

ATTITUDE BEHAVIOR CONSISTENCY AND THE CONCEPT OF POWER

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PREAMBLE

Since LaPiere's seminal study (1934) there has been a long tradition of research on the relation between attitudes and behavior. Some call for more research in the established tradition (Schuman, Johnson 1976). We propose that the attitude-behavior (A-B) issue be redefined and approached as a study of power. This perspective brings the (A-B) consistency issue to a more central position in sociological theory, and clarifies the concept of power in social interaction.

DEFINITIONS OF ATTITUDE

Rokeach (1968) defines an attitude as "a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner." Similarly, Allport (1953) defined an attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related." These differ little from more recent definitions by Summers (1970) and Triandis (1971). A widespread agreement appears on what is an attitude at the level of conceptual definitions.

We emphasize, the phrases "relatively enduring" and "organized through experience." An attitude is something which the actor brings to a behavioral setting. It is the actor's predisposition, or preferred behavior before meeting the *particular* setting. What an actor does in this behavioral setting is a function of the actor's attitude plus other characteristics of the setting.

LaPiere reported no consistency between the attitudes of hotel and restaurant managers toward Chinese people and the way a Chinese couple were treated in these establishments. Since that early study, many researchers have reported low correlations between attitudes and behavior. One reviewer of this research concluded: "It is considerably more likely that attitudes will be unrelated or only slightly related to overt behaviors than that attitudes will be closely related to outcomes." (Wicker

1969 65)

Several explanations are offered for the apparent inconsistency between attitudes and behavior. DeFleur and Westie (1963) argue that attitudes and behavior must be measured at the same level of specificity in any A-B consistency research. Attitude toward Chinese people in general is not expected to be a good predictor of behavior toward a well dressed middle class Chinese couple driving a new car. Attitude toward this specific type of couple would be a better predictor of behavior.

Some researchers suggest that attitude toward the behavior is a better predictor of behavior than is the attitude toward the object (Ajzen, Fishbein 1973). Thus, attitude to *overt discrimination against Chinese people* should be a better predictor of overt discriminatory behavior toward them than is *attitude toward Chinese people*.

Several authors have pointed to the importance of reference groups and individuals in conjunction with attitudes as determinants of behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) suggest that behavior *intention* (I), which is an approximation of *behavior* (B) is a function of an attitude toward performing the act (A_p), plus a subjective norm, (SN). The subjective norm, often called the normative component or the *social factor* is a multiplicative function of the individual's perception of the belief (b) of a reference group or reference person and the individual's motivation (m) to conform to this belief. This theory can be represented in the formula:

$$B \approx I = w_1 (A_p) + w_2 (SN);$$

where: (SN) = b, m ; w = weight.

Other researchers have presented a model containing essentially the same variables, but the two independent variables are depicted as having interaction effects rather than additive effects. Acock and DeFleur (1972) suggest that individuals' behavior will be consistent with their attitudes only if individuals perceive their reference group as sharing the attitude. As in the Fishbein and Ajzen model, *social*

support (SS) is seen as the crucial variable, along with attitudes, for predicting behavior. But the Acock-DeFleur model contains an interaction term:

$$B = w_1 [(A) (SS)]$$

Liska (1974) in reviewing *social support* theories of A-B consistency concluded that this variable should be the central theme in future research. He suggests testing a model which includes both additive and interaction effects, by the following equation:

$$B = w_1 (A) + w_2 (SS) + w_3 [(A) (SS)]$$

where $w =$ weight.

Emphasis on the role of other actors in the behavioral setting relation between attitude and behavior is an important contribution to the A-B consistency issue. The social component of behavior is recognized and the A-B consistency issue becomes a sociological rather than a psychological question. We believe that the *power* of ego relative to other actors in a setting is a more crucial social factor than the norms shared among actors. The current emphasis on social support, in both the additive and the interaction models is plagued by the *oversocialized view of man in sociology* (Wrong 1961).

DEFINITIONS OF POWER

Nearly all definitions of power in sociology stem from Weber (1947): "Power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance ..." Lenski (1966) slightly modified this definition of power as "the probability of persons or groups carrying out their will even when opposed by others."

We think that in these definitions, a person's *will* is a person's *attitude toward a behavior*. To carry out your will is to behave consistently with your attitude – to do what you are predisposed to do before meeting a particular behavioral setting. We can thus paraphrase Weber and define power as: *the capacity of an actor in a social relation to behave consistently with his/her attitude despite resistance*.

The phrase *despite resistance* is crucial, not only for the concept of power, but also for the

A-B consistency issue. Social interaction involves at least two actors having attitudes toward the same behavior or object, which may be the actors themselves. Power is not exercised in all social interaction. Rather, it is limited to those situations in which ego and alter have incompatible attitudes. In these situations, if alter did what alter wanted, and behaved inconsistently with his/her attitude, ego would be unable to do what ego wanted.

There are other situations in which ego could behave consistently with his attitude if alter behaved consistently with his attitude. In this case, ego and alter have compatible attitudes. Power is not exercised in these situations since there is no actual or potential resistance by ego to alter's preferred behavior or by alter to ego's preferred behavior.

Some situations, although initially characterized by incompatibility between attitudes of ego and alter, become compatible because one actor changes his attitude. Such a change does not result from the exercise of *power* by one actor over the other. Rather, it occurs because one actor has exerted *influence*. According to Etzioni (1968) "Influence and power are often used synonymously. ... It is useful to keep these two terms separate in order to express a significant conceptual distinction. An application of power changes the actor's situation and/or his concept of his situation – but not his preferences (attitudes). Resistance is overcome, not because the actor subjected to the use of power changes his "will" (attitude), but because resistance has been made more expensive, prohibitive, or impossible."

Etzioni suggests that the target of influence will behave consistently with his/her attitude since the attitude has changed. As a result of attitude change, ego and alter no longer have incompatible attitudes, and there is no longer any resistance to overcome. On the other hand, victims of power behave inconsistently with their attitudes.

POWER & A-B CONSISTENCY

A-B consistency theory focusing on the role of *social support* has been emerging, and now seems to be the direction of future research. Sociologists have overemphasized the roles of internalization and social approval in shaping an individual's behavior, neglecting the

role of force, power, and coercion. According to Wrong (1961:188), sociologists have ignored "the degree to which conformity is frequently the result of coercion rather than conviction. Goode (1972) complained that the "systematic study of force as a distinct phenomenon or set of processes has been singularly neglected..." Nowhere is this more apparent than in current literature on the relation between attitudes and behavior.

When the concept of power is brought to the A-B consistency issue, it is clear why there is not a perfect correspondence between attitudes and behavior. There are many social relations in which power is unequally distributed. If the two actors in such a relation have incompatible attitudes, it will be impossible for both to behave consistently with their attitudes. In a situation of power inequality, ego has a favorable attitude toward going to a ball game with alter, but alter has an unfavorable attitude to this activity, either ego or alter, *but not both* will behave consistently with his/her attitude, assuming that neither changes attitudes due to influence. The actor who has the more power in the social relation will carry out his/her will despite resistance. The other actor will not.

This situation could occur even if ego wanted to go to the game alone. If alter wanted ego to stay at home, rather than go to the game alone, then alter's attitude toward going to the game constitutes resistance to ego's preferred behavior. Ego will overcome this resistance and go to the game, thereby behaving consistently with his/her attitude only if ego has more power than alter in their relation. If ego has more power, and goes to the game, then alter will not behave consistently with his/her attitude since alter had a favorable attitude toward staying at home with ego.

We will label situations in which ego could behave consistently with his attitude as situations of *discordant* attitudes. Situations in which both actors could behave consistently with their attitudes, where power is not exercised will be called *concordant* attitudes. A concordant attitude situation would exist if ego have a favorable attitude toward going to the game with alter, and alter had a favorable attitude toward the same action.

Our argument so far, suggests the following hypotheses on the attitude-behavior relation:

- 1) In a situation of concordant attitudes, there is a strong positive correlation between attitude and behavior among all actors.
- 2) In a situation of discordant attitudes, there is no correlation between attitude and behavior among all actors because: a) there is a strong positive correlation between attitude and behavior among those actors having the most power in the social relation; b) there is a strong negative correlation between attitude and behavior among those actors having the least power in the social relation.

In the equation expressing Hypothesis 1, A is attitude, B is behavior, and subscript C refers to the concordant situation:

$$B_c = A_c$$

Treating A and B as dichotomies, the equation predicts that in concordant attitude situations, an actor engages in behavior B if she/he has a favorable attitude toward behavior B.

Hypothesis 2, concerning situations of discordant attitudes is more complex. We assign codes to the variable categories as shown in Figure 1, where each is treated as a dichotomy. Now consider all possible combinations of A_d and P_d under each condition, as shown in Table 1. Recall that by definition, in a discordant attitude situation one actor will have a +1 value for a discordant attitude, and the other will have a -1 value for that discordant attitude. In the discordant attitude situation, two categories of people will engage in the particular behavior, with a +1 value for B: 1) those with a favorable attitude toward B and power, and 2) those with an unfavorable attitude toward B, and no power. A person in category *a* will behave consistently with his/her attitude, while a person in category *b* will behave inconsistently with his/her attitude. Likewise there will be two categories of people who will not engage in a particular behavior with a value of -1 for B in discordant attitude situations: 3) those with power and an unfavorable attitude toward B; and 4) those without power, and with a favorable attitude toward B. People in category 3 will behave consistently with their attitude, while those in category 4 will behave inconsistently with their attitude. The coding scheme in Figure 1 allows us to express these hypotheses in a single equation:

FIGURE 1. DISCORDANT ATTITUDE CODES

B_d	A_d	P_d
+1 = engages in B	+1 = favorable attitude toward B	+1 = has power
-1 = does not engage in B	-1 = unfavorable attitude toward B	-1 = has no power

$$B_d = (A_d)(P_d)$$

The value of B_d will be +1 when 1) both A_d and P_d have values of +1; or 2) both A_d and P_d have values of -1. The value of B_d will be -1 when 3) A_d has a value of -1 and P_d has a value of +1; or d) A_d has a value of +1 and P_d has a value of -1.

TABLE 1: ATTITUDE, POWER, & BEHAVIOR COMBINATIONS

$(A_d) \times (P_d) = B_d$		
+1	+1	+1
+1	-1	-1
-1	+1	-1
-1	-1	+1

MORE COMPLEX RELATIONS

Situations beyond elementary dyadic relations add complexity to our theory. Imagine the triad: ego, alter 1, and alter 2, each with the following attitudes:

- Ego: wants to attend game with alter;
- Alter 1 wants to attend game with ego;
- Alter 2 wants to attend movie with ego;

In this triad, the relation between ego and alter 1 is a situation of concordant attitudes, and the relation between ego and alter 2 is one of discordant attitudes. Alter 2's favorable attitude to going to a movie with ego translates into alter 2 having an unfavorable attitude to ego's going to the game with alter 1. Our original hypothesis for concordant situations applies only to dyads. It suggests that both ego and alter 1 will behave consistently with their attitudes. We must now modify the hypothesis to account for the power of alter 2 in relation with ego. Ego and alter 1 will behave consistently with their attitudes only if ego has power over alter 2, and can overcome the resistance stemming from alter 2's attitude. If ego has power over alter 2, then two of the actors, ego and alter 1 will behave consistently with their attitudes. But if ego lacks such power, then alter 2, but not ego and alter 1 will behave consistently with their attitudes. It is impossible for all three actors to behave consistently with their attitudes, assuming no attitude change occurs.

Numerous variations of this type complexity can be introduced in our theory. Consider the triad with the following attitude situations:

- ego - alter 1 : concordant
- ego - alter 2 : discordant
- alter 1 - alter 2 : discordant

Now assume that alter 2 has power over ego. This might suggest that neither ego nor alter 1 will behave consistently with their attitudes. We must now consider the distribution of power in the alter 1 - alter 2 relation. If alter 2 has power over alter 1, then neither ego nor alter 1 will behave consistently with their attitudes. However, if alter 1 has power over alter 2, the outcome is more problematic. Now we would have to consider the power of alter 1 over alter 2 *relative* to the power of alter 2 over ego. If alter 2's power over ego is greater than alter 1's power over alter 2, then neither ego nor alter 1 will behave consistently with their attitudes. On the other hand, if alter 1's power over alter 2 is greater than alter 2's power over ego, then both ego and alter 1 will behave consistently with their attitudes.

Our longterm objective is to develop a systematic theory which incorporates complexities such as these for social systems more complex than simple dyads. We plan to formulate hypotheses for all combinations of power distribution and concordance/discordance. We hope to reduce the set of hypotheses to a small set of equations predicting a person's behavior as a function of attitudes, and the relative power of other actors in the setting. From our theoretical perspective, it is not surprising that researchers find a less than perfect correspondence between attitudes and behavior. In discordant attitude situations, it is impossible for all actors to behave consistently with their attitudes.

We have not yet discussed the determination and measurement of the relative power of actors in a social relation. That is, we have not discussed theories about the source of

power inequality in social interaction. Though our theory of A-B consistency is not necessarily linked to any particular theory of power, we will rely on the *dependency theory of power* from the social exchange perspective (Emerson 1962). According to this view, actors exchange resources. The power of ego over alter is a function of the dependence of alter on ego for the things alter values. If alter is more dependent on ego than ego is on alter, then ego has power over alter. The degree of dependence of alter on ego is a function of the value alter attaches to the resources which ego controls *and* the availability of alternative sources besides ego for obtaining these resources. The fewer alternatives alter has, the more dependent he/she is on ego.

LaPiere (1934) sent a letter to hotel and restaurant managers asking if they would accommodate a group of Chinese. Nearly all replied that they would not. However, before these letters were sent, a Chinese couple traveling with LaPiere had gone in alone and attempted to register, or to be seated for service in the restaurant. In almost none of these establishments were they denied service. Some interpreted this study to indicate that whites' behavior toward Chinese people was not consistent with their attitude toward Chinese people.

A moment's thought reveals that there were two sets of subjects in the study. The first group included managers who did express discriminatory behavior by responding by mail that they would not serve Chinese people. The other group included the clerks and waitresses who *did not* engage in discriminatory behavior when actually confronted by the Chinese couple. If we assume, as did LaPiere, that in the 1930's there were widespread negative attitudes among whites toward Chinese as a racial group, then one group, the managers, behaved consistently with their attitude, while the other group of service personnel behaved inconsistently with their attitudes. Both were in a situation of discordant attitudes with the Chinese people, assuming that the latter had a favorable attitude toward getting regular service.

Consider the resources the Chinese couple controlled which were valued by managers. Service managers need customers to operate their business. They do not require specific

persons, but just customers. When the managers received LaPiere's letter, there were many other potential customers besides the group of Chinese mentioned in the letter. Here, the managers could presume to obtain the same patronage from alternative sources. The managers had an unfavorable attitude to serving Chinese people, and had the power, *via* the availability of other customers, to behave consistently with that attitude.

Now consider the resources which the Chinese couple controlled which the service workers needed when the couple asked for service. The couple had the potential of creating a disturbance which could result in loss of job for the employee. The service workers needed to avoid such a risk, and the Chinese couple in that setting, and at that moment, were the only source of patronage, a valued commodity. The service workers' lack of alternatives gave power to the Chinese couple. Assuming that the workers had an unfavorable attitude toward serving Chinese, while the Chinese couple had a favorable attitude toward being served, this was a situation of discordant attitudes. The service workers lacked power relative to the Chinese couple, and so, behaved inconsistently with their attitudes.

CONCLUSION

By considering the role of power in social interaction, we have formed hypotheses which predict attitude-behavior consistency among all actors in concordant attitude situations, but only among powerful actors in discordant attitude situations. We realize that the theory will become more complex as we consider more elaborate social relations. We must address more of the subtleties in the A-B consistency literature. Finally, we have treated power as a zero-sum property without considering that power inequality may vary in varying social relations. We have also omitted the situation of discordant attitudes where neither actor has power over the other. Perhaps in these relations, each actor alternates between behaving consistently and inconsistently with his/her attitude. Such issues can direct future work linking A-B consistency to the power concept.

ing policy.

No conceptual schema is perfect. Two of the four study communities, B and D confounded the basic conceptual frame of this study. Community B did not become an oil boomtown until after its selection for study as a nongrowth community type. The ability of bankers and other local leaders to guide the development destiny of the community was greatly reduced when the massive oil industry investments engulfed Community B. Community D had only one bank, compared to two banks in each of the other communities, which confounded the schema and made comparison with the other communities questionable. Finally, banking policy measures need further study. The flow of scarce developmental resources in small communities is a key component of the community development process. Especially in times of national economic recession, a greater understanding of local growth and nongrowth conditions is needed.

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