

Last week:

1. What is an attitude?
2. How are attitudes measured?

Today:

1. Where do attitudes come from?
2. Do attitudes predict behavior?
3. How are attitudes changed?

Where do attitudes come from?

- Information about an object
 - direct experience with an object
 - indirect experience with an object
 - observe others interacting with the object
 - mass media
 - factual information

- Affective reactions to an object
 - How does an object make us feel?
 - Nervous?
 - Happy?
 - Calm?
 - Afraid?

- Learned responses
 - classical conditioning
 - attitude objects may become associated with a positive or negative stimulus
 - operant (instrumental) conditioning
 - we may learn that positive or negative responses to an object are rewarded or punished
 - modeling
 - we may imitate the positive or negative responses to an object that we observe others exhibiting

- Observing our own behaviors
 - Just as we often infer other people's attitudes from their behaviors, sometimes we look to our own behavior to infer our evaluation of an object

- Genetics?
 - Some scholars have argued that *some* of our attitudes are influenced by our genetic make-up (at least indirectly)
 - inherited sensory structures might influence our attitudes toward spicy foods or loud music
 - inherited body chemistry might influence our attitudes toward stimulants such as caffeine, alcohol, or nicotine
 - genetic differences in activity level might influence our attitudes toward various leisure activities

Summing up...

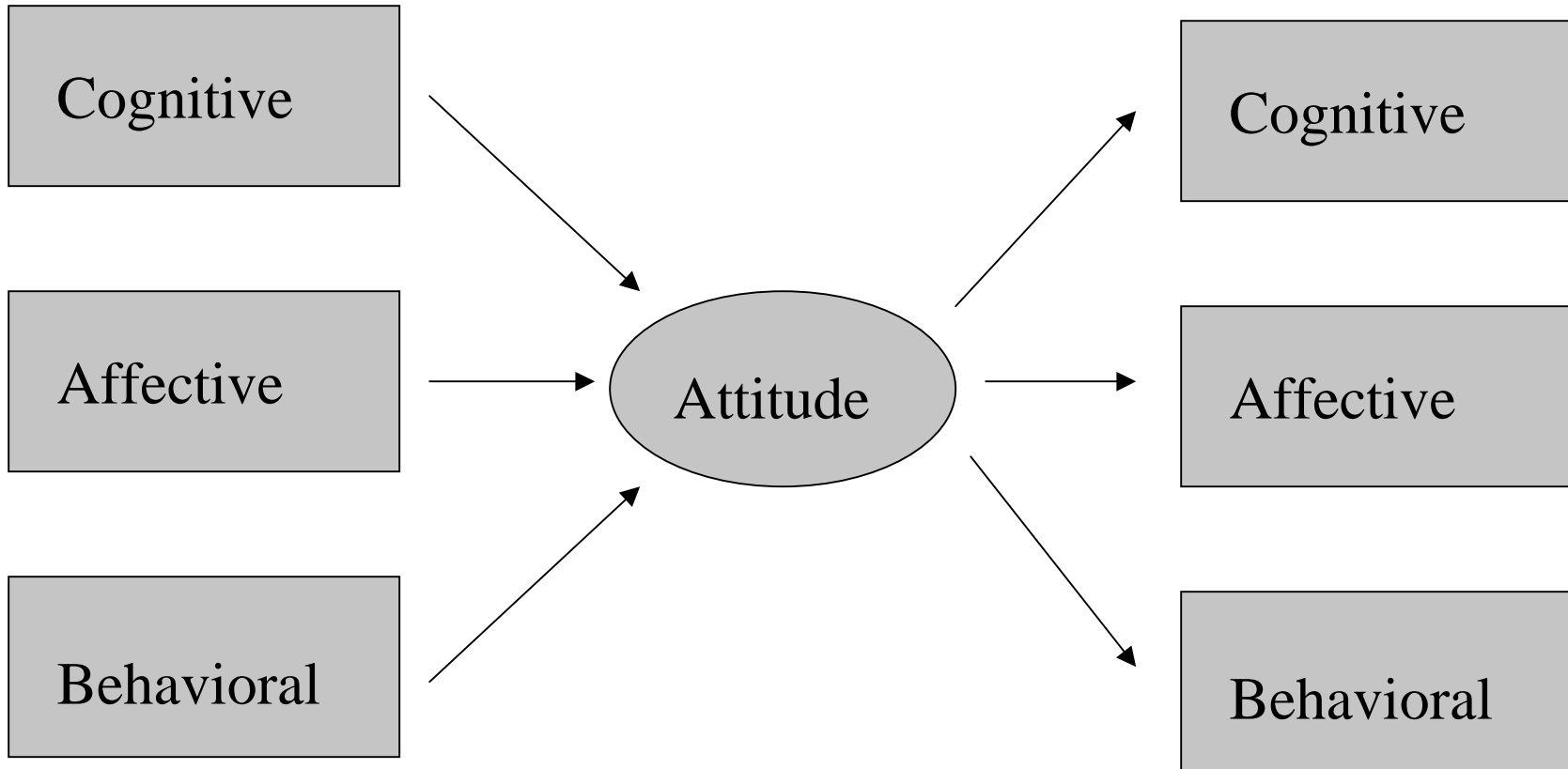
- Where do attitudes come from?
 - Information about an object
 - Affective reactions to an object
 - Learned responses to an object
 - Our own behavior toward an object
 - Maybe our genetic make-up!

Notice the symmetry...

- How are attitudes formed?
 - Cognitively
 - information about an object
 - Affectively
 - how an object makes us feel
 - Behaviorally
 - how we have behaved toward an object in the past
 - how we have seen others behave toward the object
- How are attitudes expressed?
 - Cognition
 - thoughts we have about an object
 - Affect
 - how we feel about an object
 - Behavior
 - how we behave toward an object

Input

Output



Do attitudes predict behavior?

Early attitude theorists assumed that they did:

- “The attitude is the most distinctive and important concept in contemporary American social psychology.”

» Gordon Allport (1954)

The Evidence:

- Attitudes have been shown to predict behavior toward things as diverse as:
 - littering
 - breast feeding
 - voting
 - drinking alcohol
 - recycling
 - snakes
 - religious activities
 - use of contraception

However...

- As early as the 1930's, inconsistent evidence began to emerge
 - in many studies, attitudes were found to be weakly or not at all associated with behaviors
 - attitudes toward minority groups often failed to predict behavior toward a specific member of that group
 - attitudes toward cheating were often unrelated to actual cheating behavior

1960's: Crisis

- In 1969, one scholar reviewed all of the evidence regarding attitudes and behavior and concluded:
 - “There is little evidence to support the postulated existence of stable, underlying attitudes within individuals which influence both his [or her] verbal expressions and his [or her] actions.”
 - » Alan Wicker (1969)

The Resolution...

- Measurement
 - level of specificity
 - very general attitudes can't be expected to predict very specific behaviors
 - level of specificity of the attitude and the behavior must match

Three determinants of the attitude-behavior relation:

- Individual differences
 - for some people, attitudes are highly predictive of behavior; for other people, attitudes are less predictive of behavior

- Situational factors
 - in some situations, attitudes are highly predictive of behavior, but in other situations, attitudes are not at all predictive of behavior
 - situational constraints or demands can overpower attitudes and often powerfully shape behavior

- Features of the attitude
 - Some attitudes are highly predictive of behavior, and others are not predictive of behavior at all
 - “strong” versus “weak” attitudes
 - based on a lot of information
 - highly accessible
 - based on a lot of prior thought
 - personally important
 - highly certain
 - affective/cognitive consistency

So, the relation between attitudes and behavior depends on:

- The level of specificity with which we have measured both the attitude and the behavior
- Individual differences
- Situational constraints or demands
- The strength of the attitude

How do attitudes change?

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

- Central Route
 - careful scrutiny of a persuasive message
 - generation of positive or negative cognitive responses
 - on the basis of the positive or negative thoughts generated, attitude change may occur
- Peripheral Route
 - no careful scrutiny of persuasive message
 - look for “cues” in the persuasion context
 - source expertise
 - sheer number of arguments presented
 - on the basis of the cues, attitude change may occur

- Central Route processing
 - requires ability
 - requires motivation
 - can lead to long-lasting attitude change

- Peripheral Route processing
 - requires very little ability
 - requires very little motivation
 - leads to temporary attitude shifts

When will each route be effective?

- Central route
 - when people have the ability to process a message
 - when people are motivated to process a message
 - when the arguments presented are strong and compelling

- Peripheral route

- when people don't have the ability to process a message
- when people aren't motivated to process a message
- when there are salient cues in the persuasion context