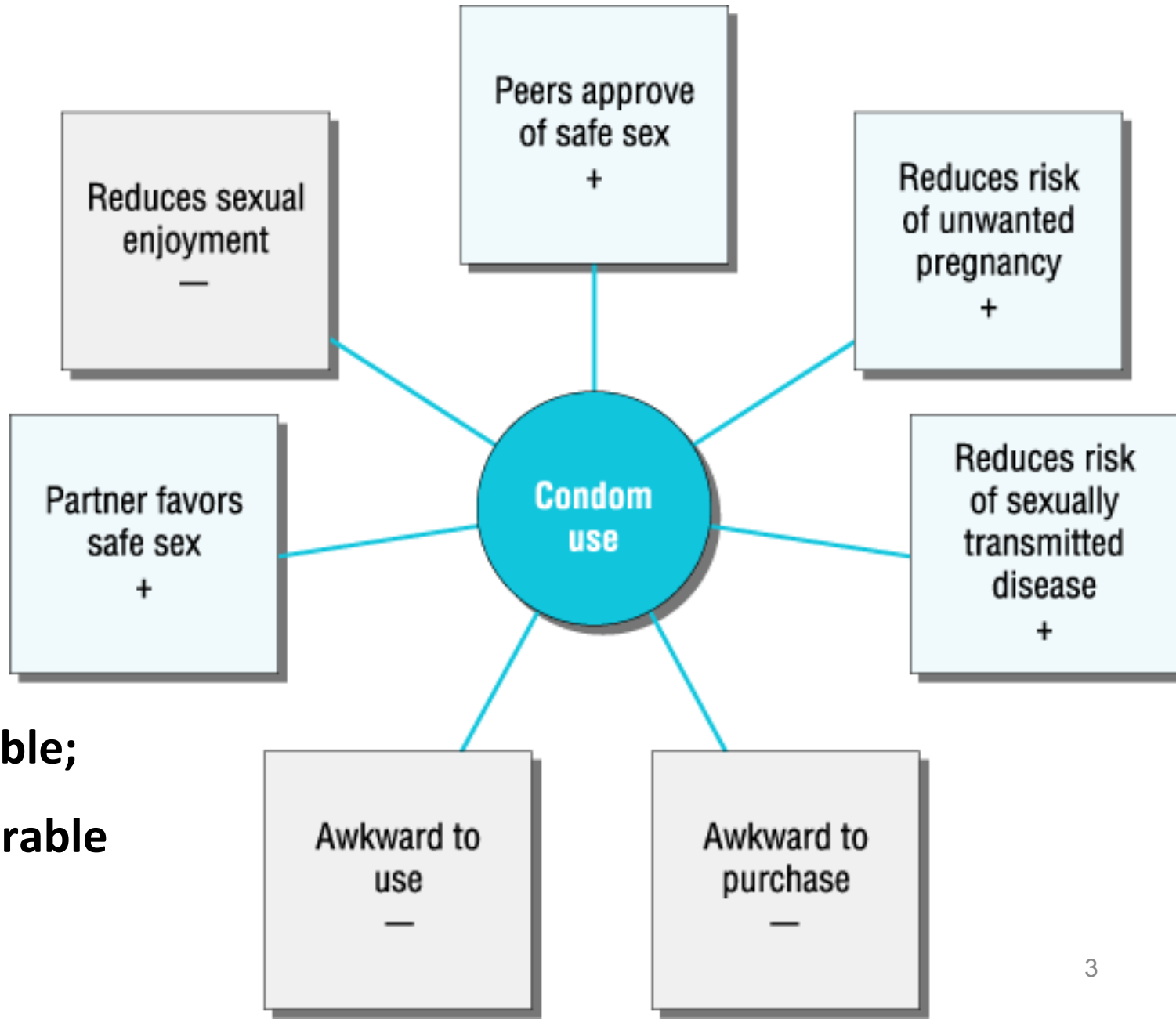# Attitudes and Attitude Change

Banu Cingöz Ulu

Attitudes

- **tri-component view** (up to 1990s):
  - attitudes are enduring dispositions that consist of <u>affective</u>, <u>behavioral</u>, and <u>cognitive</u> 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
—

Peers approve of safe sex
+

Reduces risk of unwanted pregnancy
+

Partner favors safe sex
+

Condom use

Reduces risk of sexually transmitted disease
+

Awkward to use
—

Awkward to purchase
—

+ 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

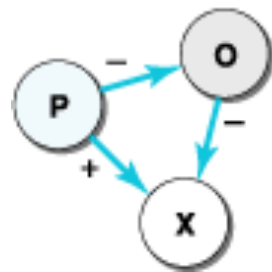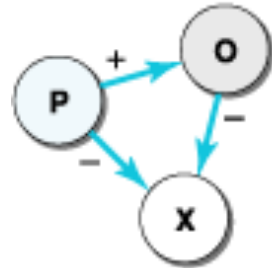- **Cognitive Consistency** approaches depict people as striving for coherence and meaning in their attitudes.
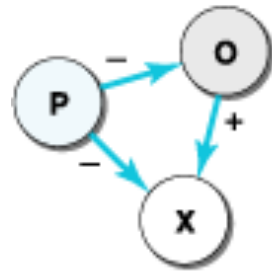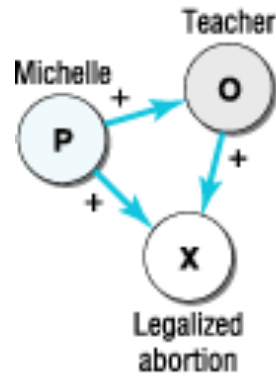
1. balance theory (Heider, 1958):

- ◦ Agree with a liked person,
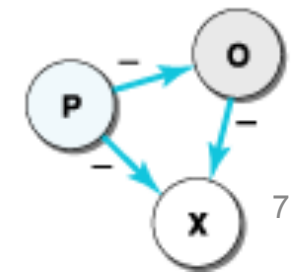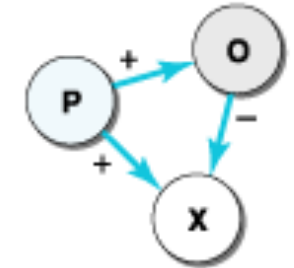- ◦ Disagree with a disliked person

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.
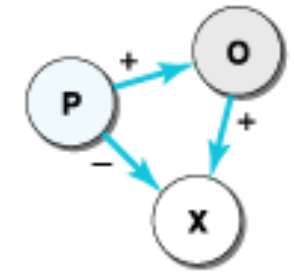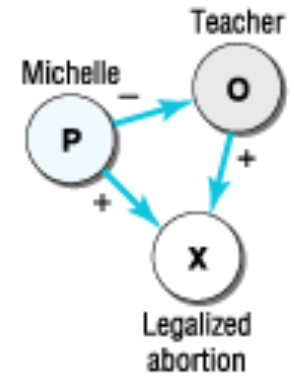
Theories: Cognitive Consistency

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 <u>discrepancy</u>, the greater potential pressure to change.

- <u>Strong</u> messages are more effective when people are willing / able to pay attention.

- <u>Repetition</u> increases liking / effectiveness (up to a point!)

Persuasion: The Message

- <u>Peripheral cues</u> 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
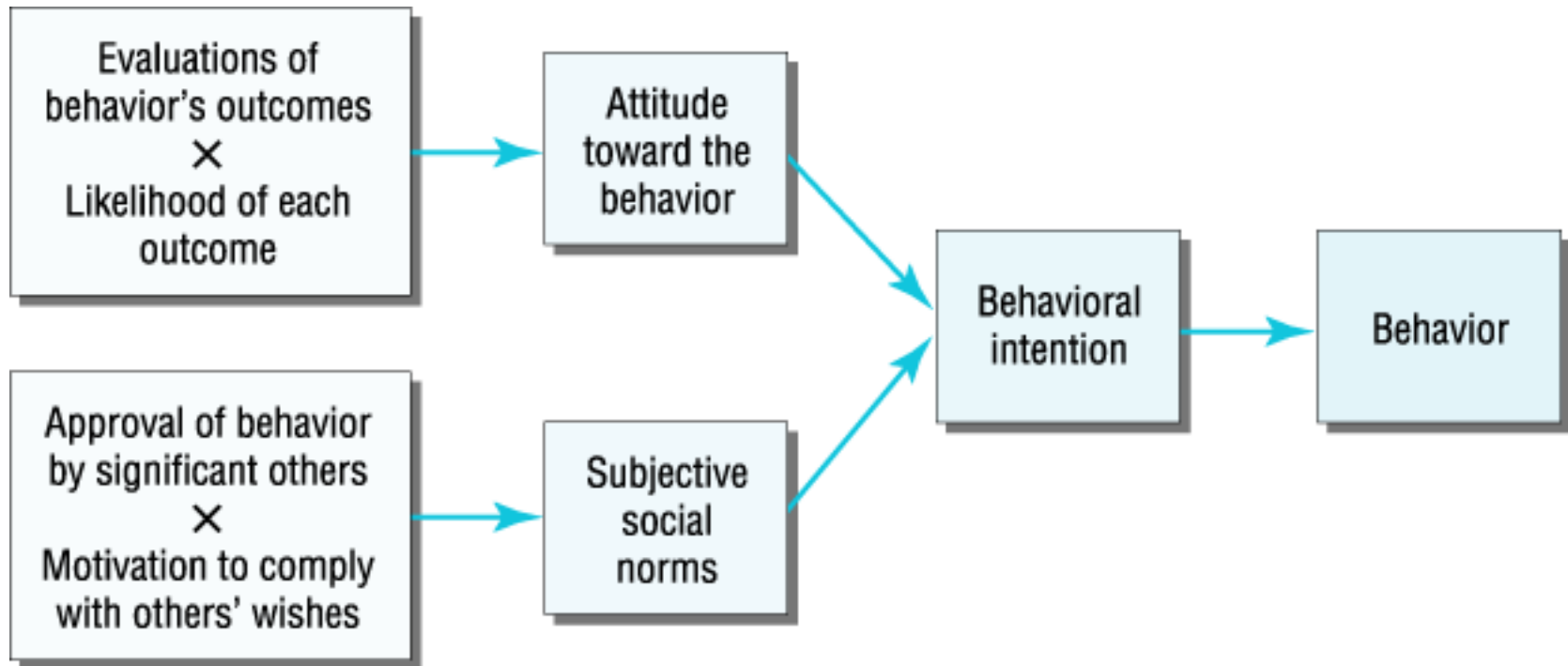 - 92% rejected on paper

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