ATTITUDE STRUCTURE and FUNCTION _____

The Third Ohio State University
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Foreword

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This volume returns to a central problem of social psychology but not in the sense of Schlesinger's cycles of history. It is not just a revival of the issues of yesteryear, though they are part of the story, as it is a new attack upon the structure and function of attitudes. It reformulates old concepts, explores new angles, seeks relationships among research findings from various sub-areas, digs deeper into the meaning of relevant psychological processes, and shows progress in the sophistication of research design and the specification of the variables concerned.

The concept of attitude has an interesting history as a broadly defined construct combining affect, conation, and belief intervening between stimulus and response. It was incorporated into social psychology by early writers including McDougall in his notion of sentiments and by Floyd Allport in his idea of predispositional sets to respond. In fact John B. Watson defined social psychology as the study of attitudes. The ambiguity of definition gave behaviorists a theoretical back door to admit mental processes and social meaning, on the one hand, and field theorists like Krech and Crutchfield to deal with relatively stable substructures in a dynamic field on the other. Thus attitude research burgeoned during the 1920s and 1930s and Murphy, Murphy, and Newcomb in their *Experimental Social Psychology* (1937) devoted some 157 pages and over 100 references to attitudes and their measurement. But attitude research did not maintain its momentum for two reasons. First, the many investigations produced few generalizable principles. Second, there was little to distinguish attitude from other concepts such as social conformity, stereotypes, habit strength, personality characteristics, schemata, sentiments, or values. There was no set of pro-

positions or systematic hypotheses to guide the researcher and bring clarification to the field.

A push toward unification came with the functional approach. It tried to combine beliefs and motives and to take account of the diversity of motivational patterns. Attitudes were seen as a means for meeting some need of the individual including personal value systems. It called for analysis of the reasons for attitude formation, maintenance, and change. It assumed that change attempts, if they were to be successful, had to be directed at the specific conditions related to the causal basis of the attitude in question. There was some recognition of the plausibility of such theorizing in the early 1950s and some research was generated. But functionalism declined as an area of interest long before it matured and developed as a significant movement.

Four related reasons account for the failure of functionalism to take hold the first time around. First, it lacked a ready and rigorous methodology for the complexity of the problems attacked. Second, it called for a large scale research program of resources and personnel rather than a single experiment—one more readily publishable. Third, it ran counter to the search for a single explanatory concept. Psychologists were essentially monistic in their thinking and had difficulty with a two-factor theory of learning let alone a four-factor theory of attitude formation. And finally, consistency theory with its emphasis on cognitive processes was sweeping everything before it. Field theory replaced behaviorism and Freudian doctrines in social psychology. The concepts of balance, congruity, and dissonance were implemented by ingenious and well-controlled experiments. The swing was back to the rational man.

The impact of consistency theory was great and it made useful contributions—some of lasting importance. The present volume employs some of these findings and theorizing of the consistency literature. The concern with the psychological field of the individual corrected a prior neglect of human being as an active perceiver, interpreter, and thinking creature. People structure and restructure their changing world in ways that make sense to them.

A dilemma arose, however, with respect to objective logic and psycho-logic. Questions were raised about the predictability and permanence of the changes induced by the experimental setting, often highly contrived and gamelike in character. In more natural settings would individuals be as constrained by logical consistency or would they turn to a psycho-logic that allowed for selectivity, rationalization, and even distortion and denial? With a multitude of experiences and beliefs and conflicting demands, could wish thinking and the will to believe be ignored. When inconsistencies appeared in behavior, why not go beyond some idiosyncratic psycho-logic of an individual to look at the motivational patterns involved? How otherwise

could one account for differences produced by the social setting as in the simple case of private and public attitudes? Why exclude studies dealing with the needs, the drives, and the desires of people emphasized by theories of social motivation, reinforcement and reward and the nature of personality determinants? Consistency of cognitive processes was only one chapter in attitude formation and change. A functional approach provided a broader framework and basically this is what the present volume is all about.

Attitude Structure and Function brings together the advances made by linking older functionalism with related bodies of research utilizing more sophisticated methodology and more precision in the definition of concepts. Its chapters examine the relationships between levels of cognitive structure, motives, and behavior in various social settings. It is both more inclusive of psychological findings and digs deeper into the specifics of structure and change. It embraces, as most earlier functional work did not, such important topics as level of representational structure, cognitive style, the relationship of attitudes to other systems, types of value conflict, the salvaging of ideology, the need for structure, the biological homeostatic model, intra-individual relationships of beliefs, behavioral habits and attitudes, the imitation and persistence of attitude change, beliefs as possessions, objective constraints and social settings on attitude formation and change, and the basis for individual differences in functional needs.

The shift toward functionalism came, however, in good part from the impingement of societal forces, often mediated by the other social sciences, upon the narrow scientism of the laboratory and its heavy concern with cognitive processes. The social disciplines bordering and interrelated with social psychology were increasingly under pressure to move from an armchair approach to empirical research to help in the solution of problems in the health field to issues of intergroup relations. Their studies of the dilemmas of racism, discrimination, the institutionalization of social inequities, group conflict, and individual and group adjustment reinstated the interests of the early realistic social psychology concerned with significant social issues. In fact SPSSI has been founded in 1938 for this purpose. Though SPSSI's influence declined after the depression and war years the objects of its concerns have become more salient in public thinking in recent years and once again a functional framework has gained adherents as motivational patterns in all their complexities call for increased study.

The use of a functional approach aids and abets the trend of psychologists to join social scientists to deal more broadly with social issues as the present work attests. The influence of system thinking from biology and sociology is evidenced in a number of chapters. The growth of political psychology is explicitly recognized in discussing the rise and fall of political movements, their relationship between attitudes and larger belief structures, and the role of elite opinion and political leadership.

Central questions still remain in the development of a functional approach. The core issue is whether some types of attitudes serve different functions and require different conditions and procedures if they are to be changed. Increasing information, for example, about ethnic groups may not affect prejudices whose basis is ego defensive. We need much more experimentation that varies the influence attempts, to see if we can predict specific changes in attitudes. This was the point of departure of the functional approach of the 1950s with a bold and direct attack upon the problem of experimenting with various change procedures directed at different types of attitudes. These experiments were properly criticized for lacking a rigorous methodology. But the objective was lost sight of and the critics did not try to develop operational definitions of the independent and dependent variables that were not confounded. The assessment of motivational patterns and the conditions for changing them or making them salient called for improvements in measurement to provide specifications for the independent variables. Was such assessment always an empirical matter to be explored in every instance in advance of anticipated outcomes or could some generalization derive from experiments that could narrow prior assessment? Are the conditions for attitude formation and change basically external constraints or internal personality characteristics or some combination of the two, and what kinds of combinations or relationships between the two are critical? More attention could have been given in this volume to central questions of operationalization in change experiments. Fortunately some authors did not by-pass the problem and it is highlighted by a chapter dealing with object variation and situation variation.

An underlying rationale for this volume, moreover, is dissatisfaction with the fragmented character of the field with its unrelated pockets of knowledge. Our problem is still one of integrating bits and pieces of validated information into a systematic and adequate set of general principles. *Attitude Structure and Function* with its many excellent chapters, representing diverse interests, will not satisfy those seeking a grand theory in the old style. But it is more than the typical handbook with a compilation of findings. It does move us ahead toward the desired goal. It provides a framework for further unification and brings together authors who emphasize the relationships within and across sub-areas of our discipline. Its forward thrust has a definite answer to the cyclical theory: "No, this is not where we came in."

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Why Are Attitudes Important?

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Before reading beyond this paragraph, the reader might try to answer the question stated as the title of this chapter. Some relevant background starts with Allport's (1935) declaration that attitude is "social psychology's most indispensable concept." Allport apparently regarded the importance of attitudes as being so evident that it was not necessary to detail the basis for his assertion of its importance. Subsequent reviewers have often followed Allport's lead, resting the case for importance of the attitude construct chiefly on its great popularity (e.g., DeFleur & Westie, 1963; Doob, 1947; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; McGuire, 1969). However, if the construct of attitude is indeed of major importance, then there must be some important phenomena of social behavior that cannot be explained (or, at least, cannot easily be explained) without appealing to attitudes. But what are the phenomena that would be difficult to explain if *attitude* were stricken from the psychologist's vocabulary? (Here is where the reader can try to answer the question, before reading further.)

WHAT ANSWERS HAVE BEEN OFFERED?

An explanation of the importance of attitudes is not readily found in scholarly reviews or texts. More accurately, the four types of answers that one finds in the literature turn out to be unsatisfying. These are:

Attitudes Are Pervasive

This observation is accurate, as can be verified by noticing (a) the ease with which people report evaluative reactions to a wide variety of objects, (b) the difficulty of identifying categories of objects within which evaluative distinctions are not made, and (c) the pervasiveness of an evaluative component in judgments of meaning (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). Nevertheless, the pervasiveness of attitudes is itself not a reason for concluding that attitudes are important in explaining social behavior. As Bem (1967) suggested, attitudes might be cognitive illusions that are constructed after the fact of behavior.

Attitudes Predict Behavior Toward Their Objects

An important, early critique of the usefulness of attitudes in predicting behavior was given by LaPiere (1934). (Problems with LaPiere's critique are reviewed later in this chapter.) Thirty years later, Festinger (1964) critically noted the lack of published support for the reasonable expectation that changes in attitudes should lead to changes in behavior toward their objects. Subsequently, Wicker (1969) reviewed a body of research that revealed only weak correlations between measures of attitudes and measures of behavior toward their objects.

In the 1970s and 1980s two major programs of research succeeded in clarifying attitude-behavior relations. The first of these, directed by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen (e.g., 1974; see chap. 10 in this volume), demonstrated that attitude and behavior are correlated (a) when the observed behavior is judged to be relevant to the attitude, (b) when attitude and behavior are observed at comparable levels of specificity, and (c) when mediation of the attitude-behavior relation by behavioral intentions is taken into account. The second major program, directed by Russell Fazio (e.g., 1986; see chap. 7 in this volume), showed that attitude and behavior, and changes therein, are correlated (a) when the attitude is based on direct experience with the attitude object, and (b) to the extent that the attitude is cognitively accessible.

Although the successful Fishbein–Ajzen and Fazio research programs have established that attitudes can and do predict behavior toward their objects, these programs have also placed important qualifying conditions on the attitude-behavior relationship. Attitude-behavior relations do not appear to be sufficiently powerful or robust to establish the importance of attitude as a theoretical construct. (Further discussion of attitude-behavior relations is found in chap. 3, 7, and 9 of this volume.)

Attitudes Are a Selective Force in Perception and Memory

It has long been supposed that perceptual and cognitive processes are guided by attitudes. The two most-often-stated principles regarding attitude-guided information processing are that persons selectively (a) seek information that agrees with their attitudes while avoiding disagreeing information (e.g., Festinger, 1957), and (b) remember attitude-agreeable information in preference to disagreeable information (e.g., Levine & Murphy, 1943). However, the empirical basis for both of these hypothesized distortions of perception and memory was sharply questioned in the 1960s (e.g., Freedman & Sears, 1965; Greenwald & Sakumura, 1967; Waly & Cook, 1966). It now appears that these selective effects on information seeking and memory occur only under rather limited circumstances (see Wicklund & Brehm, 1976). Consequently, these phenomena do not establish the importance of attitude as a theoretical construct. (Chap. 4 in this volume gives a more detailed review of the role of attitudes in cognitive processes, including evidence for substantial effects on cognitive processes more complex than the seeking and remembering of agreeable information.)

Attitudes Serve Various Psychic Functions

The most direct attention to the importance of attitudes was given in the *functional* analyses of Smith, Bruner, and White (1956) and Katz (1960); they proposed that attitudes serve functions designated by labels such as utilitarian, social adjustment, object appraisal, knowledge, value expression, and ego-defense. Because these functional theories generated little research, claims for functions of attitudes remain largely unsubstantiated. (The poverty of empirical support for attitude functions is only recently beginning to be addressed, with the initiation of research programs such as those described in chap. 4, 6, 12, 13, 14, and 15 in this volume.)

WHY HAS IT BEEN SO DIFFICULT TO DEMONSTRATE THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTITUDES?

Answering this question depends on understanding the relation of attitudes to behavior. Of the three answers to be suggested here, only the first encourages satisfaction with the current understanding of attitudes in relation to behavior.

Difficulty 1: Ordinary Situations Are Attitudinally Complex

In expecting attitudes to predict behavior toward their objects, researchers have often assumed that only a single attitude should be operative in the situation on which their research focused. This assumption is often implausible. LaPiere's (1934) research, which played an important role in criticism of the attitude construct, is used here to illustrate a setting complicated not only by uncertain identification of the focal attitude object, but also by multiple attitude objects beyond the one focal for the researcher.

Uncertain Identification of the Focal Object

In LaPiere's study, he and a young Chinese couple traveled widely in the United States, seeking accommodation at many hotels and restaurants while observing the hotel and restaurant proprietors' attitudes toward Chinese (assessed with a mailed questionnaire) and their behavior of providing accommodations or service to the Chinese couple. LaPiere assumed that the salient attitude object was "members of the Chinese race." However, the couple (who were described as "personable" and "charming") could also have been identified as *customers*, as *middle-class persons*, as *a young married couple*, and so forth. There is little justification for assuming that the only (or even the most) salient attitude-object identification was "members of the Chinese race."

Multiple Attitude Objects

A restaurant proprietor might be concerned that an unpleasant scene with the young Chinese couple could intrude on the meals of *other patrons* or harm the reputation of *the restaurant.* The proprietor's behavior toward the Chinese couple might therefore be as much (or more) influenced by attitudes toward those other objects (i.e., other patrons, the restaurant) as by attitudes toward the young couple. When, as in this situation, additional objects are important, attitude toward the presumably focal object should not dominate the prediction of behavior.

LaPiere's research is not an isolated example of the problems that (a) objects of behavior are difficult to identify in compact verbal labels, and (b) multiple attitude objects are potentially salient.[1] When these problems

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[1]As Dillehay (1973) and others observed, the interpretation of LaPiere's research in terms of attitude-behavior relations was problematic in other respects. His study compared, not statements of attitude, but predictions of behavior ("Will you accept members of the Chinese race as guests in your establishment?") with actual behavior of hotel and restaurant proprietors toward the Chinese couple. Furthermore, the predictions and actual behavior must often have been assessed for different persons, because of the low likelihood that the person who answered each establishment's mail was also the person who greeted potential patrons.

characterize a research situation, the attitude measured by the researcher should predict behavior only weakly, if at all. Some solutions are to limit research on attitude-behavior relations to objects that are easily identifiable verbally, and to use behavior assessments that lack multiple potential attitude objects. The research successes of Fazio (1986) and of Fishbein and Ajzen (1974) were achieved in large part through such limitations.

Importance of a Phenomenon in Relation to the Difficulty of Demonstrating It

Because strong attitude-behavior correlations are difficult to produce, it may appear that attitudes are only weakly connected to behavior. On the contrary, however, the need for well-controlled research settings to demonstrate strong attitude-behavior relations may mean only that the influence of attitudes on behavior is so pervasive that it is difficult to observe the isolated effect of a single attitude. (An example of a parallel point is the difficulty of observing a classically conditioned response in isolation; in ordinary situations, such as eating a meal, classically conditioned responses are certainly important but are not easily observed due to masking by multiple other conditioned responses.) In general, the difficulty of demonstrating a phenomenon in research is irrelevant to a conclusion about its importance; the difficulty may mean only that the phenomenon is typically embedded in an obscuring degree of complexity.

Difficulty 2: The Concept of Attitude Needs to Be Refined

The Conception of "Attitude Object"

Collectively, and for the most part also individually, attitude researchers have treated virtually any nameable or describable entity as an attitude object. One can find studies of attitudes toward (a) sensory qualities (colors, odors, textures), (b) concrete objects (animals, persons, places, foods), (c) abstract concepts (personality traits, subjects of academic study), (d) verbal statements (beliefs, opinions, policies), (e) systems of thought (aesthetic styles, ideologies), (f) actions (e.g., drinking alcohol, sexual behavior), and even (g) attitudes (e.g., an attitude toward prejudice). The conceptual tolerance represented by this breadth is surely to be encouraged in the early stages of a concept's development. However, the present breadth of the attitude concept may now be an obstacle to theoretical development. That is, the cost that is exchanged for this benefit of breadth may be a lack of precision.

The Three-Component Definition

In noting the variety of definitions that have been offered for *attitude,* previous reviewers have often been reluctant to suggest that one definition is superior to others. Accordingly, many reviewers have supported definitions that (a) permit a broad array of research operations for attitude measurement, and (b) put no apparent boundaries on the sort of entity that can be regarded as the object of an attitude (e.g., Allport, 1935; DeFleur & Westie, 1963; Greenwald, 1968b). The definition that has been most attractive to social psychologists, perhaps because of both its breadth and its ancient philosophical roots, conceives attitude as having three components—*affective, cognitive, and conative* (or behavioral).

> We here indicate that attitudes are predispositions to respond to some class of stimuli with certain classes of responses and designate the three major types of response as cognitive, affective, and behavioral. (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960, p. 3)
>
> . . . attitudes [are] enduring systems of positive or negative evaluations, emotional feelings, and pro or con action tendencies with respect to social objects. (Krech, Crutchfield, & Ballachey, 1962, p. 139)

The three-component definition has achieved widespread adoption and almost no criticism. The one active line of criticism has questioned the nature of relationships among the three hypothesized components (cf. Breckler, 1984; Kothandapani, 1971; Ostrom, 1969). This gentle treatment notwithstanding, a harsh evaluation of the three-component definition may be warranted—it appears to have bred confusions that have weakened the attitude construct. Chief among these confusions is that associated with investigations of attitude-behavior relationships. (See Zanna & Rempel, in press, for a similar conclusion about the three-component definition.)

Consider that the following four types of operations involving action in relation to an attitude object can serve equally *either* to measure the conative (behavioral) component of an attitude *or* to measure behavior that is presumably under the control of that attitude component: (a) observations of overt action, (b) verbal self-report of past action, (c) self-report of intentions regarding action, and (d) endorsement of statements about hypothetical actions. With this range of operations, a single research investigation can serve to test (a) the attitude-behavior relationship, (b) relations of the conative to other attitude components, or (c) the relation between behavior and the conative component of attitude. By affording this multiplicity of interpretations, the three-component definition appears to permit too broad an array of interpretations for a given set of data. Additionally, the three-component definition implicitly promotes the (below

questioned) supposition that the chief behavioral impact of an attitude should be on behavior *toward* the attitude's object. (Further discussion and critique of the three-component definition is found in chap. 11 and 17 in this volume. Alternative definitions of attitude are suggested in several of this volume's chapters, including the present author's in chap. 17.)

Difficulty 3: The Understanding of Attitude Functions Is Underdeveloped

Through more than 50 years of social psychological study of attitudes, it has been implicitly assumed that the behavioral consequences of an attitude should be most apparent on measures of behavior *toward* the attitude's object. This assumption may be most apparent in critiques of the attitude concept (especially that of Wicker, 1969) that have been based on the empirical weakness of relationships between measured attitude and observed behavior toward the object. However, *there is no compelling theoretical reason to choose behavior toward the attitude object as the only, or even the most important, type of action that should be related to an attitude.* Furthermore, although it has not commonly been taken to the credit of the attitude construct, it is well established that attitudes are powerfully related to behavior that does *not* directly involve the attitude object.

As noted by McGuire (see chap. 3 in this volume), in well-done studies of relations between general measures of attitude and measures of behavior *toward* the attitude object, the proportion of behavior variance predicted by attitude measures is only about 10%. In striking contrast, attitude measures are capable of predicting nearer to 50% of the variance in selected behaviors that do not directly involve the attitude's object. For example, attitude predicts approximately 50% of the variance in the agreement–disagreement dimension of responses to attitude-related persuasive communications (e.g., Greenwald, 1968a; Petty, Ostrom, & Brock, 1981); and the similarity of attitudes between a person and a stranger predicts about 40% of the variance in interpersonal attraction toward the stranger (e.g., Byrne, 1969; Clore & Baldridge, 1968).

Behavior Toward One Object Can Be Controlled by Attitude Toward Another—Illustration

Consider the attitude of one member of a family toward another. Observing just the regular interaction between spouses, or between parents and their children, one might find little in the daily routine to indicate the expected highly positive attitude. Instead, one might observe criticisms, protests, and arguments. However, the spouse/parent's spending 8 or more

hours per day at a disliked job may be explainable only in terms of the positive attitudes toward the family members who are supported by the resulting income. Similarly, if one considers the behavior at the disliked job only in terms of the attitude toward the job, again it would appear that attitude and behavior are inconsistent. This is a situation in which the attitude toward each object is *inconsistent* with the behavior toward that object, but nevertheless the attitude toward one object (family) fully explains the behavior toward another (job).

A negative attitude toward members of a racial group (prejudice) may explain little in the way of behavior toward persons of that race—with whom the prejudiced person may have little or no contact. However, it can explain much behavior that occurs within groups of persons who share the prejudice or who perceive themselves collectively to be targets of the prejudice.

An attitude against nuclear power may be most apparent in conversations (with friends or acquaintances) that touch on nuclear power, in protest directed against persons who advocate nuclear power or corporations that use nuclear power, or in contributions to organizations that oppose nuclear power. Here the significant behavior is toward some object other than the attitude object (which in this case is an abstract concept).

These examples stand as thought experiments in support of the proposition that an attitude toward one object is often more significant in controlling behavior toward other objects than toward its own object. This major point has not yet been incorporated into theoretical analyses of attitude functions.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONCEPT OF ATTITUDE

The first answer to the question, "Why has it been so difficult to demonstrate the importance of attitudes?" attributed the difficulty to the attitudinal complexity of ordinary situations, justifying a business-as-usual approach to attitude research. In contrast, the second and third answers identified conceptual problems that encourage efforts to strengthen theoretical analyses of attitude structure and function. Each of the chapters in this volume presents current programs by researchers who have not been content with the business-as-usual approach. Their research constitutes the leading wave of a revolution in attitude theory. This revolution can be expected to complete the already-begun overthrow of the three-component definition, and to establish effective methods for investigating attitude functions. The concluding chapter of this volume continues the present discussion and attempts to anticipate the next generation of conceptions of attitude structure and function.

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Why Attitudes are Important:
Defining Attitude and Attitude Theory 20 Years Later

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In all honesty we must confess that we do not think the time is ripe to be theoretically solemn about the definition of an attitude. Definitions are matters of convenience, and they attain high status only in the advanced stages of a science. In time, greater precision will come. (Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956, p. 34)

Chapter 1 argued that the importance of attitudes has been obscured in recent years by an insufficiently focused definition, and by flawed implicit assumptions about attitude-behavior relations. The present chapter seeks a solution to these problems by defining attitude in complementary relation to other major motivational constructs and by integrating existing analyses of attitude functions in terms of a single major function.

ATTITUDE STRUCTURE: LEVELS OF REPRESENTATION/MOTIVATION

A partial listing of psychology's motivational concepts includes (alphabetically) *affect, attitude, drive, emotion, incentive, need, secondary reinforcement,* and *value.* For the most part, these (and other) motivational terms stand in poorly defined relation to one another, and are free to occupy relatively unbounded domains. The present analysis of attitude structure

starts by attempting to define the position of attitude more precisely in relation to the broader set of motivational constructs.

Just as in its motivational domain, in psychology's cognitive domain there exists a diverse array of theoretical constructs, among which relationships have not been well described. The author has recently proposed that relations among these cognitive (mental representation) concepts can be interpreted in terms of *levels of representation* (Greenwald, 1987). In a levels-of-representation (LOR) system, representational units of each of several systems (levels) are constructed from units of an immediately subordinate, but qualitatively distinct, system of representations. Each level succeeds in representing properties of the environment that are not captured by lower levels (i.e., these are emergent properties of the multilevel system).

A specific LOR theory on which Greenwald (1987) focused described five representational levels: features, objects, categories, propositions, and schemata. (This theory was identified as LOR_{h5}—"h" for human and "5" for its number of levels.) In LOR_{h5} the most elementary level, *features*, consists of primitive sensory qualities such as brightness, loudness, warmth, and sharpness. Combinations of features that are capable of becoming figural constitute *objects*, the second level. A class membership relation permits objects to be grouped into units of the third level, *categories*. Syntactic relations among abstract category types (such as action, actor, instrument, and target) produce units of the fourth level, *propositions*. The units of the fifth and highest level, *schemata*, are rule-governed groupings of propositions, such as narrative sequences or logical proofs. The present approach to defining attitude starts by associating motivational terms with each of these five levels of representation. These associations are discoverable by first noting variations in motivational properties of the units at each level.

At the level of sensory *features*, one can distinguish pleasant features (warm temperature, soft texture, quiet sound, moderate illumination) from painful ones (cold temperature, shrill sound, rough texture, glaring light). At the level of *objects* one can identify liked objects (an ice cream cone, a 20-dollar bill) and disliked ones (a rotten apple, a hand grenade). People recognize both evaluatively positive *categories* (such as food or money) and evaluatively negative ones (such as garbage or weapons). *Propositions* describe actions and states that range from desirable to undesirable. The units of LOR_{h5}'s highest level, *schemata*, include (among other subtypes) stories, persuasive arguments, mathematical proofs, and scientific theories; for each of these types of schemata, there are readily noticeable evaluative variations, identified by terms such as aesthetic quality of prose, rhetorical excellence of persuasion, parsimony of proofs, and validity of theories. Table 17.1 suggests relationships of motivational terms to LOR_{h5}'s levels.[1]

TABLE 17.1
Relations Among Levels of Representation
and Motivational Constructs

Level	Motivational Terms
Feature	affect, appetite, drive, feeling
Object	*attitude, emotion,* incentive
Category	*attitude, value*
Proposition	*attitude,* belief, intention, opinion, *value*
Schema	*attitude, emotion,* ideology, justification (moral reasoning), motive, plan, script

Note: Italicized terms appear at two or more levels.

The breadth of the current concept of attitude is indicated by its placement at four of Table 17.1's five levels. The problems with such broad usage can be illustrated with an example in which these multiple interpretations are applied simultaneously. Consider a professor's motivational orientation toward a new graduate student. Should *attitude* refer to the professor's (a) (object-level) liking response to the particular student, (b) (category-level) evaluations that relate to the student (e.g., students, women, Chinese persons, etc.), (c) (proposition-level) intentions that relate to students (e.g., *Don't judge a book by its cover, Be encouraging but reserved),* or to women or to Chinese persons, or (d) (schema-level) complexes of beliefs, policies, and evaluation that relate to students, etc.?

By permitting several interpretations simultaneously, the current broad conception of attitude precludes precise reference; it obliges attitude to serve only as a general motivational term. Two possible solutions to this problem are: (a) to adopt a more restrictive use of attitude, or (b) to develop new labels for level-of-motivation distinctions that are not ade-

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[1]Previous hierarchical conceptions of relations among motivational constructs have rarely sought to encompass more than two of Table 17.1's five levels. Examples include the primary-secondary process distinction in psychoanalytic theory (Freud, 1900/1953), the distinction between innate (primary) and acquired (secondary) drives in learning-behavior theory (e.g., Miller, 1951), the distinction between first and second signaling systems by Pavlov (1955), and the relation between evaluation of subject-verb-object propositions and evaluations of their category-level components (e.g., Gollob, 1974; Insko, 1981; Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955; Wyer, 1974). The social behaviorist treatment of motivation by Staats (1968) is unusually differentiated in encompassing three levels (which approximate the first three of Table 17.1's five levels). Vallacher and Wegner's (1985; 1987) recent analysis of *action identification* describes variations in the perceived control of behavior, ranging from abstract, high levels (e.g., in terms of long-term goals) to lower, more concrete levels (e.g., in terms of specific movements). However, their theory does not commit itself to specific identities of levels, nor does it take a position on the number of distinct levels.

quately captured by existing terms. However, even if it is clear that one of these solutions is desirable, either would be strongly opposed by the inertia of long-established usages. Accordingly, the present treatment attempts a compromise that is in part a narrowing of the usage of attitude and in part a proposal to make distinctions (among types of attitudes) that can permit increased precision of usage while preserving much of the term's present breadth.

In the present treatment, attitude is defined as the *affect associated with a mental object*. This is both (a) a substantial retreat to the past (the definition is virtually identical to Thurstone's [1931], "Attitude is the affect for or against a psychological object") and (b) a narrowing relative to recently popular definitions that have permitted attitudes to be proposition- or schema-level entities. (In particular, this definition excludes the 3-component interpretation of attitude, which is a schema-level conception.)

The present definition's reference to the object of attitude as a *mental object* requires clarification to avoid confusion with the more restricted notion of object as one of LOR_{hs}'s five levels of representation. A mental object is a representation at any of LOR_{hs}'s four highest levels (object, category, proposition, or schema). In contrast, object (*qua* level) in LOR_{hs} designates an entity that is conceived as being located in physical space and time. These two uses of "object" will be kept distinct by referring to *mental object* or *attitude object* for the broader conception, and *ordinary object* or *spatiotemporal object* or *object* (without qualifier) for the narrower one. Table 17.2 gives examples of attitude objects at each of LOR_{hs}'s four highest representational levels.

TABLE 17.2
Examples of Mental (Attitude) Objects at LOR_{hs}'s Object, Category, Proposition, and Schema Levels of Representation

Level	Examples
Object[a]	a friend, an automobile, an insect, a poison ivy plant
Category	Eskimos, paintings, snakes, Christmas trees
Proposition	Terrorists hijacking airplanes, citizens paying income tax, drinking to become intoxicated, using contraceptive devices
Schema	Psychoanalytic theory, the game of baseball, The 10 Commandments, a career in medicine

[a]The listed objects should be interpreted as specific individuals (e.g., the poison ivy plant on which one is about to sit).

The distinctions among levels of attitude objects in Table 17.2 can be used to avoid confusions of the sort that were noted in chapter 1's discussion of LaPiere's (1934) research. The young couple who accompanied LaPiere can be construed as attitude objects (a) in their identities as individual persons, or (b) as the intersection of several categories, or (c) as constituents of various propositions, and so forth. Confusion results if it is not clear that just one of these levels of mental object is intended in any context.

This analysis has used the theory of levels of representation in two ways. First, LOR_{hs} was used in noting that attitude has sometimes been defined as having the structure of a high-level representation such as a proposition or schema. (The three-component definition, for example, is a schema structure.) The presently preferred definition interprets attitude as an affective associate of a mental representation, a compound structure that links a mental object at one of the four higher levels with lowest (feature-)level affective qualities. Second, LOR_{hs} was used to make distinctions within the broad class of mental representations that can be attitude objects. Attitude objects can be representations at any of the four highest levels of LOR_{hs}.

Implications for Attitude Research

If the author were reading rather than writing this chapter, his reaction to the proposal just made would be: Why bother? Why not maintain the present broad conception of *attitude* as is? What is to be gained by introducing distinctions that others haven't seen fit to make previously? or (borrowing from the chapter-opening quote from Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956) Why is it now the time to become "theoretically solemn" by introducing "greater precision"? The answer can equally be taken from the Smith, Bruner, and White quote—from their observation that "Definitions are matters of convenience." The broad definition of attitude appears to have become inconvenient, as reflected in the difficulty of both (a) producing a satisfying account of the relationship of attitudes to behavior and (b) reaching consensus on the functions of attitudes. (See the introductory discussions of these points in chap. 1.)

The major research-procedural recommendation of the present analysis concerns the necessity for care in specifying the attitude object in attitude measurement; the attitude object should be presented so as to target the single representational level (i.e., [ordinary] object, category, proposition, or schema) that is most appropriate for the research objectives. For example, in measuring an attitude toward snakes as a category, one should present the respondent with a photograph of a prototypical snake, or with the category name "snake" rather than presenting a live (ordinary object) snake. (Breckler, 1984, found that these variations in presenting the attitude

object produced substantial variations in correlations of attitudes with behavioral intentions and with other conceptually linked measures.)

ATTITUDE FUNCTION: MOTIVATIONAL ORIENTATION TO MENTAL OBJECTS

In the two most definitive treatments of attitude functions, Smith et al. (1956) named three attitude functions (*object appraisal, social adjustment,* and *externalization*) and Katz (1960) described four (*adjustive,*[2] *ego-defensive, value-expressive* and *knowledge*). In contrast with those treatments, the present analysis interprets attitudes as having one major function, which is to set an evaluative level with which one's behavior in relation to the attitude object should be consistent—an *object appraisal* function.

The Object Appraisal Function

Smith et al. (1956) described the object appraisal function as follows: "The holding of an attitude provides a ready aid in 'sizing up' objects and events in the environment from the point of view of one's major interests and going concerns. . . . [T]he person is saved the energy-consuming and sometimes painful process of figuring out *de novo* how he shall relate himself to it" (p. 41). These two sentences manage to incorporate the major features of two of Katz's (1960) four functions: the adjustive function (one "develops favorable attitudes toward the objects . . . associated with satisfactions of . . . needs" [p. 171]) and the knowledge function (providing "standards or frames of reference for understanding [the] world" [p. 175]).

The present conception of the object appraisal function is thus a synthesis of Smith, Bruner, and White's function of that name with Katz's adjustive and knowledge functions. The object appraisal function is of great importance in part because many of the objects in our environments are potentially *instrumental* to our adjustment. For the infant, the nipple that delivers milk may be the first instrumental object, and also the object of the first positive attitude. (The mother who delivers the nipple may become a positive attitude object only somewhat later.)

Quite apart from the instrumentality of objects, there is a noticeable pressure to "take sides" in many situations by favoring one object over others. This pressure to express preference is apparently strong enough so that happenstance spectators may find themselves preferring unknown Team A over unknown Team B when observing an athletic competition, and

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[2]Katz used *utilitarian* and *instrumental* as alternative designations for the adjustive function.

drama audience members routinely find themselves liking some characters and disliking others. (Perhaps a significant attraction of drama and literature is the opportunity to practice forming attitudes that will be tested only vicariously, in terms of target characters' successes and failures as the drama unfolds.) Attitudes formed toward novel objects when one is a passive spectator obviously do not depend on pressures to act. Their formation suggests that the value of being ready with appraisals of objects is sufficient that we form attitudes even when their usefulness is not directly apparent (cf. Jones & Gerard's [1967] discussion of the value of an "unequivocal behavioral orientation"). Furthermore, we appear to be sufficiently skilled at producing attitudes toward novel objects that the process is mentally effortless.

Functions of Attitudes Versus Functions of Their Objects

It is useful to maintain a distinction between functions of the object and those of the attitude. The usefulness of this distinction is obvious only in the case of objects that are harmful. Such an object (for example, a stinging insect) has *negative* instrumental value, but the negative attitude toward the object has *positive* instrumental value (protecting the person from getting stung). It is tempting to use the *instrumental* or *utilitarian* label for this major function of attitudes, as suggested by Katz (1960). However, these labels are too easily confused with the object's instrumental or utilitarian function, a problem avoided by using instead Smith, Bruner, & White's *object appraisal* label.

Appraisal of the Self

As already noted, the object appraisal function encompasses three of the total of seven functions that were named in Smith, Bruner, and White's (1956) and Katz's (1960) analyses of attitude functions (Smith et al.'s object appraisal function and Katz's adjustment and knowledge functions). The remaining four functions can also be interpreted in terms of object appraisal in that they depend on the importance of the appraisal of a single mental object, the self (cf. discussions of the self as an attitude object by Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984; Rosenberg, 1965; Sherif & Cantril, 1947). Katz's *ego-defensive* function ("Many of our attitudes have the function of defending our self-image") and Smith, Bruner, and White's similarly conceived *externalization* function directly acknowledge the importance of the self as an object of appraisal. The remaining two functions, Smith, Bruner, and White's *social adjustment* function and Katz's *value-expressive* function can be interpreted as reflecting strategies for establishing or maintaining a favorable attitude toward the self.

Three Facets of the Self

In a recent analysis, Greenwald and Breckler (1985; see also Breckler & Greenwald, 1986; Greenwald, 1982) identified three classes of strategies for establishing and maintaining self-esteem, which they labeled *ego tasks* of public, private, and collective facets of the self. The public self's strategy is to establish self-worth by earning favorable evaluations from important others (a public audience); the private self achieves self-worth by meeting or exceeding internalized evaluative standards (the approval of an internal, private audience); and the collective self establishes self-worth by seeking to attain the goals of reference groups (a collective audience). Attitudes toward objects other than the self readily participate in these strategies for establishing and maintaining self regard.

When the *public facet* is emphasized, the person should display attitudes that are agreeable to significant others; these attitudes can be instrumental in earning the approval of significant others and, via this public-self strategy, self-regard. This strategy of the public self corresponds to Smith, Bruner, and White's *social adjustment* function ("[O]ne will more readily and forthrightly express acceptable attitudes while inhibiting or modulating the expression of less approved ones" [pp. 41–42]).

The *private facet* of the self earns self-regard by meeting or exceeding internalized criteria of success. Consistency within one's repertory of object appraisals is such a criterion, and consistency-maintenance is a private-self strategy. By this analysis, Katz's (1960) *value-expressive* function ("the individual derives satisfactions from expressing attitudes appropriate to his personal values" [p. 170]) is a manifestation of the private facet of the self.

The *collective facet* of the self establishes self-worth by helping to achieve the goals of important reference groups (family, church, profession, etc.). An obvious strategy toward that end is to value objects that are identified with one's reference groups. Attitudes that are shaped by this strategy may be said to serve a *group solidarity* or *social identification* function. (This last is not one that appears in the Smith, Bruner, and White or Katz lists; in chap. 12 in this volume, however, Shavitt describes such a social identification function.)

Self-appraisal, Attitude Functions, and Social Influence Processes

Insko (1967) rightly identified Kelman's (1961) analysis of the influence processes of compliance, internalization, and identification as an original analysis of attitude functions. The Greenwald-Breckler three-strategy ego-task analysis converges with Kelman's analysis. As described by Kelman, *compliance* is yielding to influence in the presence of powerful others, which corresponds to the public self's strategy for earning approval; *internalization* is the acceptance of influence that is consistent with es-

tablished values, corresponding to the private self's cognitive consistency strategy; and *identification*, the acceptance of influence that comes from admired others, corresponds to the collective self's strategy of adopting reference-group attitudes.

WHY ATTITUDES ARE IMPORTANT

Chapter 1 raised the question of the attitude concept's importance in social psychology, and stated a criterion for establishing that attitudes are important. There must be some important social behaviors that cannot be explained without appealing to attitudes. It remains to determine whether the present treatment of attitude structure and function has provided a basis for making the importance of attitudes compellingly apparent.

Summary

The preliminary analysis given in Chapter 1 identified three correctible sources of interference with many previous attempts to describe relationships of attitudes to social behavior. These are:

1. *The attitude object may be inappropriately identified.* Studies of behavior directed at objects (such as a specific person) have often attempted to predict the object-directed behavior from measures of attitude toward just one of several categories into which the object falls (e.g., a racial group). This problem is related to one described in previous analyses as a difference between attitude and behavior measures in their *level of specificity* (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

2. *Behavior may be under the control of attitudes toward objects other than that on which the research is focused.* Attitude objects can be arrayed in a hierarchy of importance, with the self and persons on whom one is dependent often being at or near the top. In a research setting that focuses on attitude and behavior toward an unimportant object, the attempt to demonstrate attitude-behavior relations is likely to be undermined by the relevance of some more important object. As an example, the subject may find it more important to act on the self-attitude (e.g., by doing what would earn the experimenter's approval) than to act on the attitude toward some less important object that is the ostensible focus of study.

3. *The conception of the attitude-behavior relation is intrinsically confused by the widely advocated three-component definition of attitude.* When the three-component definition is used, a set of data that includes measures of attitude and behavior can be interpreted interchangeably as assessing (a) the attitude-behavior relationship, (b) relations of the be-

havioral (conative) attitude component to other attitude components, or (c) the relation between behavior and the conative attitude component. Such theoretical ambiguity undermines the achievement of consensus on conceptual analysis.

The present chapter sought to overcome these recurrent difficulties through its formulations of attitude structure and function. Attitude was defined as the association of a mental representation (i.e., an object, category, proposition, or schema) with affect, and attitude function was analyzed in terms of a single major function, object appraisal (a synthesis of Smith, Bruner, & White's [1956] function of that name and Katz's [1960] adjustive and knowledge functions). The implications of this analysis can be summarized as a set of three propositions that specify conditions under which attitudes play a powerful role in determining social behavior.

1. *Attitude toward the self (self-esteem) is a powerful determinant of social behavior.* The self is for many people the most important attitude object. Behavior that is interpreted in terms of evaluation apprehension and impression management is esteem-related, and self-esteem has sometimes been credited as the effective basis for the broad range of phenomena studied in investigations of cognitive dissonance (see Aronson, 1969; Greenwald & Ronis, 1978). Additionally, the powerful phenomena of attraction to similar others (Byrne, 1969) or repulsion from dissimilar others (Rosenbaum, 1986) can be understood in terms of the self-esteem implications of these responses.

2. *Attitude is a powerful determinant of evaluative responses to the source and content of influence attempts.* The person with a favorable attitude toward some mental object can be counted on to respond favorably to statements that place that object in a favorable light, or to oppose communications that evaluate the object negatively. The sources of such communications will be evaluated in correspondingly positive or negative fashion.

3. *Attitude is a powerful determinant of behavior in relation to novel (ordinary) objects with which the person has had direct experience.* Fazio and Zanna (1981) demonstrated that direct experience increases the strength of prediction of behavior from measures of attitude toward an object. As noted in discussing the object appraisal function, people are adept at rapidly forming attitudes toward unfamiliar objects. However, it is rare for attitude researchers to confront subjects with novel objects. (The subject in the typical attitude investigation inhabits a largely abstract world.) Consequently, the rapid development and attachment of attitudes to novel (ordinary) objects may be the most understudied aspect of attitudes.

Attitude Theory: Past, Present, and Future

Twenty years ago, there was a broad acceptance of a definition of attitude that was stated in terms of the venerable partition of mental activity into affection, conation, and cognition. Presently, this three-component definition of attitude is being abandoned. Twenty years ago, attitude theory was strongly dominated by cognitive consistency principles that were associated with the concepts of balance, congruity, and dissonance. Presently, the influence of consistency theories has been replaced with analyses of the role of the self in cognition and behavior. Twenty years ago, it was regarded as evident that attitude was social psychology's most important theoretical construct. Presently, the importance of attitudes is questioned.

These observations could suggest that the attitude construct is in its twilight. However, a decidedly optimistic view of the attitude construct comes from considering its position in the evolution of psychological theory of motivation. In the behaviorist and learning theory years of psychology (from the 1920s to the 1960s), theories of human motivation focused on the role of *physical stimuli* (such as electric shock, sexual contact, hunger contractions, intracranial electrical stimulation, and food taste) in directing and energizing behavior. During those same years, social psychologists were gradually evolving the construct of attitude as a conception of motivation in relation to *mental objects.*

The physical stimuli studied by learning-behavior theorists correspond to the lowest (feature) level of a representational system such as the five-level system (LOR_{h5}) used in the present analysis. In contrast, the motivational functioning of attitudes depends on the representational ability needed to cognize mental objects and to comprehend such objects' instrumentality in achieving desired goals. Attitude is thus the central theoretical construct for describing the motivational significance of mental objects.

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