

# **Social Psychology**

## **Lesson 4: Attitudes**

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# Topics:

- ☑ Attitude Types
- ☑ Component of Attitudes
- ☑ Attitude Formation
- ☑ Assessing Attitude
- ☑ How Attitudes Influence Behavior
- ☑ How Behavior Influence Attitude

1. Name the ABCs of attitude and analyze the relationships between them.

2. Enumerate ways to assess implicit and explicit attitude.

3. Explain the processes underlying attitude formation.

4. Explain how we change our attitudes to justify things we've already done.

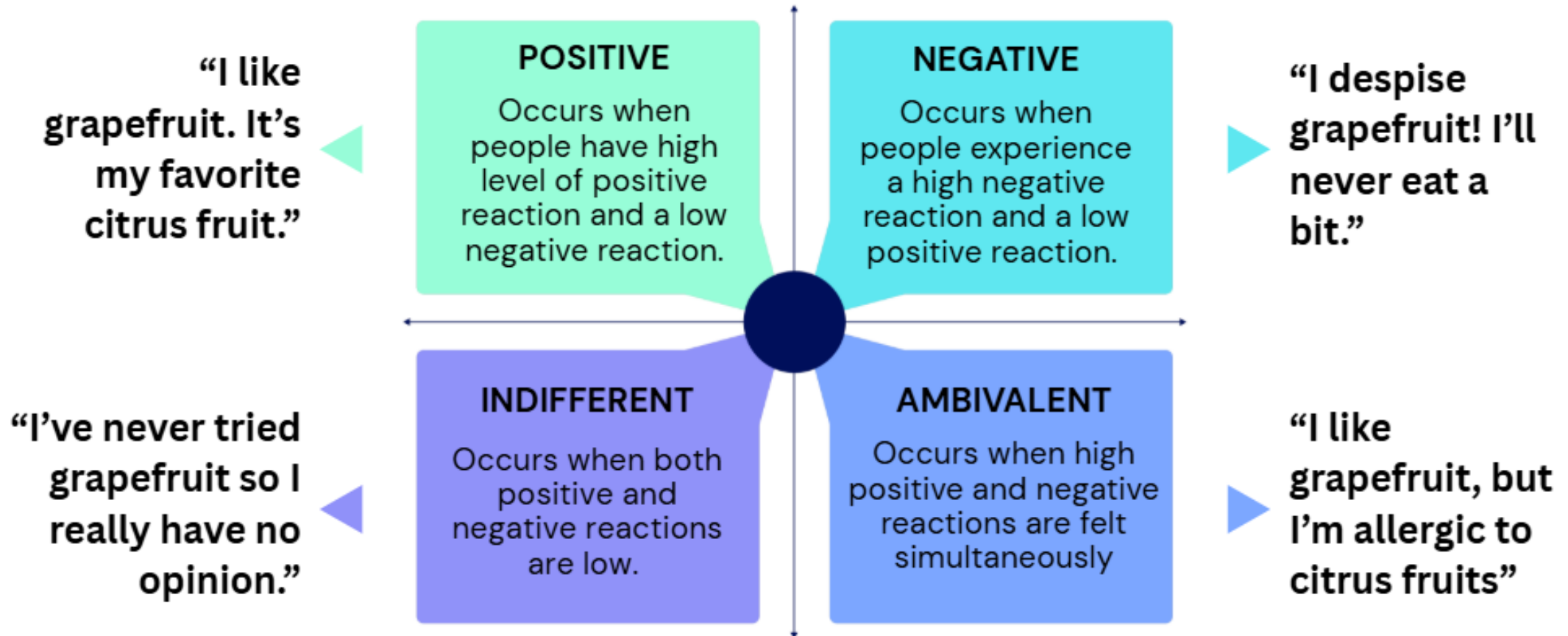
5. Apply the Theory of Planned Behavior to explain why certain attitudes successfully lead to behavioral intentions while others do not.

## **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

# What is an Attitude?

- Are evaluations people make about objects, ideas, events, or other people.
- Beliefs and feelings related to a person or an event (often rooted in one's beliefs and exhibited in one's feelings and intended behavior).
- Each of us has thousands of attitudes about many different things, and these attitudes constitute an important part of the self-concept.

# ATTITUDE TYPES



# COMPONENTS OF ATTITUDE

## ABCs of Attitude

### AFFECT

Feelings and emotions associated with an attitude object

### BEHAVIOR

Past and future activity associated with an attitude object.

### COGNITION

Thoughts and beliefs associated with an attitude object

# Scenario: Attitude towards disaster

## AFFECT

Feeling bad for the families in the flooded areas.

## BEHAVIOR

Dropping off donation supplies like clothes, medicine, hygiene kits, or canned goods at a local collection point.

## COGNITION

Recognizing that flood control systems are a vital necessity in disaster-prone regions.

# Strong attitude:

## Cognition

James believes reading broadens his horizons.

## Affect

James feels a sense of excitement and satisfaction whenever he reads.

## Behavior

James sets aside 1 hour every evening to read and consistently finishes two books per month.

# Weak attitude:

## Cognition

James believes reading broadens his horizons.

## Affect

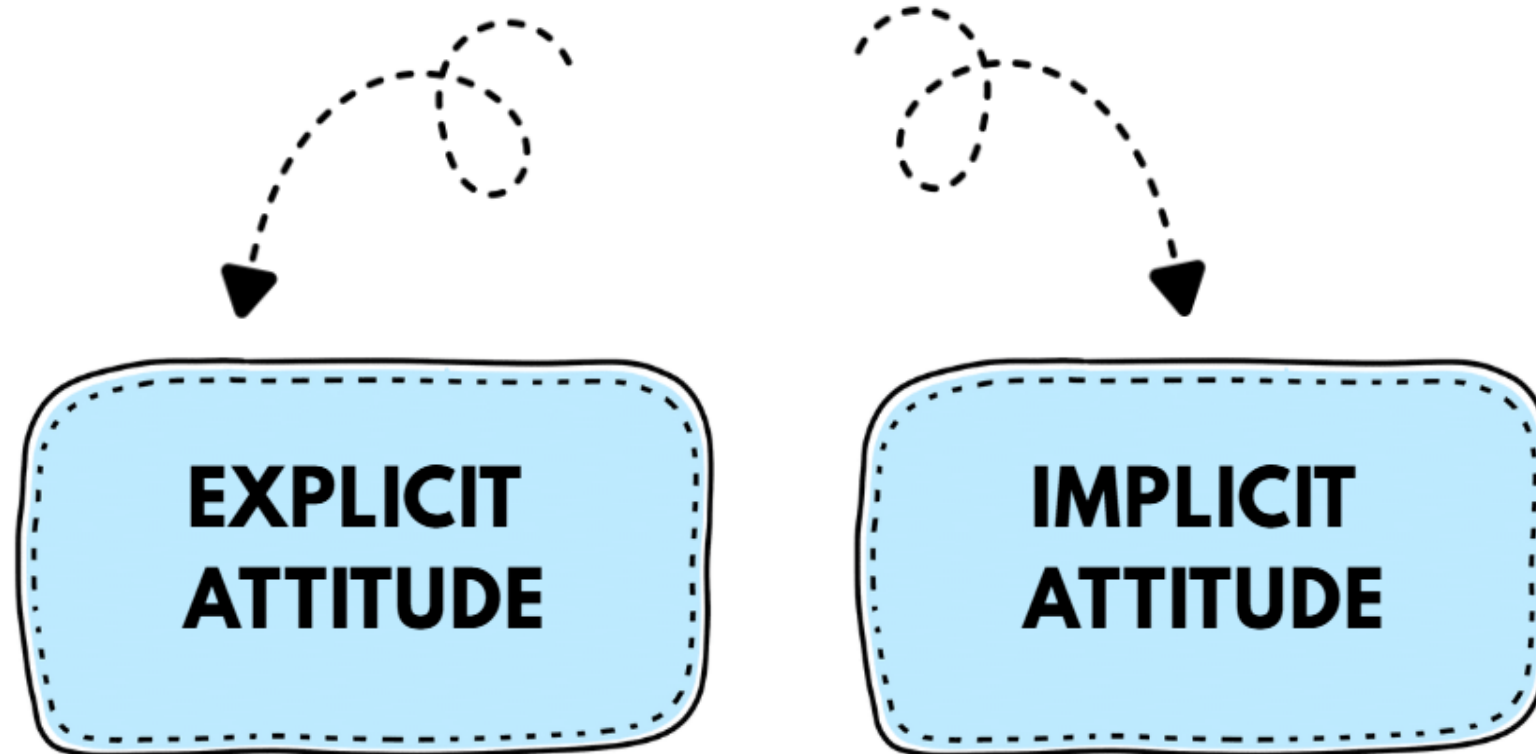
James dislike taking the time to read.

## Behavior

As a result, James read less than his belief that he should.

# ATTITUDE FORMATION

## Attitude



# Explicit attitude

- Refer to the opinions (evaluations) that we consciously hold and that people may readily articulate.
- An attitude that one recognizes and can control.
- If you asked a person, “How do you feel about [topic]?”, they would provide a clear, reasoned answer reflecting a stance of which they are fully aware.

# Implicit attitude

- Attitudes that are automatically formed and activated without our even being aware of them
- They are outside of our conscious control.
- They often stem from cultural conditioning, evolution, or repetitive social messaging.

A child may harbor a profound fear of snakes despite never having encountered one. Simply thinking about a snake evokes an immediate sense of fear.

Implicitly associating men with science, math and leadership while associating women with liberal arts, nurturing and support.

# Experiment on Implicit Attitude

- Correll et al. (2002) demonstrated the prevalence of negative implicit attitudes toward Black individuals using a simple videogame.
- Task: Participants were required to quickly "shoot" targets holding weapons and "not shoot" those holding harmless objects; race of the targets (White or African American) was varied.

## Result:

- **Study 1 (Speed):** Participants reacted faster to shoot armed Black targets but were quicker to spare unarmed White targets.
- **Study 2 (Errors):** Under time pressure, participants "accidentally" shot unarmed Black men more frequently.
- **Study 3 (Cause):** Even people who didn't personally agree with the stereotype still showed the bias.
- **Study 4 (Pervasiveness):** Both White and Black participants showed the same level of bias.

# ATTITUDE FORMATION

- 1 Genetics
- 2 Classical conditioning
- 3 Operant conditioning
- 4 Observational learning
- 5 Social roles

# A. Genetics

- A study by Martin et al. (1986) found higher attitude similarity in identical twins compared to fraternal twins.
- However, as Stangor (2011) explains, there are no particular attitude-determining genes; instead, they shape the underlying personality and temperament traits that ultimately influence our perspective on the world.

# B. Classical Conditioning

- a type of learning in which a neutral stimulus gets paired with a stimulus that elicits a response. Once conditioning has occurred through repeated pairings, the neutral stimulus by itself already elicits the response of the second stimulus.
- Ivan Pavlov (1927) uncovered this type of conditioning in his famous experiment with dogs.

# Examples of Classical Conditioning

In a billboard ad, a clothing company pairs a jeans with an attractive model who elicits a pleasant emotional response. This can make people form a positive attitude about the pants and the clothing company.

If Jack is eating sushi when he learns that his mother has been in a car accident, he may develop a negative attitude toward sushi. Even if he's not entirely aware of it, for him, eating sushi may now be linked with fearful and negative feelings.

# Experiment on Classical Conditioning

- Gibson (2008) investigated whether pairing famous brands (Coke or Pepsi) with pleasant or unpleasant imagery could subconsciously influence consumer preference. The study tested if these associations effectively altered participant attitudes.
- Result: Participants who initially did not favor either brand of soda chooses the positively associated soft drink over the negatively associated one

# Mere Exposure Effect

- Developed and popularized by Robert Zajonc in 1968.
- States that simply having been exposed to something increases our liking for it.

# Experiment on Mere Exposure Effect

- Zajonc (1968) exposed participants to various neutral stimuli, such as "nonsense" words, Chinese-like characters, and photographs of strangers.
- He discovered that frequency was a deciding factor in preference; the more often an individual was shown a specific character or face, the more likely they were to rate it as "good" or "pleasant."
- Subsequent research into subliminal processing revealed that this effect remains remarkably potent even when the exposure occurs so quickly that the subjects aren't consciously aware they have seen the stimuli at all.

# Name-letter Effect

- This is the tendency to show a preference for letters in our own name and prefer stimuli that contain those letters simply because they encounter them so frequently.
- Example: Mark prefers eating at McDonald's, living in Miami, and shopping at Marks & Spencer; he even chooses to drive a Mercedes-Benz over other luxury brands.

# C. Operant Conditioning

- A method discovered by Edward Thorndike and elaborated by B.F. Skinner.
- A method of learning that occurs through rewarding desirable behavior and punishing undesirable behavior.
- Behavior is praised → positive attitude towards the behavior
- Behavior is disparaged → negative attitude towards the behavior
- Operant conditioning occurs through the mechanisms of reinforcement and punishment.

## POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

**Adding desired things  
to increase behavior.**

You studied hard and earned 98%, and your parents rewarded you with an additional allowance of PHP 500.

## NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT

**Removing aversive  
event to increase  
behavior.**

You studied hard and earned 98%, so your parents rewarded you by exempting you from washing dishes for a week—a chore you typically dislike.

## POSITIVE PUNISHMENT

**A adding aversive  
event to decrease  
behavior.**

You did not study for an important exam. When you get the results, the teacher makes you stay after class for a mandatory, boring remedial lecture .

## NEGATIVE PUNISHMENT

**Removing desired  
things to decrease  
behavior.**

You did not study for an important exam. When you get the results back, the teacher revokes your privilege to attend the upcoming school field trip.

# Research on Operant Conditioning

- Berg and McQuinn (1986) found that couples who provide each other with reinforcements such as favors, running errands, giving gifts, and so forth, are more likely to be together four months down the line than those who do not provide many rewards.

# D. Observational Learning

- Also known as modeling or social learning.
- Proposed by Albert Bandura in 1977.
- Seeing others display a particular attitude and watching people be reinforced for expressing a particular attitude can make someone adopt those attitudes.
- Example: If a girl grows up watching her father act distrustful of a particular racial or ethnic group, she may very likely adopt those same views.

# E. Social Roles

- Roles are set of norms that define how people in a given social position ought to behave.
- Example: Gender roles tell people how a particular society expects men and women to behave. Role requirements can change over time in society.
- A person who violates the requirements of a role tends to feel uneasy or to be censured by others.
- If you are promoted to a management role, you may find yourself defending company policies you used to complain about.

# Experiment on Social Roles

- In the 1970s, the psychologist Philip Zimbardo conducted a famous study called the Stanford Prison study.
- One group of college student volunteers plays the role of prison guards in a simulated prison environment. The other group of students play the role of prisoners.
- **Result:** “Guard” students became increasingly harsh and domineering. “Prisoner” students broke down, while others rebelled or became passively resigned to the situation.



# **Assessing Attitudes**

# Explicit Measures of Attitudes

- A. Observation** – recording overt behaviors that reflect a person's beliefs
- B. Likert scales** – It asks people to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a specific statement.
- C. Semantic differential scales** (Osgood et al., 1957) – this scale measures the connotative meaning or "feeling" you associate with a specific topic using bipolar adjectives such as:

Good ..... Bad  
Helpful ..... Useless  
Exciting ..... Boring

# Implicit Measures of Attitudes

- A. Unobtrusive observation** – happens when the subject doesn't know they are being studied. Researchers could watch "micro-behaviors" that are hard to fake.
- B. Evaluative priming** (Fazio, 1995) – This measure how quickly your brain connects a concept with "good" or "bad." In this measure, you are briefly shown a "prime" (like a photo of a spider). Immediately after, a word appears (like "Pleasant" or "Ugly"), and you must categorize that word as good or bad.

# Implicit Measures of Attitudes

- C. Implicit Association Test** (Greenwald et al., 1998) – a computer-driven assessment test that uses reaction times to measure people's automatic associations between attitude objects and evaluative words. Easier pairings and faster responses are taken to indicate stronger unconscious associations.
- D. Affect Misattribution Paradigm** (Payne et al., 2005) – it relies on the idea that our emotional reactions to one thing can "leak" onto our judgment of something else.

Prime image



Neutral stimulus



Rate the neutral photograph



**Do  
attitudes  
influence  
behavior?**

# Indicate your agreement by providing a "Yes" or "No" response.

1. It is important to save our planet.
2. It is important to study hard.
3. World hunger is a serious problem that needs attention.
4. Do you engage in environmentally friendly behavior?
5. Do you study hard for all of your classes, all of the time?
6. Do you personally do anything to lessen world hunger?

# The Attitude-Behavior Gap

Wicker (1969) proved that attitudes don't actually predict behavior. After looking at dozens of studies, he found that what people say they believe rarely matches how they actually act.

- **Experiment:** Corey (1937) set out to see if students' moral beliefs actually matched their actions.
- He surveyed 67 university students and found that most claimed to dislike cheating.
- **Task:** Researchers secretly graded the students' quizzes first, then let the students grade themselves to see if they would change their answers.
- **Result:** In 76 percent of the cases, students cheated, regardless of their previously stated attitudes toward cheating.

# Theory of Planned Behavior

- Proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1985
- States that there are three factors that promote occurrence of behavior:
  - 1 One's own attitude toward the behavior
  - 2 The attitudes of others toward that behavior (subjective norms)
  - 3 The perceived feasibility of the behavior (perceived behavioral control)

# Scenario: Sarah is evaluating the possibility of ending an abusive relationship

## Attitude Toward the Behavior

Sarah writes a list of pros and cons. Since the "pros" of leaving outweigh the "cons," she develops a positive attitude toward the prospect of breaking up. She has concluded that leaving will be more beneficial than staying.

## Subjective Norms

Sarah considers what her mother and her best friend would think. She realizes they would both be pleased and happy if she left.

## Perceived Behavioral Control

Sarah feels she has the power, resources, and emotional strength to execute the plan. This is the perceived control required to turn a wish into a reality.



**When does  
behavior  
influence  
attitudes?**

# Cognitive Dissonance Theory

- Proposed by Leon Festinger in 1957.
- Proposes that people want their behavior to be consistent with their beliefs and feel uncomfortable with any inconsistency between the two.
- If people's behavior are inconsistent, they feel the need to justify or rationalize their behavior

# Three fundamental assumptions of Cognitive Dissonance Theory

- 1 Human beings sense when their behavior is inconsistent with their attitudes.
- 2 Once inconsistency is recognized, the individual is in a state of cognitive dissonance and will be motivated to resolve it.
- 3 There are three ways to resolve dissonance:
  - a. Do not repeat the behavior to stay in line with the attitude.
  - b. Change the attitude to match the behavior.
  - c. Rationalize the behavior so it won't clash with the attitude.

# How to resolve dissonance?

**Timmy believes that smoking is deadly,  
but he lights a cigarette anyway.**

## **Change the Behavior:**

Timmy quits smoking so that his actions finally match his belief that it is harmful.

## **Change the Belief:**

Timmy convinces himself that the medical research is exaggerated or “fake news” so he can keep smoking without feeling guilty.

## **Rationalize the Behavior:**

Timmy rationalizes his behavior by claiming, “I only smoke two sticks a day, so the health risks don't apply to me”.

# Experiment on Cognitive Dissonance

- Dickerson and colleagues (1992) wanted to see if they could use guilt (hypocrisy) to encourage water conservation among environmentally conscious students.
- **Task:** Participants were first reminded of their own past water-wasting habits and then asked to sign a public commitment to take shorter showers. By doing both, the researchers forced the students to face the fact that their actions did not match their public stance. This created a strong sense of cognitive dissonance.
- **Result:** to resolve this mental tension and regain a sense of integrity, these students significantly reduced their shower times compared to those who were not made to feel inconsistent.

# Effort Justification

- Refers to the idea that if people work hard to reach a goal, they are likely to value the goal more. They justify working hard by believing that the goal is valuable.
- In essence, we convince ourselves that something is worth it because we suffered for it.

# Effort justification

- ✓ **Hazing and initiation rites** – When people go through a painful or difficult initiation, they feel a psychological need to justify why they put themselves through it. To make the suffering "worth it," their brains convince them that the group is incredibly special, leading to deeper loyalty and a stronger bond.
- ✓ **Work and career** – People who invest years of study, long hours, and significant personal sacrifices into their careers are more likely to value their jobs and careers, even if they are not entirely satisfying.
- ✓ **Relationships** – People may stay in unsatisfying or even abusive relationships because of the time, emotional energy, and effort they have invested.

# Post-decision dissonance

- Cognitive dissonance that results from having to reject one appealing choice in favor of another.
- To combat this: We enhance our opinions of what we've chosen to justify our choice cognitively.

# Experiment on Post-decision dissonance

- Lieberman and colleagues (2001) asked participants to rate several photographs, choose between their favorite pairs, and then re-rate the same photos later.
- **Result:** Participants increased their ratings for the photos they had chosen and decreased their ratings for the ones they had rejected. Remarkably, this shift occurred even in amnesiacs who had no memory of making a choice or even seeing the photos previously.

# In a nutshell...

- Attitudes, behavior, and cognition have a reciprocal relationship with one another.
- Research on attitudes helps us to understand our behaviors and interactions with one another.
- Everything we say and do starts with an attitude, whether negative, positive, or somewhere in between.
- Research allows us to not only understand how attitudes, behaviors, and cognition interact with each other, it also allows an opportunity for change.
- The more we know about our attitudes and how they are linked (or not linked) to our behaviors, the more resources we will have for ensuring that our attitudes and subsequent behaviors reflect ourselves.

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