Attitude

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

Definitions of attitude

An attitude can be defined as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, event, activities, ideas, or just about anything in your environment (Zimbardo et al., 1999) In the opinion of Bain (1927), an attitude is "the relatively stable over behavior of a person which affects his status." "Attitudes which are common to a group are thus social attitudes or `values' in the Thomasonian sense. The attitude is the status-fixing behavior. This differentiates it from habit and vegetative processes as such, and totally ignores the hypothetical 'subjective states' which have formerly been emphasized.

North (1932) has defined attitude as "the totality of those states that lead to or point toward some particular activity of the organism. The attitude is, therefore, the dynamic element in human behavior, the motive for activity." For Lumley (1928) an attitude is "a susceptibility to certain kinds of stimuli and readiness to respond repeatedly in a given way—which are possible toward our world and the parts of it which impinge upon us." Attitudes are judgments. They develop on the ABC model (affect, behavior, and cognition).[1] The *affective* response is an emotional response that expresses an individual's degree of preference for an entity. The *behavioral* intention is a verbal indication or typical behavioral tendency of an individual. The *cognitive* response is a cognitive evaluation of the entity that constitutes an individual's beliefs about the object.[*citation needed*] Most attitudes are the result of either direct experience or observational learning from the environment.

Making Social Decisions in Society

"Throughout this complicated modern life, we adapt our mode of living according to the social influences. A scientific attempt named game theory was utilized for the study of decision making in our daily social lives. This was thoroughly examined in specialized neurological labs. The above emphasizes the effect of various social interactions and the role of the brain in making decisions".[2]

Attitude formation

Unlike personality, attitudes are expected to change as a function of experience. Tesser (1993) has argued that hereditary variables may affect attitudes - but believes that they may do so indirectly. For example, consistency theories, which imply that we must be consistent in our beliefs and values. The most famous example of such a theory is Dissonance-reduction theory, associated with Leon Festinger, although there are others, such as the balance theory.

Attitude change

Attitudes can be changed through persuasion and we should understand attitude change as a response to communication. Experimental research into the factors that can affect the persuasiveness of a message include

1. Target Characteristics: These are characteristics that refer to the person who receives and processes a message. One such trait is intelligence - it seems that more intelligent people

are less easily persuaded by one-sided messages. Another variable that has been studied in this category is self-esteem. Although it is sometimes thought that those higher in self-esteem are less easily persuaded, there is some evidence that the relationship between self-esteem and persuasibility is actually curvilinear, with people of moderate self-esteem being more easily persuaded than both those of high and low self-esteem levels (Rhodes & Woods, 1992). The mind frame and mood of the target also plays a role in this process.

2. Source Characteristics: The major source characteristics are expertise, trustworthiness and interpersonal attraction or attractiveness. The credibility of a perceived message has been found to be a key variable here; if one reads a report about health and believes it came from a professional medical journal, one may be more easily persuaded than if one believes it is from a popular newspaper. Some psychologists have debated whether this is a long-lasting effect and Hovland and Weiss (1951) found the effect of telling people that a message came from a credible source disappeared after several weeks (the so-called "sleeper effect"). Whether there is a sleeper effect is controversial. Perceived wisdom is that if people are informed of the source of a message before hearing it, there is less likelihood of a sleeper effect than if they are told a message and then told its source.

3. Message Characteristics: The nature of the message plays a role in persuasion. Sometimes presenting both sides of a story is useful to help change attitudes.

Cognitive Routes: A message can appeal to an individual's cognitive evaluation to help change an attitude. In the *central route* to persuasion the individual is presented with the data and motivated to evaluate the data and arrive at an attitude changing conclusion. In the *peripheral route* to attitude change, the individual is encouraged to not look at the content but at the source. This is commonly seen in modern advertisements that feature celebrities. In some cases, physician, doctors or experts are used. In other cases film stars are used for their attractiveness.

Emotion and attitude change

Emotion is a common component in persuasion, social influence, and attitude change. Much of attitude research emphasized the importance of affective or emotion components. Emotion works hand-in-hand with the cognitive process, or the way we think, about an issue or situation. Emotional appeals are commonly found in advertising, health campaigns and political messages. Recent examples include no-smoking health campaigns and political campaign advertising emphasizing the fear of terrorism. Attitudes and attitude objects are functions of cognitive, affective and conative components. Attitudes are part of the brain's associative networks, the spider-like structures residing in long term memory that consist of affective and cognitive nodes.

By activating an affective or emotion node, attitude change may be possible, though affective and cognitive components tend to be intertwined. In primarily affective networks, it is more difficult to produce cognitive counterarguments in the resistance to persuasion and attitude change.

Affective forecasting, otherwise known as intuition or the prediction of emotion, also impacts attitude change. Research suggests that predicting emotions is an important component of decision making, in addition to the cognitive processes. How we feel about an outcome may override purely cognitive rationales.

In terms of research methodology, the challenge for researchers is measuring emotion and subsequent impacts on attitude. Since we cannot see into the brain, various models and measurement tools have been constructed to obtain emotion and attitude information. Measures may include the use of physiological cues like facial expressions, vocal changes, and other body rate measures. For instance, fear is associated with raised eyebrows, increased heart rate and increase body tension (Dillard, 1994). Other methods include concept or network mapping, and using primes or word cues.

Components of emotion appeals

Any discrete emotion can be used in a persuasive appeal; this may include jealousy, disgust, indignation, fear, blue, disturbed, haunted,and anger. Fear is one of the most studied emotional appeals in communication and social influence research.

Important consequences of fear appeals and other emotion appeals include the possibility of reactance which may lead to either message rejections or source rejection and the absence of attitude change. As the EPPM suggests, there is an optimal emotion level in motivating attitude change. If there is not enough motivation, an attitude will not change; if the emotional appeal is overdone, the motivation can be paralyzed thereby preventing attitude change.

Emotions perceived as negative or containing threat are often studied more than perceived positive emotions like humor. Though the inner-workings of humor are not agreed upon, humor appeals may work by creating incongruities in the mind. Recent research has looked at the impact of humor on the processing of political messages. While evidence is inconclusive, there appears to be potential for targeted attitude change is receivers with low political message involvement.

Important factors that influence the impact of emotion appeals include self efficacy, attitude accessibility, issue involvement, and message/source features. Self efficacy is a perception of one's own human agency; in other words, it is the perception of our own ability to deal with a situation. It is an important variable in emotion appeal messages because it dictates a person's ability to deal with both the emotion and the situation. For example, if a person is not self-efficacious about their ability to impact the global environment, they are not likely to change their attitude or behavior about global warming.

Dillard (1994) suggests that message features such as source non-verbal communication, message content, and receiver differences can impact the emotion impact of fear appeals. The characteristics of a message are important because one message can elicit different levels of emotion for different people. Thus, in terms of emotion appeals messages, one size does not fit all.

Attitude accessibility refers to the activation of an attitude from memory in other words, how readily available is an attitude about an object, issue, or situation. Issue involvement is the relevance and salience of an issue or situation to an individual. Issue involvement has been correlated with both attitude access and attitude strength. Past studies conclude accessible attitudes are more resistant to change

Implicit and explicit attitudes

There is also considerable research on implicit attitudes, which are generally unacknowledged or outside of awareness, but have effects that are measurable through sophisticated methods using people's response times to stimuli. Implicit and explicit attitudes seem to affect people's behavior, though in different ways. They tend not to be strongly associated with each other, although in some cases they are. The relationship between them is poorly understood.

Jung's definition

Attitude is one of Jung's 57 definitions in Chapter XI of *Psychological Types*. Jung's definition of attitude is a "readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way" (Jung, [1921] 1971:par. 687). Attitudes very often come in pairs, one conscious and the other unconscious. Within this broad definition Jung defines several attitudes.

The main (but not only) attitude dualities that Jung defines are the following.

- Consciousness and the unconscious. The "presence of two attitudes is extremely frequent, one conscious and the other unconscious. This means that consciousness has a constellation of contents different from that of the unconscious, a duality particularly evident in neurosis" (Jung, [1921] 1971: par. 687).
- Extraversion and introversion. This pair is so elementary to Jung's theory of types that he labeled them the "attitude-types".
- Rational and irrational attitudes. "I conceive reason as an attitude" (Jung, [1921] 1971: par. 785).
- The rational attitude subdivides into the thinking and feeling psychological functions, each with its attitude.
- The irrational attitude subdivides into the sensing and intuition psychological functions, each with its attitude. "There is thus a typical thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuitive attitude" (Jung, [1921] 1971: par. 691).
- Individual and social attitudes. Many of the latter are "isms".

In addition, Jung discusses the abstract attitude. "When I take an abstract attitude..." (Jung, [1921] 1971: par. 679). Abstraction is contrasted with concretism. "CONCRETISM. By this I mean a peculiarity of thinking and feeling which is the antithesis of abstraction" (Jung, [1921] 1971: par. 696). For example: "I hate his attitude for being Sarcastic."

MBTI definition

The MBTI write-ups limit the use of "attitude" to the extraversion-introversion (EI) and judging-perceiving (JP) indexes.

The JP index is sometimes referred to as an orientation to the outer world and sometimes JP is classified as an "attitude." In Jungian terminology the term *attitude* is restricted to EI. In MBTI terminology *attitude* can include EI and also JP. (Myers, 1985:293 note 7).

The above MBTI Manual state ment, is restricted to EI," is directly contradicted by Jung's statement above that there is "a typical thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuitive attitude" and by his other uses of the term "attitude". Regardless of whether the MBTI simplification (or oversimplification) of Jung can be attributed to Myers, *Gifts Differing* refers only to the "EI preference", consistently avoiding the label "attitude". Regarding the JP index, in *Gifts Differing* Myers does use the terms "the *perceptive* attitude and the *judging* attitude" (Myers, 1980:8). The JP index corresponds to the irrational and rational attitudes Jung describes, except that the MBTI focuses on the preferred orientation in the outer world in order to identify the function hierarchy. To be consistent with Jung, it can be noted that a rational extraverted preference is accompanied by an irrational introverted preference. By Mr. M Amir Shehzad