

CHAPTER SIX

ATTITUDE

I have chosen to examine the behavior analytic and cognitive approaches to the concept of attitude as a case study that reflects these two major systems' influence on theory development pertaining to social phenomena. Attitude seems a worthy choice for such an exercise since it has been used as an explanatory concept for almost the entire history of the field of social psychology and remains one of its major theoretical obsessions although sometimes appearing in different guises.

There is probably no concept in the history of psychological explanation that has been more variously defined or is more ubiquitous than attitude. That was as true in Gordon Allport's (1935, 1954) time as it is today. If, after almost 65 years of using the concept of attitude, social psychologists still do not agree on a definition, at least two things are probably true. It refers (1) to very complex human activity, and (2) that activity is important in understanding the nature of human social existence. Attitude, therefore, can serve as a subject and a theoretical context for an examination of the way that behavior analysts and cognitivists analyze social concepts. Much of the history of attitude is readily available in other sources (e.g., Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Lindzey and Aronson, 1985; Oskamp, 1991) and will not be discussed here in detail. The focus of this chapter is, instead, on the ways contemporary social psychologists use the term and on an analysis of its use in building explanation concerning social existence.

What I will call the root definition of attitude contains four fundamental concepts:

- (1) Attitude is a heightened probability (predisposition) to react in a certain way to a given social stimulus. Events in the individ-

ual shape future responses to a given social stimulus class. Thus on a January day I might say: "I know how to swim, but I am not swimming now. I am ready to swim or have a predisposition to swim given the appropriate context, that is, summertime and a body of water nearby." Social psychologists consider this state of readiness to be acquired. It is rarely considered to be genetically determined. Because this aspect of the definition of attitude has no immediate expression in behavior since it is a state of readiness, it is only defined by the appearance of one or more of the following. It is either (a) a construct indicating an event or structure not included in the definition of attitude or (b) a summary label for one or more of the observable activities listed below. I have deliberately narrowed the stimulus classes appropriate as targets for an attitude to social ones, although having an attitude toward, leafy green vegetables, for example, fits the definition.

(2) An attitude contains a verbally accessible belief component about the nature of a stimulus configuration. For example, I communicate my belief that those members of the social stimulus configuration which I label "Tories" are not of high intelligence. Let us assume that I also believe that Tories are conservative in their fiscal policies.

(3) An attitude contains an evaluation of the nature of the beliefs held about a stimulus configuration and, therefore, about the stimulus configuration itself. The evaluation is measured along a like-dislike or positive-negative continuum. For example, I have a disliking for the state of low intelligence when I notice it in another human being. Therefore, if I believe the Tories to be of low intelligence, I dislike Tories as well. On the other hand, since I have no particular liking or disliking for fiscal conservatism, that is, I am neutral on the subject, the evaluation of belief with its liking and disliking is not operative in my belief that Tories are conservative in their fiscal policies; hence I neither like nor dislike fiscal conservatives or Tories on that account. My statement is a belief, not an attitude. Some attitude theorists identify an additional emotional component which may overlap the emotion of liking or disliking associated with the evaluation of beliefs. For example, if one negatively evaluates certain beliefs thought to be characteristics of a group, one may also experience anger or anxiety toward the group as well. The strength of these emotions will vary directly with the intensity of the evaluations of the belief.

(4) An attitude contains a verbal or other behavioral component which is consistent with the belief and evaluation components on a like-dislike or positive-negative dimension. For example, given both my dislike of low intelligence and my belief that this is a characteristic of Tories, I may also (verbally) vigorously oppose that any of them be given membership in my club and I may vote accordingly. Then again, I may not, despite my beliefs and evaluations. The issue of what behavior follows from beliefs and their evaluation is a complex one and will be addressed below.

Virtually all definitions of attitude use one or more of these components with various emphases placed on one or a combination of them. My preference is to use the term attitude as a summary label only when all of the components are present. A belief expressed without an evaluation of the belief is not an attitude, but may be an opinion. Evaluations of beliefs are preferences, liking, disliking etc., which may or may not form part of an attitude depending upon whether or not the other components are present. I shall argue below that when a belief and an evaluation of that belief are present some other behavior always follows. I emphasize *other* behavior because, of course, the belief and its evaluation are also behavior.

The way I have defined attitude avoids charges that it is a mentalistic concept. In addition, it can be said to be a cognitive construct in that it is expressible verbally. That is to say, one may legitimately speak of someone "having an attitude" if it is identified by indicating (1) a consistent response to a social stimulus class, (2) the appropriate verbal behavior which we label belief and evaluation of that belief, and (3) some other behavior which follows from (1) and (2). This places the meaning of the cognitive construct of attitude as identified totally by its verbal expression. I may say that I have strong negative feelings toward Tories and I have been observed in a number of instances to state beliefs as to characteristics of Tories which I consider negative. Leaving until later a discussion of what other behavior may be predictable from these observations, but including it without example here, these three components totally constitute what I mean by attitude. There is no structure other than whatever is constituted by these three observations, all of which are verbal behavior. The implications of this are that the frequently voiced separation of attitudes from behavior, and whether to study one or the other, is an epistemologically false dichotomy. Three of the four — and sometimes also the fourth — components of attitude listed above are inherently verbal although they can be accompanied by other nonverbal reactions such as those we ordinarily label emotions. As was mentioned, some theorists regard the emotional component of attitude to be different

from that which I have suggested as the evaluative element in (3) above. The evaluative component is directed toward the belief and secondarily toward the member of the social stimulus class, at least during the acquisition phase of the attitude. That is, a previously neutral stimulus class, such as Tory, is rendered negative because I rightly or wrongly form a belief based on certain observations of Tory behavior, or I accept reports of Tory behavior from others, that Tories consistently create wrong-minded public rules and policies. Since I am negative toward wrong-headed policies, I am negative toward Tories as well through a process of generalization. This process may also generate negative emotions in me toward other Tory behavior unrelated to that which was involved in the formation of the attitude. It is this second sense of evaluation that is often referred to as the emotional component of attitudes. This is to say that an individual may consistently display negative behavior toward a social stimulus class and later add the belief and evaluative components to his or her attitude. This situation might occur, for example, when a child consistently hears his parents rail against a certain ethnic group without providing specific beliefs and evaluations of those beliefs to the child. Usually, however, the beliefs and evaluations of them are provided along with a negative emotional reaction as in "I hate Pomeranians, because they are dishonest, cruel and eat smelly foods, and I dislike dishonesty, cruelty and smelly foods."

Oskamp (1991) believes that attitude has remained a popular concept among social psychologists for a number of reasons. He says that attitude is a "*short-hand*" term (italics Oskamp's) that summarizes many different behaviors. He gives the example of love for one's family which is an expression which summarizes the behaviors of spending time with them, kissing them, comforting them etc. This is consistent with the conception that attitude is a summary label for behaviors which constitute its definition. Oskamp also believes that attitude can be a cause of a person's behavior toward another person or object. Some attitude theorists use the term in this manner, but there are significant problems attached to this use. If attitude is considered a cause it cannot, simultaneously, be used as a summary term, and few theorists would use it in both ways at the same time. In order for attitude to be used as a causal term, its specific content and the way that content acts on the environment must be specified. Once the content of attitude is specified, we find that every theorist includes some or all of the elements of the definition presented above and that these are almost always included in the effects one wishes to predict from the attitude as cause. There is, therefore, a confounding of cause and effect in the idea that attitude can be used as a cause to predict what is contained in its very definition. On the other hand, if what is predicted is behavior other than beliefs and evaluations of those beliefs [part (4) of the definition], then the problem arises as to whether or not any other

behavior is predictable from attitude when it is described as containing beliefs and evaluations of those beliefs. As we shall see below, it is difficult to demonstrate that attitudes, however measured, predict behavior beyond that indicated in their very definition. In what sense then, can attitude ever be considered a cause of some other behavior? When we speak of attitude we are referring to a causative process, but it is contained in the acquisition of an attitude, not in its definition. This follows from the contention that attitude is and must be a summary label for various identifiable processes. Much attitude theory begins with the observation of an existing attitude, however formed, and describes and makes various predictions based on this discovery. This is one of the reasons why the concept is often reified by labeling it a cognitive structure. Once this happens, attitude seems as if it possesses causal power. The causes usually associated with attitude are better placed in the process of its acquisition rather than in conceiving attitude to be a structure with actual content. This point will be discussed more fully when specific theories of attitude are considered.

Oskamp (1991) believes that attitude helps to explain the consistency of a person's behavior. Attitude is the term we use for summarizing the consistency of a person's behavior — it doesn't explain it. We know an attitude exists when a person acts consistently in terms of the four characteristics described above. If there is no set of beliefs consistently applied to a social stimulus class, there is no attitude toward it. If there is a set of beliefs applied to a social stimulus class, but no evaluations of the beliefs, there is also no attitude. I may believe that Pomeranians are tall, dark-haired, garrulous, and athletic, but if I associate no positive nor negative values with those characteristics, it can be said that I have no attitude toward Pomeranians. Again, the idea that attitude explains, that is, supplies a causal sequence for the consistency of behavior rather than merely describing it, is probably a function of its reification in whatever theory it is used in that manner.

Classic Definitions of Attitude

In Gordon Allport's (1935) classic work on the conception of attitude, he indicates that an attitude-like construct was first introduced in the 1880's with Lange's psychophysical work on signal detection. Lange discovered that a subject who was verbally prepared to press a telegraph key immediately upon perceiving a signal reacted more quickly than one whose attention was deliberately focused on the signal. This phenomenon was eventually labeled *Aufgabe* for the task at hand and *Einstellung*, translated "set," for the condition of the organism that produced the differential reaction time. This work initiated a flurry of interest among German psychologists of the time. Nuances of the *Aufgabe-Einstellung* phenomenon were detected, new terms

introduced, and more research performed. The result was an almost universal recognition of a presumably cortical arrangement that accounted for the variable of set, which allowed psychologists to cease thinking about the origins of the behavior associated with the new concept. It was not at all clear how set, or the term used with increasing regularity now, attitude, was represented in human consciousness. Psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the active unconscious, provided one explanation as to how attitude might work. However, the observable referents associated with this process remained elusive.

Allport listed sixteen definitions of attitude, all of which indicated that attitude was some form of a state of readiness to respond in a specified manner to certain stimuli. Without listing the sources of these definitions, which were given from 1901 to 1934 (see Allport, 1935, p. 804), attitude was variously defined as readiness for attention or action; mental postures for conduct; mental dispositions; set or readiness to act; a more or less enduring state of readiness of mental organization; a physiological stress exerted upon a sensory field (Gestalt); a tendency to act; an individual consciousness; neural preparation in advance of the actual response; general set of the organism; modes of emotional regard for objects; a residuum of experience; a change of (neural) set; a disposition to act; verbalized or verbalizable tendencies (sets); and dispositions and adjustments toward certain acts. It is clear even from this cursory look at the definitions that they can be collapsed into a very few themes, the central one of which is readiness to respond. One of the definitions suggests a direct physiologically given "stress" which affects sensory response while another also refers to a "neural set." Only one refers to "verbalized or verbalizable tendencies." All of the definitions either totally bracket or only suggest the origin or acquisitional process of this readiness to act. The references to the neural substratum as determiner of attitude suggest a direction in which to look, but offer no hypothesis as to the nature of these neural arrangements. The definition referring to verbal activity still emphasizes the tendency to act, but indicates that this has something to do with verbal arrangement. All of these older definitions of attitude can be taken as descriptions of a segment of human behavior to which the term "attitude" is used as a summary device for these behaviors. The term has no other epistemological function aside from those indicating possible physiological determiners, and these provide no further specification as to what the determiners might be. This general conception of readiness to act remains in contemporary conceptions of attitude. In order to separate the concept from nonhuman animal behavior which can frequently be described as a readiness to act, as when a domestic cat vocalizes and rubs against the leg of the person that feeds it every morning, attitude will be assigned only to human beings and will be described as detectable only through verbal behavior or through other behavior predicted from beliefs.

Theory of Attitude

Concerning the conception of attitude as a state of readiness to respond, a belief, an evaluation of a belief, and other behavior, we come to the heart of most theoretical conceptions of it. Because much research has shown that the "other behavior" component does not always follow from the belief and the evaluation of belief, the three sometimes have been considered to be separate but related entities with the term "attitude" being reserved for the evaluative ("affective") component. Much empirical research has been done especially on the "other behavior" component to show that it often has little relationship to the belief and evaluative components. Although, as we shall see below, there are questions associated with this contention that can be empirically resolved. At its base, the issue is a definitional and a logical one.

People have all kinds of beliefs. They believe that when a dinner plate slips off a table it will move down, not up, and that coffee tastes better with sugar, and that all or most Tories are deceitful. It is not useful to consider all of these beliefs to be attitudinal. The belief that objects fall down not up generally does not have an evaluative component: if one were to demonstrate that there are times when an object can be made to fall up rather than down, many people would greet this demonstration with surprise, delight, awe, but it would not upset them. We would simply consider it one of the many new developments accomplished by scientists to which we will eventually grow accustomed. If a person who likes sugar with her coffee is told that others prefer it without, this will usually be unaccompanied by an evaluation of that fact. Instead there will probably be a recognition that people differ in their drinking habits. If, however, a local Tory wins an election and someone becomes behaviorally upset because of this, it is possible to sort out a set of beliefs and evaluations of those beliefs which we then properly and usefully label "attitude." This then allows us to discriminate that situation from the other two.

Other Behavior

The fourth component of attitude, which I have persisted in labeling "other behavior," is the most controversial. The components of attitude are *all* behavior. This follows from the discussion of the empty character of cognitive social constructs unless they are defined by their specific physiological components, which they are not. Attitude, as we have seen, can be considered a construct only in the sense that all of its components are verbally reviewable and can be shown to be related to one another systematically. Beliefs, their evaluation, and other behavior that may follow from them form a potential predictive chain. We only know of the presence of an attitude

when an individual tells us about it or behaves in a manner that indicates to us that if we were to ask him whether he believed certain things about a certain social stimulus class he would verbally respond in a way that would confirm our original assessment. If a person consistently grimaces and shakes his fist whenever a Tory walks by, we would probably predict that his verbal beliefs and evaluations of those beliefs would be consistent with our expectations that he holds a negative attitude toward Tories. A problem arises with the behavioral component of attitude when there is no "other" behavior that is consistent with the verbally expressed belief and evaluation. A person can declare a number of negatively evaluated beliefs about Tories and yet be perfectly polite and even helpful when encountering one. In this situation, even though there is behavior of the verbal sort (the evaluated beliefs) that is expressed, no other behavior seems to be predictable from it. LaPiere's (1934) classic experiment seems to have begun the attitude-behavior controversy. He found that only one hotel refused service to a Chinese couple although 92% of 250 hotels previously sampled by questionnaire declared they would not accommodate Chinese. The immediate impact of this experiment was to throw doubt on the other behavior component of attitude since LaPiere reasonably expected that the hotel proprietors would behave consistently with their verbally stated beliefs and evaluations. That they did not do so cast suspicion on the very definition of attitude and on its usefulness as a concept aiding the prediction of various social phenomena. Some theorists apparently separate out this other behavioral component from the conception of attitude, but there is some lack of clarity as when attitudes are defined as ". . . tendencies to evaluate an entity with some degree of favor or disfavor, [and] are ordinarily *expressed* (italics mine) in cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses" (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993, p. 155). With this definition the very evidence on which an attitude is judged to exist, the favorable or unfavorable evaluation, seems to be also that which is expressed, namely cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses. We observe the presence of an attitude when we record beliefs (cognitive), evaluations of those beliefs (affective), and other behavior (this remains problematic). If we assign the cognitive and affective components as evidence of the existence of a tendency to react to a certain stimulus class, then this problem disappears and we have only the other behavior with which to be concerned.

Research conducted from the 1930's to the present on the relationship between attitude and behavior has focused on this "other behavior." Wicker (1969) summarized his own and others' research that indicated there was little relationship between attitude and various behaviors which were independent of the behavior that specified the attitude in the first place. Wicker's summary and conclusions quite legitimately held that where one might expect a known attitude to coincide with various related behaviors, they do

not. In some of the studies on White attitudes toward African-Americans, negative beliefs failed to predict what one might reasonably expect to be behavior that would follow from these beliefs (e.g., DeFleur and Westie, 1958; Rokeach and Mezei, 1966). In short, the results were quite similar to those of LaPiere. However, studies not performed in a laboratory (e.g., Fishbein and Ajzen, 1974), indicated that attitudes were successful predictors of other behavior. Survey studies have shown, for example, that a positive attitude toward the Democratic party often results in a vote for a Democratic candidate. Returning to the LaPiere study, it has been said (e.g., Campbell and Stanley, 1966) that the negative attitude of the hotel keepers was not as strong as their reluctance to appear intolerant in public. Before examining some of the literature addressing this point, it can be said that an attitude is *always* predictive of some other behavior. Contrary to the results of Wicker's survey of studies concerned with the predictive power of attitudes, people do not hold attitudes unless it affects other aspects of their behavior with regard to the social stimulus group toward which the attitudes are directed. Holding for later discussion how an attitude is formed, it is still possible to say that the verbal arrangement which we call attitude is connected to some of our nonverbal experiences because those experiences were central to the attitudes' formation. This would be the case if either I say that all Tories are dishonest, impolite, and eat smelly foods and I do not like those characteristics, or if I am observed grimacing when a Tory walks by. If, however, my negative attitude is assumed to be based upon my verbalizations alone, the question remains as to whether or not any other behavior, besides the verbal, can be predicted from my verbalizations. If I have a negative attitude toward Tories and a LaPiere-type experiment is constructed so that I am placed in frequent contact with Tories, that is, the number of opportunities to behave in a manner consistent with my verbalized attitude increases dramatically, I am likely to display behavior consistent with my verbalized attitude. This is, of course, not a logical conclusion, but rather a prediction whose support seems likely. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) have spoken of the aggregation of behaviors associated with an attitude. I might speak politely to a Tory and never discuss my attitude with him, and not exclude him from my club, but I might not invite him to dinner under any circumstances and certainly would protest his being friendly with my daughter. If we continue to monitor more and more behaviors which have some connection with the attitude, it is likely we will find one or more behaviors that can be predicted from the verbally stated attitude.

The strength of the attitude, measurable by a Likert or other scale, should be positively correlated with the number of behaviors likely to be predicted from it. The importance of the attitude should also be positively correlated with the number of behaviors predictable from it. This suggests that broad

social issues, which involve a number of behaviors, are likely to generate a good deal of controversy. Hence attitudes toward these social issues, and the social groups germane to them, will probably predict a number of behaviors. Fishbein and Ajzen (1974) showed that although specific behaviors were not particularly predictable from religious attitudes, the number of such behaviors was predictable. The study was somewhat limited in that it required subjects to choose those behaviors in which they had engaged from a list of one hundred possible behaviors. Subjects were not observed performing these behaviors, which would have provided a more convincing demonstration of the predictability of behavior from attitude. Nevertheless, even with the limitations presented by any single study, it is clear that certain behaviors follow from particular attitudes.

In our discussion of behavior and attitudes I have used the grammar of most social psychologists in saying that attitude predicts behavior. This separates the two concepts in a manner which raises the question of whether or not behavior is part of the definition of attitude or is separate from it. Returning to the four basic components of attitude we may now draw some intermediate conclusions. Because attitude is a summary term empty of meaning aside from its referents, a decision must be made as to which referents constituent what we mean by the term. The (1) readiness to behave component is dependent upon (2) our ability to extract verbalizations (beliefs) which indicate this readiness and (3) upon evaluations of these beliefs and (4) upon our observations of other behavior — which leads us to believe that if we did extract the appropriate verbal behavior, it would confirm the readiness to behave which we have already witnessed. Let us assume that we have obtained the answers to a number of questions which we have put to a subject which lead us to believe that she holds a particular attitude toward a target social group. These answers will reflect beliefs and evaluations of those beliefs, which means that the concept of attitude as readiness to behave reduces to, or is defined as, beliefs and evaluations of those beliefs. The fourth element, other behavior, refers to the predictand. It is conceptually possible to leave this fourth element out of the definition of attitude. However, if it is true, as suggested above, that other behavior is likely to follow from the first three elements, it has sometimes been included in the definition. Since beliefs and their evaluation constitute the state of readiness used in every definition of attitude and the only excess meaning is contained in the fact that we can predict other behavior from beliefs and their evaluation, the term “readiness” is either empty or synonymous with attitude. We are left with the following definition of attitude: attitude refers to the process whereby a belief and an evaluation of that belief allow for successful predictions of other related behavior. The entire definition is functional and does not refer to attitude as if it had structural status. It leaves open the possibility

that physiological and early life experiences might have determined these functional properties. No psychologist has seriously pursued the physiological implications of the attitude concept, but an analysis can be made of early life experiences and their affect on the formation of attitudes.

The Formation of Attitudes

Attitudes regarding social issues have most likely been formed over a number of years beginning in childhood. One can imagine a negative attitude toward an ethnic group beginning to form in a child who hears his mother or father criticizing the group and, for example, that group's habits at the dinner table. It is possible that a child's attitude toward a particular ethnic group can be formed without having actual contact. Beliefs and the evaluation of beliefs are formed as a result of the verbal communication between parent and child with the appropriate verbal responses reinforced by parental approval and the inappropriate ones eliminated usually by punishment. Later in life actual social contact with members of the ethnic group may yield behavior that is predictable from the verbally acquired beliefs. A child may also acquire a verbally structured attitude as a result of specific experiences which are generalized to a social stimulus class. Suppose a child walking to school on a particular street is roughed up by an older boy. On returning home and relating the incident to his mother, she tells him to avoid that street in future because the people who live on it are Tories who are aggressive. The appellation "Tory" is then assigned to the older boy as is the characteristic of aggressiveness. If in the future, the boy not only avoids the older boy, but also anyone else he identifies as a Tory, response generalization has occurred. Avoidance behavior has been established indicating that some other behavior is predictable from the belief and evaluation components.

This process is similar to those that occur in nonhuman animals and that are necessary for survival. The ability to generalize allows an animal to save time in the assessment needed to choose what is fit to eat, what stimulus objects to avoid, with whom to mate, etc. If a hungry lion could not generalize from one wildebeest to another despite their minor, but obvious differences in size, hair color, and speed of running, it would starve to death. Occasionally the animal's generalization represents an apparent failure to discriminate an important difference between one ostensibly similar animal and another of the same type, as when a domestic cat successfully drives off a sedentary dog and fails to do so when attacking a hunting dog. Humans could not negotiate their day if they did not minimize certain differences in the environment and instead act only on a few object characteristics. If we need the services of a police officer quickly, we look for someone in a dark

blue uniform. We may make a mistake, as when we ask for police services from someone in such a uniform who turns out to be a doorman. Such reactions and errors occur frequently in daily life, but are usually immediately correctable and cause few problems for either the perceiver or the perceived. However, when the natural generalization process is directed toward a social stimulus class, problems may arise. The generalization of a few perceived or imagined negative characteristics to all members of an ethnic group is socially destructive. Typically, as in any generalization process, differences among members of the social stimulus class toward which the generalizations are held are glossed over. If the generalizations consist of a number of beliefs which are negatively evaluated, the generalizations constitute what we have defined as a negative attitude. It is, of course, possible to hold a positive attitude toward a social stimulus class which develops and operates in the same manner as a negative attitude. There are people, for example, who believe that everything the English, Italians or French do is wonderful. Behaviors not consistent with positively evaluated beliefs are ignored or explained away. However, positive generalizations (attitudes) are rarely destructive; thus they have been somewhat neglected by both social psychologists and the general public. Negative attitudes held by one segment of the population against another have, understandably, received more attention than have generalized positive attitudes.

Behavior analysts (e.g., Guerin, 1994) emphasize the generalization process to a much greater extent than do cognitive social psychologists. Behavior analysts reverse the typical cognitive explanation of how attitudes are acquired. Beliefs, which are always verbal, are formed as a result of an individual observing how he or she behaves with regard to a social stimulus class. If one finds oneself avoiding people from a certain group and behaving negatively toward them, one then forms negatively evaluated beliefs about that group. Notice how this position solves the problem of whether attitudes predict other behavior by suggesting that the beliefs and evaluations that constitute attitude are determined by that other behavior. However, it is also possible, as we have seen, for beliefs and evaluations to form without any other behavior being involved as when beliefs are reinforced directly in parent communications to children. Nevertheless, the evaluative component of the attitude is reflective of the strengthening effect of the belief. For example, when I say I believe the English to be honest, the fact that I value honesty generalizes to the English, and I say I like the English. At this point, the behavior analyst might say I find myself making positive responses toward the English and therefore I respond verbally to them in a manner which I also consider positive.

Attitudes, for a behavior analyst (Guerin, 1994), are verbal behavior directed at oneself or others about "other behavior." An attitude is not consid-

ered a causal event, but rather social commentary which may or may not be related to one's behavior regarding the content of the attitude. As we would expect, behavior analysts reject the idea of an attitude being a construct with ontological, and therefore causal, status. That position is consistent with the one taken here. Since behavior analysts consider attitudes to be verbal behavior with effects on listeners as well as on speakers, the verbal community plays a central role in attitude formation and expression. It is Guerin's position that reporting an attitude is often a requirement of the verbal community as when one is asked to deliver an opinion on, for example, "the situation in Northern Ireland," or when asked how one "feels" about the national drug policy. The implication is that the attitude or opinion has no causal status and does not necessarily reflect generalizations based upon specific reinforcement histories. Guerin considers this "tacting" (see Chapter 2) to be a major function of attitudes. His position minimizes the content of an attitude in influencing a behavior which may follow from the attitude regarding the appropriate social group, and maximizes the tacting nature of attitudinal expression, a behavior which is maintained by the verbal community and not by reinforcements directly provided by the group toward which the attitude is directed. For example, if I say I do not like Tories for certain reasons, this has less to do with reinforcements associated with Tories than it does with reinforcements from the verbal community in which I express the attitude: I might perceive that stating that one does not like Tories is generally reinforced within the verbal community in which I function.

Guerin continues his interpretive analysis of attitude by showing the relationship between attitude and other parts of verbal behavior developed by Skinner (1957) as we discussed in some detail in Chapter 2. Besides its tacting function, the expression of an attitude can actually be a mand when a supervisor says to one of her employees that she does not like people who drink coffee at work (Guerin, 1994, p. 238) — she is actually manding that she does not want the employee to drink coffee at work. An attitudinal statement can be cast as an autoclitic such as "I have always believed that it is important for people not to drink coffee at work." Presumably an attitude expressed as an autoclitic is more forceful than when it is expressed as a mand disguised as a tact, but Guerin does not make this clear. When speaking of a belief, Guerin separates it from attitude such that the evaluation of the belief is the attitude and the belief is "something else." As we have seen, other social psychologists make this distinction as well. The position taken here is, of course, that evaluation, that is, liking–disliking, is meaningless without something liked or disliked, in which case it is conceptually clearer to include the belief within the conception of attitude rather than to omit it. Evaluated beliefs are attitudes, and as has been argued above, some other behavior always follows from this. Since Guerin holds that attitudes can be

used as mands or tacts, but are essentially autoclitics, he emphasizes the communicative nature of attitudes and de-emphasizes the content of the belief. All of his illustrations of the operation of the verbal expression of attitude focus upon the attitude's influence on other people and how these statements are reinforced by members of a verbal community. The social stimulus group that is the target of the attitude is also affected by the attitude. That is to say, there are real consequences for Tories, however minor they may be, if I hold a negative attitude toward them. I may vote against a Tory candidate for political office on these grounds alone, or not sell my house to one on the same grounds. Generally, Guerin's position with respect to the nature of attitudes is to focus upon the process of acquisition and its functional consequences. This is to be expected from the general behavior analytic epistemology and is consistent with the emphasis here placed on generalization as the fundamental process by which attitudes, however defined, are acquired.

There are actually very few theories of attitude formation. Most theories focus on attitude change. Where theories are concerned with the formation of attitudes the focus is generally narrowed to rather specific instances. For example, the expectancy-value model of attitude formation (Fishbein, 1963) holds that an attitude (defined as the evaluation of a social stimulus object) is the sum of the expected values of the attributes of the attitude object. One may believe that Tories are intelligent, brave, and conscientious, but they lack compassion for their fellow citizens. The sum of the degree to which the individual is certain of Tories possessing each of these characteristics (the beliefs), as well as an evaluation of each attribute (the evaluation), gives an index of the attitude strength. Attitude is simply a summary term for the two operations. It has no extra meaning. In short, the expectancy-value model is quite traditional and clearly defines the operations needed to discover the existence of attitudes without suggesting how the acquisition process occurs.

Attitude Change

There is some confusion that arises with the various attempts to explain attitude formation and change. These can be summarized as follows below.

(1) Is it meaningful to say that one holds an attitude toward a single object which does not represent a class of objects? For example, if it is said that I have an attitude toward a particular political candidate it is obvious that he or she does not constitute a stimulus class, or at best a stimulus class with only a single member. Nevertheless theorists do use the term attitude to refer to beliefs and evaluations that refer to individuals. If I believe that a political

candidate is honest and intelligent, but not compassionate, this description certainly has the structure of an attitude but lacks reference to a class of social stimuli. Confusion mounts when attitude is also defined as a person's beliefs and evaluations of those beliefs applied to an entire class of social stimuli such as an ethnic, religious or political group. In the case of an attitude toward a single individual there is no stimulus generalization. A person believed to be honest, intelligent, and compassionate may constitute the entire belief system of the attitude holder toward that person. These beliefs are not generalized to anyone else, as is often the case in people's conceptions about ethnic groups. Conversely, one's beliefs and evaluations of those beliefs held toward that social stimulus class called politicians is necessarily general in that it encompasses a number of known and unknown individuals who fit the category. My preference is to restrict the term attitude to belief and evaluative phenomena that are directed to stimulus classes.

(2) How is the process of the formation of attitudes different from the process of attitude change? Attitude formation requires the acquisition of the appropriate language to express the attitude. This, in turn, suggests that the individual be reinforced by appropriate non-linguistic and linguistic consequences involving the representation (linguistic or perceptual) of the attitude object(s). It is difficult to maintain an attitude toward a social class no member of which can be identified. If I say I dislike Tories and list my relevant beliefs and evaluations, but cannot identify a Tory by any means, it is, for me, an attitude without a stimulus class and is likely to disappear over time. Yet such an attitude can be formed, as we have seen, purely through the reinforcement of certain verbal responses. My father has often said that he dislikes Tories because they are dishonest, aggressive and lack compassion, characteristics he dislikes, and he reinforces the same response in me. I might develop such a negative attitude toward Tories even though I have never seen one nor am I able to recognize one. People's demeanor sometimes changes when they learn that a person with whom they have been on cordial terms is a member of a social stimulus class toward which they have a negative attitude although they were not able to make the discrimination up to that point in time. Any number of plays and movies have been about the discovery and the resulting change of one character when he or she discovers that a friend is Jewish or is part African. The lack of ability to perceive membership in an attitude class can, of course, also be involved when the attitude is developed through non-linguistic experience. If I am cheated and attacked by someone who either identifies himself as a Tory or is identified as a Tory by others, I might still have difficulty in identifying Tories in the future. People have difficulty in identifying members of many ethnic groups whether or not they hold positive or negative attitudes toward them. Quite often the

only way to identify a member of a social stimulus class is by a member of that class announcing it. Part of the prolonged negative attitudes of some European-Americans toward African-Americans or Asians is supported by the relative ease of identifying a member of those groups compared with identifying members of sub-groups within the broader European category.

Assessing changes in attitudes is somewhat less difficult than describing their acquisition. Once an attitude exists as a verbalized set of beliefs and evaluations, it can be examined for its ability to predict related behaviors and for any changes that may occur over time as a result of various experiences in the life of the individual. The assessment of an existing attitude usually consists of taking a sample by questionnaire of individual verbal behavior that reflects the evaluation of various characteristics of the social stimulus class. Once the attitude is evaluated, and an index of its strength and importance is determined, an attempt to change it can proceed. Such an attempt needs to be directed toward one of the three elements that define attitude. Changing the attitudinal beliefs or the evaluations of them is more difficult than changing non-attitudinal beliefs where no evaluation is involved. Changing non-attitudinal beliefs is a process we equate with education. That is, the process of formal or informal instruction directed at the young and the uninformed consists of both providing information or correcting misinformation. If I explain the evidence for the earth orbiting the sun to someone who believes that the sun orbits the earth, but who has no particular liking or disliking associated with that belief, change will likely occur if my arguments are perceived as sound. When a mechanic suggests that the noise in the front end of your car was caused by a faulty axle rather than by the brakes, as you believed, you are likely to change your belief very quickly. Then again, if my explanation that the sun is orbited by the earth and not vice versa is contrary to the tenets of your religious beliefs, and thus is accompanied by a strong positive evaluation, you are not likely to change your belief in favor of the heliocentric explanation.

Another attempt at changing attitudes can be made by separating the negative evaluated beliefs from the social stimulus class. Let us assume that we have identified a group of people all of whom hold strong negative attitudes toward Tories. If they hold in common the beliefs that Tories are dishonest, aggressive and lack compassion, one can attempt to detach Tories, as a group, from these beliefs. We may provide information about specific Tories that have, contrary to these beliefs, been shown to be honest, non-aggressive, and compassionate. This approach usually fails to change strongly held attitudes because it is easy enough for the attitude holder to view this information as an exception. Ethnic groups in the United States have attempted to change negative attitudes directed toward them by providing information that some universally admired individuals are members of their particular group. The

hope is that some of the positive assessments held toward the universally admired figure will generalize to the whole group because the group is of the same ethnicity. In large cities of the Northeast such as New York and Philadelphia, parades are held annually by some of the larger ethnic groups living in these cities. There is a Columbus Day parade held by the Italians, a Polish Kosciusko Day parade, a German von Steuben Day parade, a St. Patrick's Day parade with the Irish and so forth. In each of these parades cultural heroes, preferably those with ties to both the United States and the old country, are celebrated. The heroes are typically accepted as such by both the ethnic group and other individuals not of that group. The idea is primarily to enhance the reputation of the ethnic group and secondarily to counterbalance negative characteristics associated with it by non-members. Although these parades have become traditional, they were initially, at least in part, attempts to change the negative attitude of the surrounding non-ethnics toward the group, and also to reinforce the ethnic group's own sense of worth.

Another possibility is to separate beliefs from their evaluations. This is even a more difficult task since negative evaluations of dishonesty, aggressiveness and lack of compassion, etc., have undoubtedly been established over a lifetime and are usually tenaciously held. In short, attitudes are extremely difficult to change particularly if the evaluation component is strong.

This leaves the other behavior, which may be predicted from evaluations and their beliefs, as the remaining candidate for change. Changing behavior predictable from belief and evaluation components is possible if the agent for change possesses certain power over the attitude holder. A prime example of such a situation occurred some years ago when the federal government of the United States ordered the racial integration of various educational institutions in the traditional South. The prevailing attitudes of a large number of white Southerners were clearly negative as they pertained to school integration and African-Americans in general. The government's insistence upon school integration in Arkansas, Mississippi, and elsewhere created a behavioral reality which, at least at the time, clashed significantly with the attitudes of a number of people. One of the results of the government action was that many Southerners removed their children from the integrated school system and sent them to private schools — in many cases created specifically to thwart integration.

Of great interest is the question of whether or not, over the years after the government decisions, the attitudes of white Southerners in these areas changed or has remained the same. One suspects, of course, that the behavioral fact of school integration influenced changes in the belief and evaluation portions of the attitude of white Southerners toward African-Americans. Whether these attitudes are more negative or more positive since the decisions to integrate the Southern school systems is open to empirical

investigation. From casual observation, one might suspect that these attitudes have become more positive. Changing behavior related to the verbally stated belief and evaluative components of attitude serves at least two purposes. It reduces the destructive quality of many strongly held negative attitudes of one societal sub-group, and it may reduce the strength of the negative evaluation and change the nature of the beliefs so as to render the attitude more positive.

(3) Is it necessary to postulate attitude as an explanatory concept in order to account for generalized responses to stimulus classes? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. There is no doubt that both nonhuman animals and human beings respond similarly to the members of certain classes of stimuli. When these generalized response patterns are verbal there is some utility in labeling the process, attitude, to distinguish it from generalized responses which are either not verbal or typical of another species. As we have seen, ontological and epistemological difficulties arise when the summary term "attitude" is conceived to be a cognitive or physiological structure of some kind that possesses characteristics independent of the belief, evaluation and other behavioral components.

(4) What is the difference between decisions predictable from known attitudes versus decisions that have no apparent attitudinal basis? Many of the examples from the research literature (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993) are more about decision making and opinion shifts than they are about changes in attitude. As we have seen, researchers use the term attitude to refer both to long-held beliefs and evaluations as well as to transitory ones such as those directed toward a political candidate. In addition, the stimulus classes associated with an attitude often encompass a single instance (e.g., the political candidate) rather than a class of stimuli (e.g., political candidates in general). In short, the terms "opinion" and "attitude" are often used interchangeably and this confuses the issue further. Opinions may or may not be, but attitudes are always, response generalizations.

Theories of Attitude Change

William McGuire's (1985) information processing theory of attitude change describes the process through which an incoming message must pass in order for belief to change. When a message is (1) presented, the recipient must be (2) attentive to it, must (3) comprehend it, must (4) yield to and (5) retain its suggestions which then influence (6) other behavior. Steps two through four are usually considered cognitive processes which are viewed here as covert verbal behavior or thought, with all the implications stemming from

the discussions presented in earlier chapters. For McGuire, this labeling focuses the observer's attention on specific aspects of the process which are crucial to affect change in it. McGuire hypothesizes that the likelihood of appropriate other behavior (6) occurring is a function of the product of the individual probabilities of occurrence of steps two through five. Since the multiplication of probabilities always produces a product smaller than the probability of occurrence of any one of the multipliers, the chance of behavior change is likely to be relatively small, since it is a function of the probability of occurrence of each of McGuire's steps multiplied in sequence. If any of the six steps does not occur, the process ceases and no behavior is predictable. This contention supports the general observation that it is difficult to change attitude in any case, and particularly through verbal messages, especially if the desired consequence is to influence the occurrence of some behavior. Eagly and Chaiken (1993), in illustrating McGuire's ideas, give the illustration of a television message designed to inform the public about the risks of high blood pressure which presumably encourages the populace to have their pressure checked. This example is used to illustrate McGuire's conception, but is not really attitudinal as defined here. It has more to do with the success or failure of an opinion change than with a long-term attitude. This running together of short- and long-term decisions and the presence and absence of evaluative components is, as we have seen, frequently found in attitudinal literature. To say that one has an attitude toward taking or not taking one's blood pressure surely involves different processes than, for example, an attitude toward a religious or ethnic group. Very few people will disagree about the value of taking one's blood pressure periodically, so long as they understand what is being done. They either have their blood pressure taken regularly or not because of factors other than their evaluation of the process. However, people will likely differ widely in their long-term attitudes toward various ethnic and religious groups. It is virtually impossible to change a long-established attitude on the basis of a single or even multiple verbal messages.

Petty and Cacioppo's (1981, 1986a, 1986b) elaborations-likelihood conception of opinion and or attitude change consists of seven postulates which provide the conditions under which the verbal behavior of the subject is likely to change regarding a particular opinion or attitude topic. These postulates describe both the determiners of verbal behavior toward a social stimulus class and the nonverbal determiners that also influence attitude change. The postulates follow below.

1. People are motivated to hold correct attitudes. This can be interpreted to mean that people's verbal and other behavior regarding a social stimulus class is more likely to be reinforced by the verbal community if this behavior is the same as, or consis-

tent with, their own. When this behavior is found to be usefully descriptive of some environmental conditions as well, it is said to be correct. The verbal and "other behavior" constitutes the attitude. For example, I am convinced that my attitude toward Tories (that they are dishonest, aggressive and lack compassion) is correct when it is echoed by many others in my social group and when I have directly observed one or more Tories behaving in a manner consistent with my expectations.

2. Although people want to hold correct attitudes, the amount and nature of issue-relevant elaboration in which people are willing or able to engage in evaluating a message varies with individual and situational factors. I may wish to hear a talk on the nature of Tory behavior, but do not wish to travel the distance it would take to hear it. Thus, I believe I am prevented by my immediate situation from attending.

3. Variables can affect the amount and direction of attitude change by (a) serving as persuasive arguments, (b) serving as peripheral cues, and/or (c) affecting the extent or direction of issue and argument elaboration. Item (a) refers to the nature of the persuasive argument used to change attitude. There are, of course, well and poorly constructed arguments. For example, most people hope that the politician's message will concentrate on exactly what he or she proposes to do while in office and the advertiser's message will concentrate on the actual characteristics of the product. Item (b) refers to those variables that have nothing to do with the issue in question, but which accompany it and may very well be effective in producing opinion change. For example, the ethnic background of a politician or her physical attractiveness can be influences in changing attitude or opinion even though these characteristics may be irrelevant to the characteristics which are at the heart of the attitude.

4. Variables affecting motivation and/or ability to process a message in a relatively objective manner can do so by either enhancing or reducing argument scrutiny. The message itself or attention to the peripheral cues mentioned in postulate 3 can lead the individual to scrutinize or to ignore the content of the persuasive message. The fact that I may consider a politician physically attractive either induces me to pay greater attention to what she says or to neglect what she says and concentrate on her attractiveness, both of which may result in my changing an opin-

ion. This seems to be a corollary of postulate 3 rather than a separate postulate.

5. As motivation and/or ability to process arguments are decreased, peripheral cues become relatively more important determiners of persuasion. Conversely, as argument scrutiny is increased, peripheral cues become relatively less important determiners of persuasion. This is a corollary of postulate 4 and simply adds a quantitative perspective to the processes indicated there.

6. Variables affecting message processing in a relatively biased manner can produce either a positive (favorable) or negative (unfavorable) motivational and/or ability bias (ability to process a message) to issue-relevant thoughts. If either the content of the message or one or more of the peripheral cues are constructed to direct the attitude or opinion change in a particular direction, they may or may not succeed. If a message's content contains an emotional appeal along with its substantive argument, individuals may turn away from the substantive argument even though they were initially disposed to embrace it. The same is true for reaction to peripheral cues. The politician's message may succeed because of her attractiveness or fail for that very reason despite the quality of the substantive argument.

7. Attitude changes that result from processing issue-relevant arguments will show greater temporal persistence, greater prediction of behavior, and greater resistance to counter persuasion than attitude changes that result from peripheral cues. People who are convinced by the validity of the argument of the persuasive message will be more influenced in a variety of their behaviors than people who change attitude or opinion because of attention to peripheral cues.

Given that attitude requires a long-term perspective and a social stimulus, it is likely that Petty and Cacioppo's system is directed to the conditions under which short-term opinions, rather than long-held attitudes, change. As we have seen, most attitude change systems refer to single person or single event issues rather than person or event classes. Nevertheless, Petty and Cacioppo's system, besides being a useful analysis of what most likely occurs when people change their opinions, is an attempt to formally present a theoretical structure in the form of explicit postulates which may be related to long-term, attitudinal change. Indeed, this postulate system serves as an indicator of the important variables that are involved in the maintenance

and change of beliefs and their evaluation, and behavior that may be predicted from them.

The Princeton Studies

Many people would agree that some North American attitudes most worth changing are those negative ones directed toward various ethnic groups. Any number of persuasive techniques have been used to effect these changes, from providing information about the target group, or shaming those holding the negative attitude, to forcing compliance with certain integrative practices that are contrary to these attitudinal beliefs. Attempts to change belief have largely failed because they have been short-term single or multiple communications directed at the attitudinal group. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that negative attitudes held toward specific ethnic groups have changed over the years since World War II. In a series of studies of white Princeton undergraduate students done in 1933, 1951, and 1969 (Gilbert, 1951; Karlins, Coffman, and Walters 1969; Katz and Braly, 1933), changes in attitude toward various ethnic groups were evident.

It is interesting to note that seven of the ten ethnic groups assessed were viewed as having largely positive characteristics in 1933 and 1951 although they were not the same groups each time. In 1933, Turkish people, Negroes and the Chinese were judged to have a predominance of negative characteristics, while in 1951 the groups judged negatively were Turkish people, Negroes and the Japanese. In 1933 the Japanese were seen as possessing largely positive characteristics. In 1951, six years after the close of World War II, there was apparently still a great deal of animosity, at least among these Princeton students, toward the Japanese. By 1969 the Turkish were still negatively perceived, but Japanese and Negroes were not. In addition, the perception of Irish had gone from neutral to slightly negative. Why any of these specific changes in attitude occurred was not examined in any of the studies, but it is clear that experiences with regard to an ethnic group can change significantly over thirty years and, therefore, so can attitude. Karlins et al. (1969) indicated that some of the subjects objected to identifying any ethnic group by traits that presumably characterized its entire membership (see also Gilbert, 1951). This response was in contrast with the subjects in the Katz and Braly (1933) study who voiced no such objection. Other subjects in the 1951 and 1969 studies made clear that they would select traits associated with each group that they believed reflected the perceptions of the general North American population and that were not part of their own attitudes toward these groups. Since World War II, with the increasing sensitivity of North Americans toward characterizing an entire group of people by only a few traits, the responses of the students in 1951 and, especially in 1969, were

less likely to represent actual attitudes than were the responses of students in 1933. However, assuming that the later responses were actually perceptions of what the students believed were the attitudes of the general public rather than expressions of their own attitudes, it is still clear that the belief systems, but not the evaluations, toward virtually all of the ethnic groups listed had changed.

By 1969, the number of traits used to describe any of the ten ethnic groups increased significantly. About one third more trait characteristics were used in 1969, compared with 1933 and 1951, to describe any one of the ethnic groups. Thus the variability in the assessments increased from the first two to the third assessment which, in turn, suggests that a less clear belief system existed in 1969 than in the earlier years. One suspects that, should a similar study be done today, there would be even more reluctance to participate and that those who did would use even more trait characteristics to describe any particular ethnic group. This may represent a triumph of modern sensibility in that the inherent unfairness of assigning important traits to a person based on group membership rather than individual assessment is resisted more today than it was sixty-five years ago. Even assigning traits that are perceived to be positive may now be seen as an inaccurate assessment. It is perhaps desirable that the members of a society as diverse as that of the United States be attitude-free regarding the ethnic groups which compose it.

Another interpretation of the changes in perception of Princeton students from 1933 to 1969 is that their attitudes remained the same, but their willingness to express them in public changed. An unwillingness to speak in public of one's attitudes regarding ethnic groups is an indication of a similar sort of change as an unwillingness to assign traits to members of ethnic groups in the first place. All this being said, the point made above remains: these studies indicate that some attitudes have changed, but the precise persuasive processes effecting these changes remain unknown even though we speculate on the historical occurrences which have influenced them. It is doubtful that such changes could have been accomplished by the application of a single or even a series of persuasive communications as is suggested in much of the attitude change literature. Most changes accomplished by short-term persuasive messages involve opinion and are associated with severely time-bound issues such as those involving an election or a political referendum.

As Karlins, Coffman, and Walters (1969) indicated, most of the students in the 1933 and 1951 studies had had little contact with members of nine of the ten ethnic groups. The American group was the exception. Consequently, students' reactions, even if reflective of their own attitudes, were based on the assimilation of verbally transmitted beliefs from sources other than their own experience. One suspects that many attitudes toward ethnic groups are based on these verbally transmitted beliefs that are somehow reinforced

without benefit of direct experience with members of the stimulus class. As one British wag put it, "I despise Americans and never met one I didn't like."

Attitude Conflict Within an Individual

People's stated attitudes do not always become manifest in other presumably relevant behavior. People holding negative attitudes toward a particular group may be polite and accommodating when in the presence of one of its members. In the LaPiere (1934) study it may be that other conditions were operating when the managers were confronted with the presence of the couple. Whether or not those other conditions are attitudinal is not clear. It could be that the hotel managers valued politeness, good manners, or fairness more strongly than the negative evaluated beliefs that they held toward the Chinese couple. Then again they might have been anxious and frightened about the response that a refusal would generate in the Chinese couple and they wished to avoid a public confrontation. A third possibility is that the manager's negative attitude toward Chinese was verbally constructed from other than direct experience and that meeting this particular Chinese couple, who were pleasant, produced a weakening in the attitude. Other explanations are also possible. The question arises as to whether any of these alternatives are attitudinal. In what sense is, for example, a desire to be polite, fair and mannerly attitudinal? Is it possible that a single experience such as meeting an actual Chinese couple could have changed an attitude that had probably developed over many years? Would a manager reverse policy from fear of public unpleasantness? There are no easy answers to these questions. For whatever the reason, behavior that might be expected to follow from the existence of a verbally given attitude is somehow blocked by these other attitudinal and non-attitudinal factors.

The Correspondence of Attitudes with "Reality"

For many of us the very idea of attitude suggests that the belief generalizations assigned to a stimulus class are inappropriate in that they do not mirror objective reality. To characterize a sizable group of people with whom someone has had little experience, by the assignment of a few adjectives, seems fanciful at best and destructive at worst. The elimination of attitudes directed at ethnic groups within greater North American society seems a worthy goal. However, as has been argued earlier, response generalizations, which constitute the biological basis of social attitudes, are universal. The result is that large numbers of people acquire evaluated belief systems characterizing a particular group that may do the group a grave injustice. The question arises as to whether or not characteristics assigned to various groups are totally fanciful or are based on some objective evidence. There is, of course,

no fully satisfying answer to this question. However, we have all appreciated the different ways in which groups of people approach various aspects of life in ways that seem more similar among group members than between members of different groups. To take what I hope is a benign example, the care and interest in the preparation of daily meals taken by Italians and the French seems decidedly different than that taken by the English and Norwegians. This seems accurate to many people even though we recognize that there are some English and Norwegians who are both interested and skilled food preparers and some Italians and French who are not. The destructive quality of negative social attitudes lies in the usually severely restricted number of characteristics assigned to a group. The extent to which a group is assigned a large number of qualities is the extent to which an attitude toward it is weakened. This can occur when the characteristics of group members are assessed individually because the holder of the attitude has had direct experience with particular individuals who are members of that group.

Conclusions

An attitude is a verbal label which summarizes a few observable behavioral and environmental objects and events which have to do with a stimulus class. Although it is possible to assess these events with regard to a non-social stimulus class, the vast majority of attitudes studied by psychologists are associated with social stimulus classes. Therefore, although speaking of an "attitude toward chocolate" involves the same type of behaviors that are appropriate for speaking about an "attitude toward Chinese," psychologists rarely become interested in attitudes directed toward non-social stimuli. All attitudes consist of the following:

- (1) a belief or beliefs about a stimulus class.
- (2) an evaluation of those beliefs such that they are judged, to some degree, favorable or unfavorable.

The evaluation directed toward specific beliefs may engender a more general positive or negative emotion, such as fear, anger, love, or joy, toward the stimulus class as a whole.

- (3) other behavior which always follows from or accompanies (1) and (2), but which can be difficult to detect. However, since this other behavior is often that which one seeks to predict from an assessment of beliefs and their evaluation, it can be separated from a definition of attitude without producing any conceptual difficulty.

Whether attitude is to be considered either a social or cognitive construct, or both, this cannot refer to any event other than one or more of the three listed above unless indicated by reference to a specifiable process (e.g., physiological, genetic, or other). Attitudes are a series of verbalizable responses referring to specified objects or events toward which one behaves in a certain way. That is, the verbalizations are behavior, however they have been acquired (see Chapters 2 and 3), and they indicate other behaviors likely to occur under certain environmental conditions. The verbalized attitude has been determined by, and determines, effects on listeners and represents the attitude holder's correspondence view of environmental conditions relevant to the attitude stimulus class. Beliefs are not separate from attitudes — they are part of the very definition.

Attitude as a “tendency” or “readiness” to act in a certain way toward a certain stimulus class simply means that certain consistencies have been observed in a person's verbal behavior toward that class. It is this consistency or predictability that fully accounts for this “tendency” or “readiness.” Neither term has meaning separate from this and hence they are summary labels for predictability.