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Board of Overseers
National Election Studies
P. O. Box Z
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Dear Colleagues:

Thank you very much for sending me the stimulus memorandum for the Conference on Issue Voting, Cognitive Processes, and Rational Choice planned for January, 1978 at Stanford University.

I am intrigued by the issues and questions that Professors Sears and Page have raised concerning the cognitive, social, and interpersonal determinants of voting. Issue voting may provide an ideal testing ground for probing the utility of applying contemporary theory and research in social psychology to the traditional concerns of students of political processes.

Of critical concern to the social psychologist is the relationship between attitudes and behavior. If there were reliable links between an individual's attitudes and actions, it would be possible to predict future behavior from measures of relevant present attitudes. Thus, social psychologists have long attempted to assess the extent to which the attitudes expressed by individuals after contemplating their positions on social issues (such as, for example, in survey research on political attitudes and preferences) actually are reflected in their actions in relevant life situations (such as, for example, in voting and other political/electoral involvement). Typically, empirical researchers have attempted to assess the extent of the relationship between verbal measures of attitude and observations of actual social behavior. These endeavors have often met with frustrating outcomes. For, although the observed relationships between attitude and behavior have varied considerably in magnitude, all too many of these correlations have been of rather modest size.

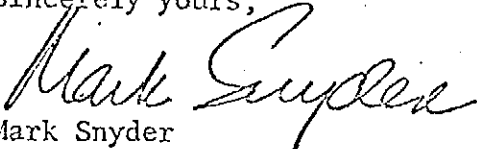
In contrast, recent theoretical considerations have focused on the processes by which attitudes are actively translated into action. These conceptual analyses have stimulated empirical research on the personal and social determinants of the extent to which actions are meaningful reflections of personal attitudes, and the extent to which actions are strategic reactions to pragmatic considerations and situational pressures. It has been possible,

for example, to identify those individuals for whom attitude behavior correspondence is characteristically substantial, those situations that reliably promote and foster attitude--guided action, and the cognitive and motivational processes that underly and generate consistency between attitude and behavior.

Some of my own theoretical and empirical attempts to define and chart the processes that join attitude to behavior are briefly outlined in the enclosed memorandum When Believing Means Doing: A Cognitive Social Psychology of Action. Although neither the theoretical analysis nor the practical implications have been cast specifically in the context of issue voting, I believe that there exists considerable potential for meaningfully applying this viewpoint to the concerns of a conference on issue voting.

I do hope that my suggestions will be of some value to you in planning and structuring the conference. Although I must confess to considerable ignorance in the domain of political studies, I am definitely interested in the themes of this conference and any attempts to develop stimulating productive interchanges between social psychologists and political scientists. Therefore, I hope that you will keep me informed of your activities.

Sincerely yours,



Mark Snyder
Associate Professor

MS:s

Enclosure: When Believing Means Doing

When Believing Means Doing:

A Cognitive Social Psychology of Action

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Although most theoretical viewpoints have stressed the links between attitude and behavior, empirical researchers have all too often reported weak and inconsistent relationships between verbal measures of attitude and observations of social behavior (for reviews, see Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kiesler, Collins & Miller, 1969; Wicker, 1969). Just as it is the case that avowed attitudes are not always reflected in actual behavior, so too is it the case that changes in attitude are not always translated into corresponding changes in behavior (e.g., Festinger, 1964). One outcome of this empirical search for links between avowed attitudes and actual behavior has been considerable skepticism about the existence of close ties between attitudes and behavior.

Consistency: Some People More Than Others

However, this skepticism may have been premature. For recent empirical research has indicated that people differ in the extent to which their social behavior covaries with measures of relevant attitudes: some people are more consistent than others (e.g., Norman, 1975; Schwartz, 1973; Snyder & Tanke, 1976). These differences in congruence between attitude and behavior can be conceptualized in terms of the social psychological construct of self-monitoring (Snyder, 1974, in press). According to this formulation, an individual in a social setting actively attempts to construct a pattern of social behavior appropriate to that particular context. Diverse sources of

information are available to guide this choice, including (a) cues to situational or interpersonal specifications of appropriateness and (b) information about inner states, dispositions, and attitudes.

Individuals differ in the extent to which they rely on either source of information. For those who monitor their behavioral choices on the basis of situational information (high self-monitoring individuals), the impact of situational and interpersonal cues to social appropriateness is considerable; they demonstrate considerable situation-to-situation discriminativeness in their social behavior (Snyder & Monson, 1975). Moreover, for these high self-monitoring individuals, correspondence between behavior and attitude is often minimal (Snyder & Tanke, 1976). By contrast, persons who guide their choices on the basis of salient information from relevant inner states (low self-monitoring individuals) are less responsive to situational and interpersonal specifications of behavioral appropriateness (Snyder & Monson, 1975). For these low self-monitoring individuals, the covariation between behavior and attitude is quite substantial (Snyder & Tanke, 1976). It is as if low self-monitoring individuals live their lives according to the maxim, "believing means doing."

Consistency: Some Situations More Than Others

Similarly, social settings and interaction contexts may differ in the extent to which they provide salient and relevant "attitudinal" and "situational" guides to action. In the presence of clear and unambiguous social or interpersonal cues to situational appropriateness, correspondence between social behavior and these situational factors should be substantial. At the same time, covariation between attitude and behavior might be minimal. By contrast, in situations that stress the relevance of attitudes and dispositions as guides to actions, social behavior ought to be less responsive

to situational and interpersonal specifications of behavioral appropriateness. Behavior in these situations should, however, be well-predicted from knowledge of personal characteristics, including measures of social attitudes. (For further details of this argument and further specification of the characteristics of "attitudinal" and "situational" environments, see Snyder & Swann, 1976.)

As a first test of this self-monitoring conceptual formulation, we (Snyder & Swann, 1976) constructed social environments that differed in (a) the extent to which they contained interpersonal cues to situational appropriateness of self presentation, and (b) the extent to which relevant attitudes were made "available" to serve as relevant guides to action. Students participated in a judicial decision-making task in which they prepared written communications about their judgments of liability in a sex discrimination court case in anticipation of discussing these verdicts with another individual. In this basic situation, judgments were generally unfavorable to the female plaintiff who had alleged sex discrimination in hiring. Moreover, these judgments were independent of general attitudes toward affirmative action that had been measured two weeks before participation in the judicial decision-making task ($r = .07$).

In order to provide salient and relevant interpersonal cues that could serve as guides to choosing a situationally appropriate verdict, some participants anticipated discussing their decisions with a partner who disagreed with them on the issue of affirmative action. In such circumstances, participants adopted a "moderation" strategy (cf. Cialdini, Levy, Herman & Evenbeck, 1973) of self-presentation and offered "middle-of-the-road" judgments, favorable neither to the plaintiff nor to the defendant. Once again,

it was not possible to predict the favorability of these judgments from previously measured attitudes toward affirmative action ($r = .06$).

In order to increase the salience of relevant attitudes, some participants were encouraged to think over, reflect upon, and privately articulate their general attitudes toward affirmative action and the implications of their viewpoints before considering the specific court case. This "thought manipulation" procedure markedly enhanced the covariation between favorability of judgments toward the female plaintiff and general attitudes toward affirmative action ($r = .58$). Just as it was the case that correspondence between attitude and behavior was enhanced in a situation that gave relevance to salient attitudes as guides to action, so too was it the case that correspondence between attitude and behavior was also greatest for individuals who characteristically regard their behavior as reflections of corresponding attitudes (individuals with low scores on the Self-Monitoring Scale, Snyder, 1974).

A Cognitive Social Psychology of Action

Why does adopting a contemplative orientation to choosing a course of action, as we induced with the "thought" manipulation and which we believe to be characteristic of low self-monitoring individuals, increase the correspondence between attitude and behavior? This procedure may have the following effects, each of which may increase the availability and relevance of attitudes as guides to action:

(i) To the extent that an individual actor's attention is normally focused on the demands of coping with the immediate situation, any procedures that increase attention to inner states will also increase the probability that such inner states can potentially serve as guides to action;

(ii) To the extent that one ponders and reflects upon one's attitudes, it is more likely that one will be aware of any behavioral implications inherent in one's viewpoints;

(iii) To the extent that inconsistencies exist between the cognitive, affective, and intentional components of one's attitude, procedures that increase the salience of these attitudes may also lead to resolutions or eliminations of these structural inconsistencies and therefore place the individual in a better position to use attitudes as relevant and functional guides for behavioral choices (cf. Norman, 1975);

(iv) To the extent that one considers and consolidates one's viewpoints, one's sense of personal responsibility (cf. Schwartz, 1973) for one's actions and one's awareness of self (cf. Wicklund, 1975) as a potential cause of behavior may be enhanced;

(v) To the extent that one is encouraged to consider and contemplate one's attitudes, any processes of avoiding and reinterpreting commitment (cf. Kiesler, Roth, & Pallak, 1975) will be short-circuited and it will not be possible to define one's attitudes as irrelevant to the action choices at hand.

These specific effects may be understood in terms of two concepts. Beliefs will be translated into corresponding behavior to the extent that: (1) these beliefs are available in the form of a well-articulated "cognitive structure" containing clear behavioral implications, and (2) these beliefs are linked to an "action structure" that makes belief a relevant and situationally appropriate guide to action and that endows behavior with implications for beliefs.

The cognitive structure and availability of the attitude. The activation or priming (or formation) of a cognitive structure is the effect of processes (i), (ii), (iii) in the above listing. A cognitive structure is in the same conceptual family as a frame (Minsky, 1975), a script (Abelson, 1976), and a schema (Bartlett, 1932; Bobrow & Norman, 1975; Rumelhart & Ortony, 1976; Tesser, 1976), all of which are structures for representing knowledge about objects, events, and actions. Recently attention has been directed at specifying conceptual structures used in the organization and explanation of one's own behaviors. Such self-schemas are defined as "cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the processing of self-related information contained in the individual's social experience" (Markus, 1977). In an impressive series of converging investigations, Markus (1977) has demonstrated the ways in which such self-schemas guide and facilitate the processing of information about the self. Self-schemas contain easily retrievable behavioral evidence, provide a basis for confident self-prediction of behavior on schema-related dimensions, and make individuals resistant to counter-schematic information.

The cognitive structures that are proposed to generate consistency between attitudes and behavior are generalizations about one's attitudinal orientation and the behavioral implications of these viewpoints for classes of attitude-relevant situations. These cognitive structures vary in the extent to which they are clearly articulated; that is, in the extent to which they are (a) free of internal contradictions that might pull the individual in different behavioral directions, and (b) contain clear specifications of specific behaviors that are implied by these general viewpoints. However,

the availability (activation, salience) of such cognitive structures, although necessary for attitude-guided action, is not sufficient to guarantee congruence between attitude and behavior. For, no doubt, one may be well aware of one's attitudes but still choose (for a variety of reasons) not to act upon these attitudes.

The action structure and relevance of the attitude. Action structures are "rules of thumb" or operational guidelines that make belief a relevant and appropriate guide to action and that endow behavior with implications for belief. They are specific exemplars of the maxim "believing means doing". As such, they are "scripts" (Abelson, 1976) that direct the individual to turn to salient and relevant attitudes as guides to action. The concept of "action structure" traces its roots at least as far back as Cartwright (1949), who observed that attitude change will only lead to sustained behavioral change when the individual is led to believe that attitude is a relevant and appropriate guide to action.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The "cognitive social psychology of action" analysis suggests that both the cognitive structure and the action structure must be present to generate consistency between attitude and behavior. When a cognitive structure is activated without being linked to a corresponding action structure, the individual's performance on a variety of cognitive information-processing tasks will be influenced in the ways that self-schemas are known to influence information processing (see Markus, 1977; Tesser, 1976), but covariation between attitude and behavior may yet be minimal. Individuals with an activated cognitive structure will be in an excellent position to quickly and

easily provide information about their attitudes, and the behavioral implications of their attitudes; yet still not act upon this self-knowledge. Such individuals may talk as if they possessed attitudes, but not act as if they possessed those attitudes. When both a cognitive structure and an action structure are activated, the cognitive effects will manifest themselves and attitude-behavior covariation will be enhanced. For such individuals, their attitudes will be reflected not only in their words, but also in their deeds. For, when both a cognitive structure and an action structure are activated and operational, believing means doing.

Moreover, the "cognitive social psychology of action" viewpoint on the links between attitudes and behavior has possible implications for designing successful programs to change behavior by influencing attitudes. Attitude change will only lead to sustained behavioral change when attitude and behavior are linked by an action structure that makes the attitude a relevant and appropriate guide to action and that endows behavior with attitudinal implications. Individuals must be persuaded that they possess their new attitudes only to the extent that they translate them into relevant action. Thus, for example, it would not be sufficient to persuade others to accept the positive values of affirmative action policies. Rather, one would need to convince people that having such an attitude entails engaging in behaviors that implement the policies and procedures of affirmative action in meaningful ways. Stated more simply, new attitudes will be translated into new behaviors only when people are persuaded that "believing means doing".

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