Attitudes and Attitude Change

Banu Cingöz Ulu
Attitudes

• **tri-component view** (up to 1990s):
  ◦ attitudes are enduring dispositions that consist of *affective*, *behavioral*, and *cognitive* components
  ◦ beliefs about object, feelings about object, behavior toward object

• not all components need to be in place!

• positive or negative *evaluations* of objects, issues, or persons
Attitude toward condom use.

- Reduces sexual enjoyment: unfavorable (-)
- Peer approves of safe sex: favorable (+)
- Partner favors safe sex: favorable (+)
- Reduces risk of unwanted pregnancy: favorable (+)
- Reduces risk of sexually transmitted disease: favorable (+)
- Awkward to use: unfavorable (-)
- Awkward to purchase: unfavorable (-)

+ sign = favorable;  
- sign = unfavorable
Attitudes

• Implicit attitudes:
  – activated automatically from memory, often without awareness that we possess it
  – e.g., why do I feel uneasy/irritable around X?

• Explicit attitudes:
  – consciously held attitudes, a thoughtful and deliberate evaluation

• Dual attitudes: contradictory implicit & explicit toward the same object
  – e.g., Kate and her pony, Topper
  – especially for sensitive topics
Theories of Attitudes: Learning

• **Learning Theory:** assumes a person’s attitudes are based on principles of:
  – association
  – reinforcement (reward & punishment)
  – imitation

• message learning – is it important?

• Transfer of affect from one object to another

• e.g., **Amansız Ol**
Theories: Cognitive Consistency

- **Cognitive Consistency** approaches depict people as striving for coherence and meaning in their attitudes.

1. **balance theory** (Heider, 1958):
   - Agree with a liked person,
   - Disagree with a disliked person
BALANCE THEORY

There are eight possible configurations of two people and one object. According to this model, the imbalanced structures tend to become balanced by a change in one or more elements.
Theories: Cognitive Consistency

2. **cognitive dissonance theory** is concerned with discrepancies between attitudes and behaviors.
   
   – Leon Festinger

• **dissonance:**
  
   – aversive arousal state when behavior ≠ attitudes (or two beliefs conflict)
   
   – would like to avoid, naturally **motivated** to reduce
Theories: Cognitive Consistency

• *Post-Decision* ⇒ dissonance
  – I like my choice even more
  – Brehm’s classic study
  – also happens when we commit
  – e.g., Doomsday cult

• *Counterattitudinal behavior*: acts that are inconsistent with our attitudes.
  – Δ the attitude since behavior can’t be undone
Theories: Cognitive Consistency

- **Insufficient justification**: the less incentive for acting in an attitude-discrepant way, the more dissonance
- Offer of small reward
- Paid to lie “enjoyable” for $1 or $20
- “I’m doing this for no $$, so I guess I do it because I like it!”
- Threat of small punishment
Theories: Cognitive Consistency

- Factors ↑↑ dissonance in counterattitudinal behavior (=weak reasons behind behavior)
  - Behavior is freely chosen
  - There is an irrevocable commitment
  - Negative consequences were foreseeable
  - Person feels responsible for consequences
  - Great effort is expended
  - Questioning self-relevant expectations (competence, morality, etc.)
Theories: Self-perception

- **Self-perception theory:** (Bem, 1967)
  - infer my internal states, like attitudes, from observing my behavior externally
- behavior causes attitudes
- little prior knowledge, vague attitudes
- similar prediction with CD but for different reasons
Theories: Expectancy-Value

Expectancy-value Theory:
• decisions are based on the value of possible outcomes and the likelihood of each will occur
• weigh costs and benefits (pros and cons): adopt the attitudes that maximizes gain!
• Subjective Utility = Value X Expectancy
• assumes humans to be calculative, active, and rational decisions makers
Theories: Dual-Processing

Dual-Processing Theories:

- “systematic & deliberate” versus “rapid & heuristically based”
- explicit, implicit, and dual attitudes
Theories: Dual-Processing

**Cognitive Response Theory**
what thoughts are produced in response to a persuasive message?
• examines attitude change processes
• how much and what kind of *counterarguing* does a message create?
• *central* versus *peripheral* routes to persuasion
• *systematic* versus *heuristic* processing
• >> elaboration-likelihood model
PERSUASION
Persuasion: The Source

• The more we evaluate a *communicator*, the more likely we are to adopt the message / position.

• e.g., buying a product because it is endorsed by...
ice-cream

shampoo

pop drink

jeans
Persuasion: The Source

• Credibility:
  – expertise
  – trustworthiness - little to gain, multiplicity

• Liking:
  – physical attractiveness
  – similarity
  – e.g., reference groups
    • silvia_fashion | joao_clubs | dimon_ball

• source derogation

• the communicator = peripheral cue
Persuasion: The Message

• The greater the discrepancy, the greater potential pressure to change.
• Strong messages are more effective when people are willing / able to pay attention.
• Repetition increases liking / effectiveness (up to a point!)
Persuasion: The Message

• Peripheral cues are important when no time / motivation to systematic processing:
  – length of arguments
  – number of arguments
Persuasion: The Target

• Arousal:
  – aggression ~ punitive stance
  – fear: less clear
  – mood
Persuasion: The Target

• **Ego involvement:** link between attitude and self.
  – Commitment
  – Issue involvement (personal relevance)
  – Response involvement (approval of others)

• **Personality:**
  – authoritarianism / dogmatism
  – need for closure
Persuasion: The Situation

• **Forewarning**: informing s.o. in advance that someone will try to change their attitudes
  – effects depend on the degree of commitment
Persuasion: The Situation

- **Distraction**: drawing attention away from the persuasive message
  - works best when issue is familiar, and we have established arguments
  - too much of it doesn’t work
Persuasion: The Situation

- **Inoculation**: building resistance by arguing against weak forms of a persuasive argument

- Culture influences persuasiveness (individualist versus collectivist appeals)
Attitude Change

- **Spontaneous attitude change:** thinking about an attitude object makes the attitude more extreme
  - need a prior schema about the object, issue, person

- **Sleeper effect:** increased persuasiveness of a message from a non-credible source over time.
Attitudes and Behavior

- LaPiere’s (1934) classic study
  - 66 hotels, 184 restaurants: no rejection
  - 92% rejected on paper
Attitudes and Behavior

The attitude-behavior consistency is higher if attitudes are:

– stable
– important
– easily accessible
– formed through direct experience
– clear/certain
– consistent between cognition and affect
The Reasoned Action Model

- factors that determine attitude-behavior consistency?
The Theory of Planned Behavior

- factors that determine attitude-behavior consistency?

- Attitude toward behavior
- Subjective social norms
- Perceived behavioral control

Intention

Behavior