can be traced to the investigator's description of the nature of the predisposition. For example, Sarnoff (1960) defined attitude as "a disposition to react favorably or unfavorably to a class of objects." Thurstone (1931) and others have argued that attitude is an affective or evaluative predisposition. Although not discussing its nature per se, Chave (1928) provided a detailed description of the factors that influence a person's predisposition: "An attitude is a complex of feelings, desires, fears, convictions, prejudices, or other tendencies that have given a set or readiness to act to a person because of varied experiences." A direct description of the nature of a predisposition has been offered by Krech and Crutchfield (1948), who defined attitude as "an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive processes with respect to some aspect of the individual's world."

Attitudes Are Learned

The disagreements concerning the nature of the disposition lead to the final feature of attitudes to be considered, namely, the notion that attitudes are learned. Although virtually every attitude theorist would agree with this assumption, its importance is frequently not recognized. The social scientist confronts the formidable task of trying to explain the behavior of organisms with complex and unique past experiences. It is widely accepted that residues of this experience influence or modify behavior of the organism. Since a person's complete history is not available

to the investigator, he often turns to variables that reflect residues of past experience. Attitudes are generally assumed to constitute such residues (Campbell, 1963), and hence attitudes are considered to be learned.

In other words, predispositions to respond in consistently favorable or unfavorable ways are assumed to be the result of past experience. Clearly, the level of predispositional specificity at which an investigator is working will tend to determine the kinds of past experiences that he considers relevant for attitude formation. For example, concern with predispositions to perform a particular response is likely to lead to considerations of past experiences directly related to performance and nonperformance of the behavioral response in the presence of the stimulus object. Thus investigation may focus on consequences of the behavior, such as monetary rewards, punishments, social approval or disapproval, and on the effort involved in performing the behavior, as well as on social pressures to perform or abstain from performing it.

In contrast, concern with general predispositions to behave in a favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to some object may direct attention to any kind of prior experience with the object. In a study of a person's predisposition toward Catholics, for example, it would be possible to consider consequences of different behaviors with respect to Catholics, social pressures concerning such behaviors, factual knowledge about Catholics, general feelings one had previously experienced in the presence of Catholics, etc. Indeed, almost any experience might be deemed relevant for the formation of a general predisposition toward Catholics.

In conclusion, most investigators would probably agree with a description (or definition) of attitude as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object. In the discussion above we have attempted to reveal some of the disagreements concealed by the apparent consensus. Agreement with this description of attitude leaves five basic problems unanswered. First, different interpretations may be given to the phrase "respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner." Second, the predisposition may be viewed as specific or general, and it may or may not be linked to particular behavior. Third, response consistency and level of dispositional specificity may or may not be coordinated. Fourth, disagreement exists concerning the nature of the predisposition. Finally, different kinds of past experiences may be considered relevant for the formation of the disposition.

Clearly, there exists a great diversity of viewpoints concerning the attitude concept, and this state of affairs is reflected in a multitude of definitions of attitude. Many of the disagreements among investigators are questions of theory rather than definition. For example, we saw above that many definitions of attitude make explicit reference to the nature of the disposition or to factors that influence it. Theorists usually have not made clear which aspects of an elaborate theoretical description of attitude are essential defining aspects of the concept and which are speculative arguments that require empirical verification. It follows that these definitions of attitude have no clear implications as to how attitudes are to be measured, and the result is the arbitrary selection of measurement procedures noted

earlier. What is needed at the present time, therefore, is a conceptual definition of attitude which specifies only the essential characteristics of the attitude concept which must be assessed in order to obtain a valid measure of attitude.

CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTIONS

Attitude. In discussing the notion of response consistency, we noted that the major characteristic that distinguishes attitude from other concepts is its evaluative or affective nature. Indeed, there is widespread agreement that affect is the most essential part of the attitude concept. Further, in Chapter 3 we will see that most of the commonly accepted attitude-measurement procedures arrive at a single number designed to index this general evaluation or feeling of favorableness or unfavorableness toward the object in question. Consistent with Thurstone's (1931) position, attitude may be conceptualized as the amount of affect for or against some object. We therefore suggest that "attitude" should be measured by a procedure which locates the subject on a bipolar affective or evaluative dimension vis-à-vis a given object.²

Although one should recognize that this definition does not capture the full complexity that has come to be associated with the attitude concept, there seems to be widespread agreement that affect is the most essential part of attitude, and the proposed definition therefore appears to do justice to the concept of attitude.

Clearly, the proposed definition of attitude would invalidate many of the measures used in empirical investigations, since those measures often do not unambiguously locate an individual on a bipolar evaluative dimension. Conversely, such labels as opinion, satisfaction, prejudice, intention, value, belief, etc., have sometimes been applied to clear measures of evaluation. The result has been to confound the distinctions between attitude and other concepts. Distinctions between some of these terms have at times been suggested (e.g., Rokeach, 1968; Triandis, 1971; Harvey, Hunt, and Schroeder, 1961; Katz, 1960; Osgood, Suci, and Tanenbaum, 1957), but the prevailing view holds that such distinctions are not warranted at the present time, since it has not been demonstrated that these variables obey different scientific laws. According to this view, a distinction between belief and attitude, for example, would be justified only if research could demonstrate that different factors determine these two variables, and/or that a change in beliefs leads to different consequences than does a change in attitudes (McGuire, 1969). This book will attempt to demonstrate that some distinctions not only are justifiable but are necessary for an adequate understanding of the attitude area.

One distinction that has been repeatedly proposed is the age-old trilogy of

2. The terms "affect" and "evaluation" are used synonymously throughout this book. Although it might be argued that there is a difference between a person's judgment that an object makes him feel good and his evaluation that the object is good, there is little evidence to suggest that a reliable empirical distinction between these two variables can be made.

affect, cognition, and conation. Affect refers to a person's feelings toward and evaluation of some object, person, issue, or event; cognition denotes his knowledge, opinions, beliefs, and thoughts about the object; and conation refers to his behavioral intentions and his actions with respect to or in the presence of the object. Since, when dealing with attitudes, we are concerned with predispositions to behave rather than with the behavior itself, it seems desirable to make a distinction between behavioral intention and actual behavior. This suggests a classification consisting of four broad categories: affect (feelings, evaluations), cognition (opinions, beliefs), conation (behavioral intentions), and behavior (observed overt acts). Although many attitude theorists appear to agree with such a classification, they seldom make use of it in their research.

We have already reserved the term "attitude" for one of these categories, namely, affect. The term "belief" will be used for the second category, cognition, and the term "intention" for the third category, conation.

Belief. Whereas attitude refers to a person's favorable or unfavorable evaluation of an object, beliefs represent the information he has about the object. Specifically, a belief links an object to some attribute. Here and throughout this book, the terms "object" and "attribute" are used in a generic sense, and they refer to any discriminable aspect of the individual's world. For example, the belief "Russia is a totalitarian state" links the object "Russia" to the attribute "totalitarian state." Another belief may link "using birth control pills" (the object) to "preventing pregnancy" (the attribute). Thus the object of a belief may be a person, a group of people, an institution, a behavior, a policy, an event, etc., and the associated attribute may be any object, trait, property, quality, characteristic, outcome, or event.

With respect to any object-attribute association, people may differ in their *belief strength*. In other words, they may differ in terms of the perceived likelihood that the object has (or is associated with) the attribute in question. Thus we recommend that "belief strength," or more simply, "belief," be measured by a procedure which places the subject along a dimension of subjective probability involving an object and some related attribute. The use of subjective probability in relation to beliefs has increased in recent years, and several recent models of belief change have applied mathematical probability theory to make predictions about subjective probabilities, i.e., beliefs (cf. Cronkhite, 1969; Scheibe, 1970; Warr and Smith, 1970; Wyer, 1970a). Some of these models will be considered in a later chapter.

Behavioral intention. The third class of variables refers to a person's intentions to perform various behaviors. In many respects, intentions may be viewed as a special case of beliefs, in which the object is always the person himself and the attribute is always a behavior. As with a belief, the strength of an intention is indicated by the person's subjective probability that he will perform the behavior in question. It can thus be recommended that the strength of an intention, or more simply, "intention," be measured by a procedure which places the subject along a sub-

jective-probability dimension involving a relation between himself and some action.

In sum, the concept "attitude" should be used only when there is strong evidence that the measure employed places an individual on a bipolar affective dimension. When the measure places the individual on a dimension of subjective probability relating an object to an attribute, the label "belief" should be applied. When the probability dimension links the person to a behavior, the concept "behavioral intention" should be used. Other concepts that have been employed in the attitude area appear to be subsumed under one or another of these three broad categories. For example, concepts like attraction, value, sentiment, valence, and utility all seem to imply bipolar evaluation and may thus be subsumed under the category of "attitude." Similarly, opinion, knowledge, information, stereotype, etc., may all be viewed as beliefs held by an individual. Other items, such as brand image, prejudice, and morale, are usually defined so broadly that they may relate to all three categories. Thus a person may hold prejudicial beliefs, attitudes, and intentions.

Behavior. At this point, a few comments about the fourth category, overt behavior, are in order. First, note that all questionnaire or verbal responses are also instances of overt behavior. That is, they are observable acts of the subject. Usually, however, such responses are not treated as records of behavior but are instead used to infer beliefs, attitudes, or intentions. In contrast, the behavioral category in our classification refers to overt behaviors that are studied in their own right. That is, an investigator obtains a measure of overt behavior because he is interested in that particular behavior and is trying to understand its determinants.

Note further, however, that any given behavior may either be studied in its own right or be used to infer beliefs, attitudes, or intentions. Thus, in Nemeth's (1970) study mentioned earlier, the number of seconds spent talking to another person was taken as a measure of liking. The same measure could have served as a record of verbal behavior. The results of this study indicate that time spent talking to another person should probably not be viewed as a measure of attitude or liking, since it was found to have no relation to an independent, more direct measure of the affective dimension.

To reiterate, the term "behavior" will be used to refer to observable acts that are studied in their own right. A more thorough discussion of some of the problems involved in measuring and predicting behaviors will be presented in Chapter 8.

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this book is to organize and integrate research in the attitude area within the framework of a systematic theoretical orientation. Our aim is to expose the reader as much as possible to the wide range of theoretical viewpoints and

empirical investigations conducted in this area, while at the same time providing a coherent framework that permits a systematic theoretical analysis. The foundation for our conceptual framework is provided by our distinction between beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. The major concern of the conceptual framework, however, is with the relations between these variables.

Beliefs are the fundamental building blocks in our conceptual structure. On the basis of direct observation or information received from outside sources or by way of various inference processes, a person learns or forms a number of beliefs about an object. That is, he associates the object with various attributes. In this manner, he forms beliefs about himself, about other people, about institutions, behaviors, events, etc. The totality of a person's beliefs serves as the informational base that ultimately determines his attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. Our approach thus views man as an essentially rational organism, who uses the information at his disposal to make judgments, form evaluations, and arrive at decisions.

At the simplest level, beliefs formed on the basis of direct observation may lead to the formation of new beliefs. For example, on the basis of an observation (and consequent belief) that John is wearing a plain gold ring on his left hand, a person may infer that John is married. Although beliefs can be arrived at by a number of different inference processes, we assume that such inferences are usually made in an orderly fashion on the basis of the beliefs already held by the individual.

An information-processing approach is also viewed as underlying the formation of attitudes. Specifically, a person's attitude toward an object is based on his salient beliefs about *that* object. An individual's attitude toward the church, for example, is a function of his beliefs about the church. If those beliefs associate the object with primarily favorable attributes, his attitude will tend to be positive. Conversely, a negative attitude will result if the person associates the church with primarily unfavorable attributes. It can thus be seen that a person's attitude toward some object is determined by his beliefs that the object has certain attributes and by his evaluations of those attributes.

We have made it clear that attitude is viewed as affective or evaluative in nature, and that it is determined by the person's beliefs about the attitude object. Most people hold both positive and negative beliefs about an object, and attitude is viewed as corresponding to the total affect associated with their beliefs. In terms of the relation between beliefs and attitudes, our conceptual framework thus suggests that a person's attitude toward some object is related to the *set* of his beliefs about the object but not necessarily to any specific belief.

In a similar fashion, attitude toward an object is viewed as related to the person's intentions to perform a variety of behaviors with respect to that object. Again, however, the relation is between attitude and the set of intentions as a whole, and attitude toward an object will usually not be related to any specific intention with respect to the object.

To give a concrete example, a person may hold many beliefs about the Democratic Party, such as "the Democratic Party is disorganized," "the Democratic

Party is in favor of increased social security benefits,” “the Democratic Party is against big business,” etc. These beliefs may lead the person to hold a moderately favorable attitude toward the Democratic Party. This attitude leads to a set of intentions which, in their totality, are also moderately favorable. Thus the person may intend to vote for a Democratic candidate and to donate money to the party’s campaign fund, but not to canvass his neighborhood to raise money for the party.

Each intention is viewed as being related to the corresponding behavior. Since we view most social behavior as being volitional, barring unforeseen events, a person should perform those behaviors he intends to perform. It follows that attitude toward an object will again be related only to the total behavioral pattern rather than to any specific behavior with respect to the attitude object.

Like most other investigators, we agree that an attitude can be *described* as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object. It should be clear that since a person’s attitude is assumed to be related to the total affect associated with his beliefs, intentions, and behaviors, we define response consistency in terms of overall evaluative consistency. Thus attitude is viewed as a *general* predisposition that does not predispose the person to perform any specific behavior. Rather, it leads to a set of intentions that indicate a certain amount of affect toward the object in question. Each of these intentions is related to a specific behavior, and thus the overall affect expressed by the pattern of a person’s actions with respect to the object also corresponds to his attitude toward the object.

The description above is admittedly brief, and it omits feedback loops at various stages of the process. For example, once established, an attitude may influence the formation of new beliefs. Similarly, performance of a particular behavior may lead to new beliefs about the object, which may in turn influence the attitude. The notions discussed thus far are illustrated in Fig. 1.1.

It has usually been assumed that a person’s attitude toward an object can be

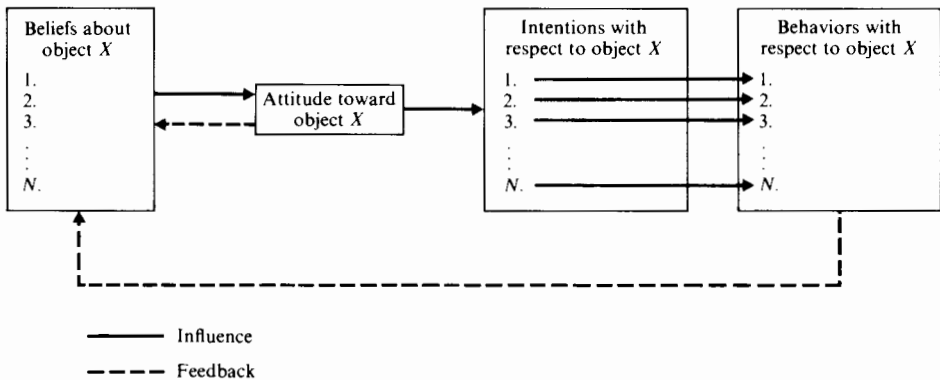


Fig. 1.1 Schematic presentation of conceptual framework relating beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors with respect to a given object.

used to predict his behavior with respect to the object. Our conceptual framework, however, suggests that the performance or nonperformance of a specific behavior with respect to some object usually cannot be predicted from knowledge of the person's attitude toward that object. Instead, a specific behavior is viewed as determined by the person's intention to perform that behavior. This raises the question of the factors that influence the formation of behavioral intentions.

According to our conceptual framework, a person's intentions, in the final analysis, are a function of certain beliefs. Rather than being beliefs about the object of the behavior, however, the relevant beliefs are concerned with the behavior itself. Some of these beliefs influence the person's attitude toward the behavior. Specifically, his attitude toward performing a given behavior is related to his beliefs that performing the behavior will lead to certain consequences and his evaluation of those consequences. This attitude is viewed as one major determinant of the person's intention to perform the behavior in question. Other beliefs relevant for a behavioral intention are beliefs of a normative nature, i.e., beliefs that certain referents think the person should or should not perform the behavior in question. The person may or may not be motivated to comply with any given referent. The normative beliefs and motivation to comply lead to normative pressures. The totality of these normative pressures may be termed "subjective norm." Like his attitude toward the behavior, a person's subjective norm is viewed as a major determinant of his intention to perform the behavior. Thus a person's behavioral intention is viewed as a function of two factors: his attitude toward the behavior and his subjective norm. As noted earlier, this intention is viewed as the immediate determinant of the corresponding behavior. The factors influencing intentions and behavior are illustrated in Fig. 1.2.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

In the remainder of this book we will attempt to fill in the details of the conceptual framework outlined in the present chapter and to show how other approaches to

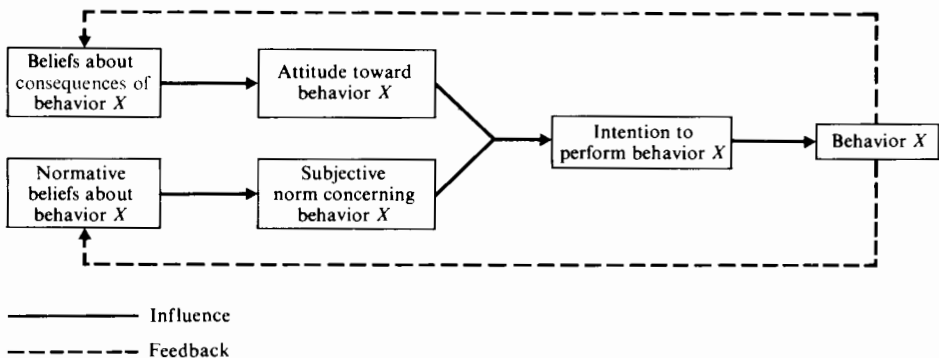


Fig. 1.2 Schematic presentation of conceptual framework for the prediction of specific intentions and behaviors.

attitude theory and research can be integrated within this conceptual framework. From our point of view, attitude theory and research deal with three major questions: (1) What are the determinants of beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior? (2) How are these variables related to each other? (3) What are the ways in which these variables can be changed?

The first part of the book provides a general overview of attitude theory and measurement. Chapter 2 examines the ways in which current attitude theories deal with one or more of the three questions stated above. Several theoretical orientations are reviewed, including learning theories, expectancy-value theories, the congruity principle, balance theory, dissonance theory, and theories of attribution, and each theory is analyzed in terms of our conceptual framework. Chapter 3 discusses various techniques for the measurement of beliefs, attitudes, and intentions. The discussion deals not only with the standard attitude-scaling methods (Guttman, Thurstone, Likert, and semantic differential scales) but also with indirect attitude measures, measures of cognitive structure, and multidimensional scaling. An attempt will be made to show that different measurement procedures may imply different views of the nature of beliefs, attitudes, and intentions and of the relations between these concepts. The final chapter in Part I, Chapter 4, considers some more general methodological issues related to attitude measurement and research. Included in this chapter are discussions of reliability and validity of measurement; reactive effects, such as demand characteristics and experimenter bias in laboratory experiments; and internal and external validity of experiments.

Parts II and III turn to substantive research in the attitude area. Part II deals with the determinants of beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors and with the relations between these variables. Chapter 5 examines belief formation. Particular emphasis is placed on inference processes underlying the formation of beliefs. Theory and research in the attitude area, as well as in other areas of psychology, are brought to bear on the question of inferential belief formation. A number of inference processes are identified and discussed, including trait inferences, concept formation, cue utilization, syllogistic reasoning, subjective probability models, and attribution processes. The chapter will attempt to demonstrate that inferential beliefs are formed in accordance with orderly principles of information processing.

Chapter 6 attempts to demonstrate the importance of beliefs for attitude formation. Various approaches to attitude formation will be examined, including research on impression formation, interpersonal attraction, and classical conditioning of attitudes. We will show that all this research is compatible with the general notion that a person's attitude toward a given object is a function of his beliefs that the object has certain attributes and his evaluation of those attributes.

Chapter 7 turns to the formation of intentions. Traditional approaches to the prediction of intentions will be discussed, as well as an alternative model based on our conceptual framework outlined earlier. We will review research generated by this model and show that a person's intention to perform a given behavior is a function of his attitude toward that behavior and his subjective norm concerning the behavior.

The final chapter in Part II, Chapter 8, deals with the determinants of behavior and with behavioral prediction. We attempt to explain the failure of the traditional approach, which assumes a strong relation between attitude toward an object and specific behaviors with respect to that object. We suggest an alternative approach, in which a distinction is made between single-act and multiple-act behavioral criteria. We show that attitude toward an object is related to multiple-act criteria, whereas the best predictor of a single-act criterion is the person's corresponding intention. Factors influencing the intention-behavior relation are also discussed.

Clearly, Part II starts with a consideration of beliefs and describes their sequential relations to attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. Chapter 9 uses our conceptual model to analyze processes of change. We show that, in the final analysis, change in any variable is initiated by changes in beliefs. Such changes are brought about by exposing a person to new information. Exposure to such information may initiate a chain of effects, beginning with changes in beliefs, which may produce changes in attitudes. Changes in appropriate beliefs and attitudes influence intentions and corresponding behaviors. Research dealing with various links in the chain of effects is reviewed.

The next two chapters in Part III discuss the two major strategies of change employed in the attitude area. Chapter 10 examines research on active participation. We discuss effects of interpersonal contact, role-playing, forced compliance, and choice behaviors, and we attempt to reconcile conflicting findings within the framework developed in Chapter 9. Chapter 11 deals with the influence of persuasive communication. We discuss the nature of persuasive messages, and we present a theory of the persuasion process and contrast it with the traditional approach to communication and persuasion. The theory's major focus is on acceptance of information provided by an outside source, and it distinguishes between acceptance of information and changes in beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior. We show how this theory can account for apparently inconsistent effects of traditional variables, such as discrepancy between the position advocated in the message and the subject's own position, communicator credibility, and type of appeal. Finally, Chapter 12 provides a general overview of attitude research, its problems and prospects.