

INFLUENCE

CHAPTER 3

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

Julie: Hi, Mary. Is this your new dog? She is so cute! How old is she?

Mary: Thanks. Her name is Tillie. She's 7 weeks old. I got her yesterday from the shelter. She was abandoned. Someone just dumped her off on the side of the road.

Julie: That's terrible! People are so irresponsible with their pets. People get a puppy, don't get it neutered, and then they have puppies they don't want and can't keep. If people would just have their pets neutered, the world would be a better place!

Mary: I agree completely! Everyone except for breeders should neuter their pet. It's the only responsible thing to do.

Julie: I agree! Well, have fun with Tillie! I'll see you later.

One year later:

Mary: Hi, Julie. How are you? Would you like to get another dog?

Julie: Not really. Charlie and Lamar are all I can handle. Why?

Mary: Tillie had puppies last month, and I'm trying to find homes for them. I'm going to have to take them to the shelter if I can't find homes for them soon.

In the previous chapter, we said that attitudes are related to behaviors; however, the scenario depicted above in Julie and Mary's conversation is not all that unusual. Here, Mary expressed an attitude toward the need to neuter pets, but she did not act on that attitude. In some situations, attitudes lead to behavior; yet in other situations, people seem to act in ways that show no relationship between attitudes and behavior.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- EXPLAIN HOW THE MEASUREMENT OF ATTITUDES CAN INFLUENCE HOW WELL ATTITUDES PREDICT BEHAVIOR.
- DESCRIBE ATTITUDE FORMATION FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR RELATIONSHIP.
- EXPLAIN HOW ATTITUDE ACCESSIBILITY AND RELEVANCE AFFECT THE ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR RELATIONSHIP.
- EXPLAIN HOW INDIVIDUAL AND SITUATIONAL FACTORS AFFECT THE ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR RELATIONSHIP.

In this chapter, we discuss factors that determine when attitudes are good predictors of behavior, as well as additional factors that influence behavior. As persuaders we are often interested in influencing other people's behavior as well as their attitudes and beliefs. To do that successfully, we need to understand behavior and the factors that influence it.

DO ATTITUDES INFLUENCE BEHAVIOR?

It makes sense that attitudes should guide behavior. Humans are intelligent creatures, and we expect reasons to exist for our behavior. Most people assume that attitudes influence behavior. For example, if someone speaks favorably about a presidential candidate, we expect him or her to vote for that candidate. Scholars are in the business of challenging assumptions, so it wasn't long before this assumption was tested. In the early 1930s, Richard LaPiere conducted one of the more famous studies. LaPiere traveled with a Chinese couple around the United States to see whether they would be accepted as guests at hotels, restaurants, and auto-camps. (During the 1930s in the United States, there was considerable bias against people from China.) They visited 251 establishments and only once were they refused service. Six months after visiting each establishment LaPiere (1934) sent a questionnaire to the proprietor asking "Will you accept members of the Chinese race as guests in your establishment?" (p. 233). Despite having been consistently "treated with what I judged to be more than ordinary consideration" (LaPiere, 1934, p. 232), over 90 percent of respondents indicated they would not accept Chinese as guests. LaPiere concluded that attitudes did not influence behavior.

You don't need to be a genius to see some flaws in the methods LaPiere used. Consider what other explanations there might be for these findings besides attitudes not influencing behavior. Did the same person fill out the questionnaire who served

3.1 ABOUT CORRELATIONS

In this chapter we frequently refer to correlations. A correlation is a simple statistical measure of the relationship between two things. The letter “*r*” is shorthand for the word *correlation*, and a correlation can range from -1.0 (a perfect negative relationship) to 1.0 (a perfect positive relationship). A correlation of 0 indicates no relationship. A positive relationship means that as one thing increases or decreases, so does the other. For example, as attitude becomes more positive about recycling, recycling behavior increases. A negative relationship means that as one thing increases, something else decreases. For example, as attitude toward eating a healthy diet increases, eating of sugary and fatty foods decreases.

Correlation should not be confused with causation. Just because two things are correlated, or happen at the same time, does not mean that one causes the other. At one time, people believed that breathing swamp air *caused* malaria because being around swamps was *correlated* with contracting malaria. We now know that mosquitoes live in swamps and can carry the microscopic malarial parasite and can transmit it in their bites. Thus, there is a *correlation* between breathing swamp air and contracting malaria, but breathing swamp air is not the *cause* of the disease. Being bitten by an infected mosquito is what *causes* malaria.

the Chinese couple? Could the servers’ attitudes about politeness, not creating a fuss, or the desire for money have been stronger than their discriminatory attitudes? Others have suggested that having a white man with the Chinese couple set up a different situation. You can probably find other problems as well. Although this was only one study, it received a lot of attention and challenged the assumption that attitudes influence behavior. Over the next few decades, research continued with mixed results. Sometimes a relationship was found between attitudes and behaviors, and sometimes it wasn’t.

In a review of 42 studies, Wicker (1969) made a case for the lack of an attitude–behavior relationship. He reviewed studies examining attitudes and behaviors toward blacks and other ethnic groups, jobs, breastfeeding, and other issues. Some of these studies found attitudes to be strongly correlated to behavior (as high as $r = .60$); others found correlations close to zero. Most of the correlations were quite low, however, leading Wicker to conclude, “taken as a whole, these studies suggest that it is

considerably more likely that attitudes will be unrelated or only slightly related to overt behaviors than that attitudes will be closely related to actions” (p. 65).

Wicker’s (1969) article created a real fracas among scholars. Wicker drew on studies that were primarily experimental studies conducted in artificial laboratory settings. Critics noted that the laboratory settings might not reflect actual situations where attitudes and behavior would be related. Other studies that used surveys outside the traditional laboratory in “real world” settings found stronger and more consistent relationships between attitudes and behavior. For example, a study of voting behavior found that attitudes toward political candidates were closely related to voting behavior (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). Polls are used frequently during election years, and political candidates rely heavily on them. Even though poll results are occasionally in error, there is evidence of a strong relationship between attitudes and behavior in this context. Schuman and Johnson (1976) reviewed a broader base of studies including the survey research methods described above, and they concluded that the correlation between attitude and behavior was small to moderate. Thus, at times attitudes have been linked to behavior, and at times attitudes don’t appear to have much of a relationship to behavior. One key result of Wicker’s (1969) and Schuman and Johnson’s (1976) reviews was a renewed interest in the relationship between attitudes and behaviors. Because the reviews found that attitudes and behaviors were *sometimes* correlated, the focus of research turned from “are attitudes correlated with behavior?” to “*when* are attitudes correlated with behavior?” and “what else influences behavior?” Thus, there are times when attitudes are linked to behavior, but it is not a simple relationship. Additionally, attitudes are not the only factor that influences behavior.

INFLUENCING BEHAVIOR

Behavior is often the outcome of interest in both persuasion research and practice, and because attitudes are thought to affect behavior, attitude has been a central focus of persuasion. However, the relationship between attitudes and behaviors is complex, and multiple factors must be considered. These factors fall into five categories: measurement issues, perceptions of behavioral control, attitude formation, cognitive processing, and situational factors. Understanding these factors will allow us to better understand how to shape, reinforce, and change both attitudes and behaviors, which are central persuasion goals.

MEASUREMENT FACTORS

To determine whether attitudes predict behavior, it is important to understand *which* attitudes and *which* behavior. **Measurement factors** were a problem with much of the early attitude research. Attitude was measured in a rather general way (as it was in LaPiere’s study) whereas the behavior was measured very specifically. A general attitude is predictive of a general pattern of behavior. For instance, if José expresses a positive attitude toward the environment (a general attitude), then we could expect any combination of several behaviors from José. He might recycle, drive a hybrid vehicle, install solar panels on his house, eat locally grown food, or walk to work.

However, it would be very difficult to predict which of these behaviors he would perform. This was one of the problems with early research—attitudes and behaviors were measured with different levels of specificity. When measuring attitudes and behavior, we want to measure both with the same **level of specificity**. A specific attitude predicts a specific behavior.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) identified four factors that should be taken into account when measuring attitudes and behaviors, and these factors help us increase the level of specificity. These four factors allow us to be very detailed about the kinds of behaviors that are expected, and thus we can examine more specific attitudes. The first factor is the **action** performed. This refers to the specific behavior, such as recycling or eating locally grown food. The second factor is the **target** of the action; or in other words, what object the behavior targets. If we focus on recycling, then what object is the action directed toward? Is it paper, glass, plastic, or used oil? Each target modifies the specific action performed. Third, the **context** of the action must be considered. Context can refer to the location of the action or the situation. For example, is the context recycling at home, at work, or on campus? The specific context helps specify attitudes that can lead to behavior. The final factor identified by Ajzen and Fishbein is **time**. When is the action to be performed? For example, is it recycling during the annual “Recycle Mania” or on a daily basis? When you vary the context, target, or time, the action varies. Therefore, to predict a specific behavior, you must have a specific attitude. You might want to think of the four factors as a series of choices you need to make to appropriately focus your measurement, as illustrated in Figure 3.2. Measuring attitude and behavior with the same level of specificity will allow you to gather data to demonstrate the effectiveness of your campaign or other persuasive messages.

When attitudes and behaviors are measured with the same level of specificity (that is, the action, target, context, and time all match), measurement specificity is greater. Greater **measurement specificity** results in a stronger attitude–behavior relationship. In other words, if you measure the attitude with the same level of detail (or specificity) as you measure the behavior, the attitude is more likely to predict (or be correlated with) the behavior. In LaPiere’s (1934) study, the action was serving

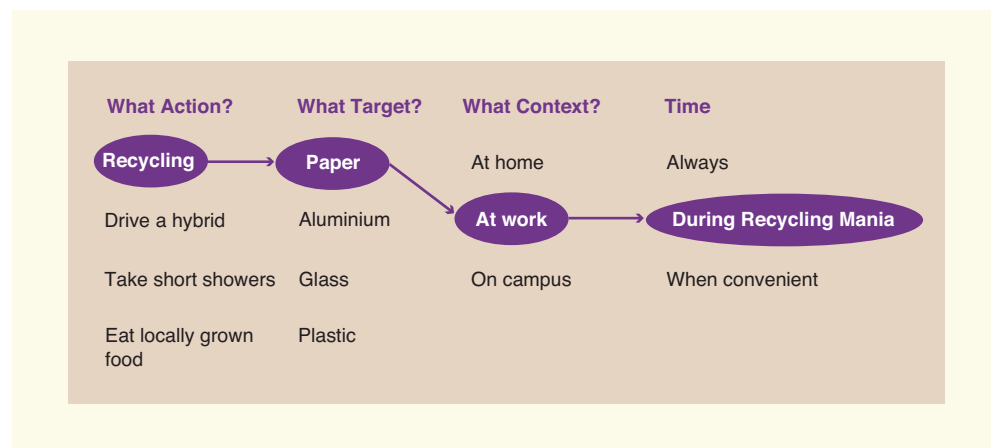


FIGURE 3.2 Example of attitude factors for predicting environmental behavior.

Chinese people. This was as far as that study went in specificity. Had LaPiere examined attitudes concerning serving (action) a Chinese couple (target) in the establishment when the couple is well dressed and in the company of a Caucasian (context) at dinnertime (time), the results may have been different. This kind of specificity can lead to stronger relationships between attitude and behavior and greater ability to predict the behaviors we attempt to influence through persuasion.

The correlation between attitude and behavior increased when researchers began measuring attitudes and behaviors with the same level of specificity. For example, Davidson and Jaccard (1979) conducted a study dealing with attitudes and behaviors regarding birth control. They measured the attitudes of 244 women toward birth control, birth control pills, using birth control pills, and using birth control pills in the next 2 years. They then followed up to see which women used birth control pills during those two years (specific behavior). Table 3.1 displays the correlations among the four attitudes with the behavior of using birth control pills during a two-year period. The first attitude in Table 3.1 is the most general; the fourth is the most specific and is measured with the same level of specificity as the behavior. Note that the more specific the attitude, the larger the correlation with the behavior. Thus, the more specific the measures were on the action, target, context, and time dimensions, the better the attitude predicted behavior. Ajzen and Fishbein's (1977) review of more than 100 studies further supported this conclusion by finding that the highest correlations between attitudes and behaviors occurred in the studies that measured behavior and attitude with the same level of specificity.

The four factors discussed above refer to using a specific attitude to predict a specific behavior. What if we measured more than one behavior? Would attitude be a better predictor of behavior if we measured multiple behaviors? In our earlier example, we noted that if José had a positive attitude toward the environment we could expect him to perform one or more of several behaviors. Ajzen and Fishbein (2005) describe the **principle of aggregation**, which states that a general attitude will predict a **behavioral domain**, but not a specific behavior. A behavioral domain is a set of related behaviors. Earlier we listed several behaviors that José may engage in because he has a positive attitude toward the environment. All of these environmental behaviors taken together are a behavioral domain. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between specific behaviors and behavioral domains. If you are

TABLE 3.1 ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR SPECIFICITY

ATTITUDE MEASURE	CORRELATION WITH BEHAVIOR (USING BIRTH CONTROL PILLS DURING A 2-YEAR PERIOD)
1. Attitude toward birth control	.083
2. Attitude toward birth control pills	.323
3. Attitude toward using birth control pills	.525
4. Attitude toward using birth control pills during the next 2 years	.572

Note: Data from Davidson and Jaccard (1979).

interested in influencing a specific behavior, then you need to work with the attitude specific to that behavior (match on action, target, context, and time) both in regard to your persuasive message and the measurement. If you are interested in influencing a behavioral domain, then a general attitude is sufficient. Again, how the attitude and behavior are measured affects our ability to predict behavior from attitudes.

BEHAVIORAL CONTROL BELIEFS

What a person believes about a behavior can also influence whether he or she will perform that behavior. Ajzen (1985) identified perceived behavioral control as a factor that influences behavior. **Perceived behavioral control** refers to an individual's perception of the level of control he or she has over a behavior. For example, a person could have a favorable attitude toward losing weight, yet not believe he or she is capable of engaging in that behavior. Wanting to lose weight but believing that it isn't possible means that attitudes in favor of weight loss would not be reflected in behavior. Although many have successfully managed to lose weight, the key issue here is whether the specific recipients of the message *believe* (or *perceive*) that this would be possible for themselves. Many people have become aware of the need for a good night's sleep, yet many fail to achieve it. This failure may be due to perceptions that because of a busy lifestyle or other factors, individuals have little personal control over getting more sleep. In this case, in addition to measuring a person's attitude toward sleeping more, you would need to measure the person's *perceived* behavioral control with regard to modifying his or her sleep patterns.

Messages can directly address the issue of perceived behavioral control. Including information about how to take control over an issue, such as how to lose weight successfully, can help increase the chances that the target of the persuasive message will perceive the ability to control that behavior. For example, an article on a popular medical information website provided advice on how to lose weight and focused on beliefs. It is targeted at helping individuals feel in control of their eating behavior, with statements such as, "Picture yourself thin," "Have realistic expectations," and "Set small goals." It is written in the form of an article, but the goal of the author is clearly to change what a person believes about weight loss and one's ability to lose weight. When the perceptions of control increase, so does the likelihood that the overall persuasive message will be more successful.

FORMATION FACTORS

The way an attitude is formed can also affect whether attitudes influence behavior. When attitudes are formed through **direct experience**, they tend to have more influence on behavior. Here's an example of an attitude being formed through direct experience: Someone has a positive attitude toward Greek olives because he or she ate them. The person has direct experience with the attitude object and believes that they have a good taste. Attitudes formed through direct experience tend to be better predictors of future behavior than attitudes formed through **indirect experience**. A person who forms an attitude through indirect experience does not directly interact with the attitude object, but learns about it secondhand through reading about it or hearing about it from others. A person who has a negative attitude toward Greek

olives because his or her siblings said the olives tasted bad (but has never actually tasted a Greek olive) is an example of an attitude formed through indirect experience.

Regan and Fazio (1977) examined attitude formation in a naturalistic setting. Because of a shortage of housing at Cornell University, many freshmen were forced to spend their first few weeks of school in temporary facilities including cots in dormitory lounges. Other freshmen moved directly into permanent housing, but the issue of the housing shortage was discussed among students and in the college newspaper. The freshmen who lived in temporary facilities had **direct experience** with the issue, and they formed attitudes based on the housing situation they experienced. The freshmen who lived in permanent housing formed attitudes through **indirect experience** by reading about it and discussing it with others.

Regan and Fazio surveyed a random sample of students in temporary housing and students in permanent housing. Survey questions measured attitudes about the housing situation and offered students the opportunity to take six actions: (a) sign a petition to the administration, (b) get other students to sign the petition, (c) report interest in attending a meeting to discuss proposals to deal with the housing situation, (d) report interest in joining a committee of students to research the situation and make recommendations to the administration, (e) list recommendations or suggestions for solving the housing problems, and/or (f) write a letter expressing opinions about the housing problems to the Housing Office. (Note that behavior was measured with multiple acts.) The researchers indicated they would forward the items and information to the administration.

Both groups (those in temporary facilities and those in permanent housing) had similar attitudes about the situation. Even though the attitudes were the same, the behavioral responses were not. Regan and Fazio found that those who formed their attitudes through direct experience (those in temporary housing) were more willing to act (an attitude–behavior correlation of $r = .42$) than those who formed their attitudes through indirect experience (an attitude–behavior correlation of $r = .03$). In other words, when the attitude was formed through indirect experience, it didn't seem related to behavior, but when the attitude was formed through direct experience, it was related to behavior. Additional research conducted on this issue (Fazio & Zanna, 1978; Regan & Fazio, 1977) found similar results. Fazio and Zanna (1981) concluded.

Generally speaking, the picture that emerges is that attitudes formed through direct experience are stronger than those formed through indirect experience. There is evidence to suggest that direct experience attitudes are more clearly defined, held with greater certainty, more stable over time, and more resistant to counterinfluence. (p. 185)

This research challenges the traditional model that attitude causes behavior as is illustrated in the top panel of Figure 3.3. The research on direct experience along with contemporary views of attitude suggest that behavior can be the basis of attitude formation. Or, in other words, behavior can cause an attitude to form (Dillard, 1993). The lower panel of Figure 3.3 illustrates behavior leading to an attitude, which in turn influences future behavior. This issue has practical implications for persuaders.

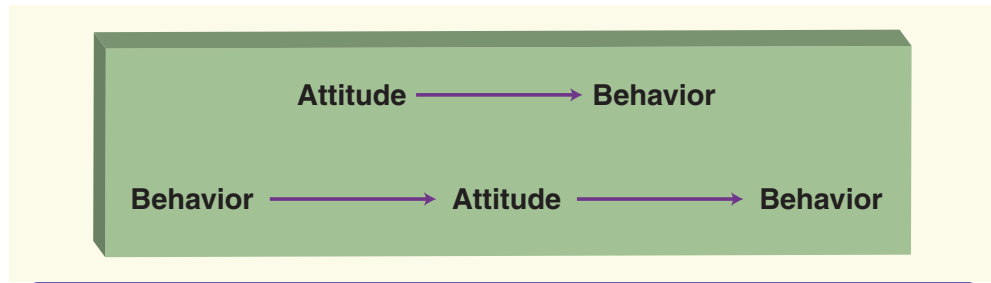


FIGURE 3.3 Two views of the attitude–behavior relationship.

If direct experience leads to attitude formation, then persuaders might plan efforts to include behavior first. This is done in grocery stores that routinely give away samples of food products. In this case, the behavior (customers eating the food) comes first, and the grocers hope positive attitudes will result that will lead to future behavior (customers purchasing the food). Stores continue this practice despite the expense because it results in greater sales of sampled items. Another example of this issue is the use of seat belts. For years the government tried to convince Americans to wear seat belts at all times when driving (change attitude to influence behavior). Focusing on attitude toward seat belts didn't result in a sufficient rate of seat belt usage, so the government changed their strategy. A law was passed making seat belt use mandatory, and resulted in people wearing seat belts, even though they didn't want to (held a negative attitude toward seat belts). For many people, they performed the behavior (wearing seat belts), which in turn positively influenced their attitude toward seat belts. Today seat belt usage is much greater than it was 30 years ago. Two theories of persuasion, cognitive dissonance theory and self-perception theory (Chapter 9), involve behavior serving as the basis for influencing attitude. In that chapter we more thoroughly discuss exactly how behavior influences attitude.

Thus, when we are trying to influence behavior, we need to consider how related attitudes were formed in addition to the level of perceived behavioral control. Additionally, how attitudes are cognitively structured influences the relationship between an attitude and a behavior.

COGNITIVE PROCESSING FACTORS

We all have attitudes on a variety of topics. Some attitudes we use regularly and are at the forefront of our thoughts. Other issues we think about infrequently and it can take time to recall our attitudes on a topic when it is raised. Think of the human mind as a kind of filing cabinet. Attitudes we use frequently are in the front of the cabinet, and this information is easy to find, it is accessible. Attitudes used infrequently are elsewhere in the cabinet, and it can take a while to locate them in the filing system. This concept is referred to as **attitude accessibility**. Only attitudes that are activated can affect behavior, and highly accessible attitudes are more easily activated. Making an attitude accessible is sometimes more important than changing an attitude.

Fazio, Chen, McDonel, and Sherman (1982) argue that attitude accessibility is related to direct experience. They suggest that direct experience makes an attitude more

accessible, or more easily retrieved. These researchers measure attitude accessibility by timing how quickly subjects are able to retrieve attitudes in response to questions. Attitudes that are retrieved the fastest are the most accessible, and those attitudes are better predictors of behavior. Attitudes used most often are also easier to retrieve, or in other words, more accessible.

Attitude accessibility has been tested in research examining a presidential campaign (Fazio & Williams, 1986) and environmental attitudes (Kallgren & Wood, 1986). Results have consistently supported attitude accessibility as an important factor in the attitude–behavior relationship. It makes sense that people who talk about an issue frequently are more likely to engage in behavior consistent with their attitudes than those who rarely consider an issue, but other factors come into play here. Clearly, attitude formation based on direct experience and/or vested interest would influence attitude accessibility. Issues that individuals have had experience with and stand to gain from (as in the housing study) are retrieved more easily than issues with indirect experience or no vested interest. Attitude accessibility is a cognitive processing factor, but it is influenced by how the attitudes are formed.

Attitude accessibility is also related to the **relevance** of the attitude to the behavior for the individual. Snyder and Kendzierski (1982) propose this model: For behavior to be influenced by attitude, the attitude in question must first be accessible for a person, and second must be perceived as relevant to the behavior. This model essentially states that attitude accessibility is not enough for attitudes to influence behavior—a person also has to perceive that the attitude is relevant to the behavior. For instance, if I go out to buy a lawn mower, my attitude toward air quality and emission of pollutants would only influence my purchasing behavior if first it was accessible and second if I perceive it as relevant. If I think of my attitude toward emission standards as only relevant to cars, trucks, buses, and manufacturing plants, I probably won't even consider the emissions of the different models of lawn mowers. Snyder (1982) describes relevance as an action structure that links the attitude to the behavior. If it is pointed out to me that some models of lawn mowers produce an inordinate amount of air pollution, it serves to link my attitude toward emission standards to my lawn mower purchase and allows me to act on my attitude. An implication of Snyder and Kendzierski's (1982) model is that attitude–behavior consistency can be increased if the receiver is reminded of his or her attitude (enhance accessibility) and the relevance of the attitude to the behavior is noted. An example of this is shown in Figure 3.4. This announcement was distributed to faculty at the authors' institution. Note that in the brief message appealing to professors to announce the speaker to their classes, the source attempts to make professors' positive attitudes toward class discussion relevant to announcing the speaker to their classes.

Snyder and Kendzierski (1982) demonstrated that when receivers perceived their attitude toward affirmative action as relevant to decision-making behavior, receivers' behavior was more consistent with their attitude. Snyder and Kendzierski concluded that if a person perceives an attitude as relevant to a behavior, that attitude is automatically accessible. Therefore, as a source, you can focus your energy on enhancing the relevance of an attitude to a behavior. If you are successful in making the attitude relevant to the behavior, you will also be successful in making it accessible to the receiver.

DEAR MIAMI PROFESSOR:

Campus Activities Council Lecture Board is composed of 12 students, and we have worked very hard to bring a diverse set of speakers to Oxford's campus. We hope that as professors, you will encourage your students to expand their education outside of the classroom. By attending lectures and widening their knowledge, students will be able to contribute increasingly in class discussions. Please take the 15 seconds that is needed to announce the following lecture; our board and your classes will appreciate it. We want to work with you, and are asking you to meet us halfway.

KERSHAUN SCOTT TO LIVE & DIE IN L.A.

Kershaun Scott—gang name Lil' Monster, an original gangster from South Central's Eight Tray Crips—has become a familiar face to Americans following the violent aftermath of the Rodney King verdict. Scott offers profound insight into the causes and reasons for gang violence. Drawing on his own personal experience, Scott articulates the attraction gang life has for the young men and women growing up in ghetto environments in Los Angeles and other American cities. Scott was instrumental in implementing the gang truce so many thought impossible.

"Bright and articulate . . . I liked him very much and was extremely impressed with a great deal of what he had to say and the passion with which he says it."

— Ted Koppel, ABC NEWS

FIGURE 3.4 The source attempts to make the professors' positive attitude toward class discussion relevant to announcing the speaker to their classes.

Similar to relevance is vested interest. If you have a **vested interest** in something, it has some impact on you and you are interested because you have something to gain or lose. Thus, attitudes formed through vested interest are better predictors of future behavior. Sivacek and Crano (1982) studied college student responses to a proposed raise in the legal drinking age (a topic with which college students were expected to have had direct experience and a vested interest) and student responses to proposed comprehensive exams as graduation requirements for themselves (vested interest) or others (non-vested interest). In both studies, the relationship between attitudes and behavior was strongest for those participants with a vested interest in the topic. Relevance and vested interest both create links between an attitude and a behavior, creating a stronger relationship between the attitude and the behavior.

Attitudes that are particularly relevant to an individual and to the behavioral choices he or she faces are those most likely to be used frequently and to be accessible. If an attitude is also formed through direct experience with an object, and the object is one in which the individual has a vested interest, the attitude-behavior relationship is further strengthened.

SITUATIONAL FACTORS

Situational factors are the final set of factors to examine in understanding when and how attitudes predict behavior. **Situational factors** are characteristics of the situation in which an individual performs the behavior in question. Abelson (1982) divided situational factors that affect the attitude-behavior relationship into three

categories: **individuated situations**, **deindividuated situations**, and **scripted situations**. As the situation is altered, the expected relationship between attitudes and behavior is altered as well.

Individuated situations are situations that encourage individuals to focus on their internal states, including attitudes, beliefs, and values. Often, individuated situations cause individuals to take more responsibility for their own actions, and it is less possible for individuals to be part of an anonymous group in these kinds of situations. When individuals focus more on their own attitudes and feelings, they tend to act on those attitudes and, hence, attitude and behavior are related. In addition, when individuals feel more responsibility for their own actions as opposed to being part of a group, their attitudes are more consistent with their behavior. Research has supported this (Carver, 1975; Pryor, Gibbons, Wicklund, Fazio, & Hood, 1977). A person choosing to write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper about a political candidate is acting in an individuated situation. There is individual responsibility, and the person is more likely to think about his or her stand on the issue than a person who is part of a citizen's group that intends to endorse a political candidate.

Deindividuated situations are situations that offer an individual more anonymity and encourage less focus on internal states such as attitudes and feelings. When participating in a group, people tend to adopt the group perspective and often don't have to take as much responsibility for individual actions. As a result, there is less correspondence between attitudes and behaviors in deindividuated situations. Rioters, looters, and people who engage in nonnormative social behavior (e.g., mass suicide in religious cults) are all examples of actions in deindividuated situations (Sherman & Fazio, 1983). In these cases, people are more likely to engage in behavior that the group as a whole is engaging in without considering their own thoughts and feelings (beliefs and attitudes) about the behavior. Individuals who participate in riots and looting may be doing so simply because everyone else is doing it. However, deindividuated situations are not necessarily so extreme. Anytime we are part of a group, our behavior is apt to be more influenced by the group than by our own individual attitudes and beliefs.

The third type of situation is **scripted situations**. Do you ever respond automatically without thinking? Do you ever say "I'm fine" when someone asks how you are, even when you feel terrible? Doing so is an example of a scripted situation—in other words, a situation in which individuals know the expected behavior and therefore do not need to think in order to behave. For example, when you walk into a classroom for the first time, you don't need to think about whether you should sit at the desk in the front of the room or at a seat facing that area. You also don't need to be told to quiet down when the teacher begins speaking, and you expect the teacher to take the initiative to start the class. This is a scripted situation in which you don't need to think about your behavior, but instead you follow what is expected from you. Similarly, many of us rely on scripts when grocery shopping. We often reach for the same brand or the same size of products each time we go, so we don't need to ponder each of the 100 or more decisions we make. These scripts often serve us well, but sometimes we buy the wrong thing or pay a higher price because we rely on a script, rather than on our attitudes toward costs or nutrition. For example, if you always buy a gallon of milk because it is cheaper per ounce, and don't look at the price, you will

miss out on sales where two half gallon jugs are cheaper than the gallon size. Scripted behavior is guided less by an individual's attitudes and more by social norms, habits, or previously thought out patterns. Thus, attitude-behavior correlations are much weaker in scripted situations.

As a persuader, you can use all of these situational factors to enhance your persuasive success. Persuaders may take advantage of deindividuated group events to get people to jump on the bandwagon to join their cause, buy their product, or adopt their beliefs. Some unethical persuaders will plant "converts" to speed up the deindividuating process and encourage audience members to join the cause. A persuader can create a link between some existing attitude or value, and then ask the audience to look deep into their soul, creating an individuated situation that encourages the audience to act on their attitudes, beliefs, or values. Persuaders also take advantage of the scripts we use. For example, manufacturers try to maintain product placement and brand names so that purchase habits are reinforced. They may also reduce the contents of a package yet keep the size of the box or bag the same to encourage scripted responses. If a new, smaller package was designed to reflect the reduction in contents, the consumer might think about the purchase rather than grab the product as usual.

All five factors that affect the attitude-behavior relationship are important, and all five factors have considerable support from research studies. What started out as a fairly simple proposition in Chapter 2 (attitude influences behavior) has become a bit more complicated. It takes more than simply influencing attitude in order to affect behavior. When you are designing persuasive messages, these factors should be considered. If you consider that attitudes formed through direct experience are more predictive of behavior, you might choose to give customers free samples. Alternatively, if you consider that when attitudes are accessible and relevant they have more impact on behavior, you may choose to remind people of the importance they place on the environment before asking them to sign a petition to increase taxes on gas guzzling vehicles. Understanding the relationship between attitudes and behavior may be very important, but by itself it is insufficient to be a successful persuader. In the following chapters we discuss source and message factors, which are your primary means for influencing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The theory chapters that follow in section three provide explanations that help us put all the pieces together.

SUMMARY

- Early research, including the LaPiere (1934) study, suggested that attitudes did not correlate with behaviors.
- Other research, especially in naturalistic situations, found support for attitudes predicting behavior.
- Determining when and under what circumstances attitudes are related to behavior involves factors in five categories: measurement issues, perceived behavioral control, attitude formation, cognitive processing, and situational factors.
- Measurement factors include the action performed, the target, the context, time, and types of behavioral criteria.

- Specific attitudes predict specific behaviors; general attitudes predict behavioral domains.
- Perceived behavioral control influences behavior and can sometimes be addressed in a persuasive message.
- Attitudes formed through direct experience are more predictive of behavior than attitudes formed through indirect experience.
- Factors related to cognitive processing include attitude accessibility, relevance, and vested interest.
- Situational factors include individuated, deindividuated, and scripted situations.
- The attitude-behavior relationship must be considered when creating persuasive messages.

KEY TERMS

Attitude accessibility—the availability of an attitude in a person’s mind.

Attitude relevance—how related or connected an attitude is to a behavior.

Behavioral domain—a set of related behaviors.

Deindividuated situations—situations that offer the individual more anonymity and that tend to encourage less focus on internal states such as attitudes and feelings.

Direct experience—when an audience forms an attitude as a result of engaging with the attitude object.

Indirect experience—when an audience forms an attitude by observing or learning about the object from a secondary source.

Individuated situations—situations that encourage individuals to focus on their internal states, including attitudes, beliefs, and values.

Level of specificity—refers to measuring both attitude and behavior with the same amount of detail.

Measurement factors—how attitudes and behaviors are measured. How they are measured can influence whether attitudes and behavior are related.

Measurement specificity—the extent to which both attitude and behavior are measured in the same way with regard to the action, target, context, and time.

Perceived behavioral control—an individual’s perception of the level of control he or she has over a behavior.

Principle of aggregation—states that a general attitude will predict a behavioral domain but not a specific behavior.

Scripted situations—situations in which individuals know the expected behavior and therefore do not need to think in order to behave.

Situational factors—characteristics of the situation in which an individual performs the behavior in question.

Vested interest—having a personal stake in the outcome of a situation.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does LaPiere (1934) conclude about the relationship between attitudes and behavior? What are problems with this research?
2. How does measurement of attitude and behavior impact their relationship with one another?
3. How do action, target, context, and time improve the measurement of attitudes and behavior?
4. What is meant by perceived behavioral control? How does it affect the behavior?
5. How do direct and indirect experience affect the attitude–behavior relationship?
6. How does cognitive processing affect the attitude–behavior relationship?
7. How are attitude accessibility and relevance related? What impact do they have on the attitude–behavior relationship?
8. How are vested interest and relevance similar?
9. What is the difference between individuated, deindividuated, and scripted situations? How does each affect the attitude–behavior relationship?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Would a research study such as LaPiere’s be acceptable today? If not, how could you ethically modify this study to replicate or check on the validity of the findings today?
2. How much do you think your attitudes influence your behavior? Describe a time when your behavior influenced your attitude. When has your behavior influenced your attitude?
3. Think of a time you behaved in a way that was inconsistent with a related attitude. Use the factors that affect the attitude–behavior relationship in explaining why your behavior was inconsistent with your attitude.
4. What are some of the scripts you use frequently? When do they serve you well, and when don’t they?
5. Many factors affect the attitude–behavior relationship. Do you have ethical concerns about targeting any of these aspects? For example, is it ethical to manipulate situations to create more of a deindividuated situation to enhance persuasive pressure? Can a persuader ethically create an artificial situation so that a target audience has direct experience in order to enhance persuasive success? Where would you draw the line?

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