psyc3122 lecture 9

Attitudes and Information Processing

next week: Motivation and effective self-change

Today

- Discussion of book (ch. 9)
- Review of last week(s)
- Attitudes and information processing
  - Exposure
  - Attention
  - Encoding
  - Judgement
  - Elaboration
  - Memory
  - Disguised attitude measures
- Attitudes: What are they good for?
Review:

- Why many of our individual attitudes are the same
  - Generation theory and "millenials"
  - Other models of social influence on attitudes we've learned (e.g., Operant conditioning; descriptive and injunctive norms as heuristics; referent informational influence; polarisation & reactance; relevance, creativity)
  - Cialdini's 6 principles of influence (reciprocation; consistency; social proof; liking; authority; scarcity)

- How and why our individual attitudes become ordered
  - Motives for liking the status quo
  - Consistency motives – dissonance & balance theory
  - Ideologies as networks
    - Linked to dimensions of evaluation
    - Linked to group identities and norms (generate 'frames')

- How change happens
  - From individual activists to political parties and laws to norms and 'individual' attitudes

Attitudes and info processing:

Exposure
Attitudes and info processing: Exposure

- List 5 common foods **fried** at home
- List 5 contemporary Australian bands
- List 5 stretches for the lower back
- List 5 80s Australian pop bands
- Etc!
Exposure – the search for info

- Extreme attitudes (vs. neutral) are correlated with knowledge (past exposure)
- Attitude uncertainty is correlated with information seeking (future exposure) – but only with personal relevance, esp. before decisions
- Remember – when we’re going to make a decision, an informative ad is more persuasive than the liked music ad (Gorn, 1982)
  – we actively seek out info and try to evaluate it to make a good decision

Figure out the rule

- I’ll tell you three examples of the rule
  - 1, 2, 4
  - 2, 3, 6
  - 5, 6, 12
- You can ask me if sequences of #s fit the rule
- Once you are reasonably confident you know the rule, stop asking questions
Exposure – the search for info consistent with what we already know & believe

- Confirmation bias promotes search for attitude-congruent info
- Consistency motives promote search for attitude-congruent info
  - inhibits search for incongruent info
- Esp. for those with strong attitudes, or after a decision, or under threat

Preference for congruent info

- Ps measured on pro-life vs pro-choice attitudes to abortion
- Code for attitude strength (weaker vs stronger)
- Ps rate desirability of reading 8 articles, 2 of which by title & abstract support pro-life and 2 pro-choice
- Code preference for congruent articles (support att) vs incongruous

Selection of congruent vs. incongruent Information as a function of whether you can change your mind

From Frey & Rosch, 1984: See fig. 9.2 in your text

And more when you’re managing terror? (Jonas, Greenberg, & Frey, 2003)

- Contemplate death or dental pain
- Make a decision about insurance coverage for alternative medicine
- Review evidence in favour of vs against
- Opportunity to change decision but only 3/86 did so. Focusing on those who persisted in original decision:
Search for Info

- Confirmation bias evident
- Heightened by mortality salience

Search for info

- If unsure and need to make a decision
- If have relevant, active (positive or neg) attitude
- But not with defence motive for strong attitude!
- If have just made a decision and info is congruent with that decision
Basketball

Participants view a video of two teams passing a basketball, one team wearing black and the other wearing white (Simons and Chabris, 1999).

- Asked to count the number of passes made between either team.
- After approximately 45 seconds, a woman dressed in a black gorilla suit walked across the scene.
  - Overall, 44% noticed unexpected event of gorilla (!).
- Participants counting the passes made by the black team noticed the gorilla significantly more often (58%) than participants counting passes for the white team (27%).
  - Similarity of the stimulus (the gorilla) to the attended objects (the black or the white team) affected whether or not the participants paid attention.

Check out [http://viscog.beckman.uiuc.edu/grafs/demos/15.html](http://viscog.beckman.uiuc.edu/grafs/demos/15.html) to see the gorilla video yourself.

Inattentional blindness
Attention to info

- Evolutionary argument: Attitudes serve an **orienting function** to identify ‘hedonically relevant’ objects (costs and benefits)
  - Automatically notice things and people that help / harm you (i.e., that assoc with strong pos or neg affect)
  - Depends on active goals
- Jews observing central item [swastika / Star of David / neutral control] surrounded by eight other items recalled more surrounding items when central object was neutral (Erdelyi and Appelbaum, 1973)
- Chronically accessible attitudes -> objects more likely to be noticed if flashed up in array;
- If increase acc by rehearsed evaluation then more likely to be noticed even compared to rehearsed judgement on non-evaluative dimension (e.g., animate vs inanimate)
- Visual search takes longer if ‘distractor’ items include objects w/ highly accessible attitudes (all Fazio et al.)

“A narrow mind and a wide mouth usually go together.”

-- Proverb
Encoding

- We already studied *prototypicality* and attitude-behaviour inconsistency as well as attitude formation / framing
- **Encoding**: internally / mentally representing the attitude object (categorisation) for processing & storage
- Attitude to attributes of an object influences likelihood the attribute is used to categorise
  - Car: transportation vs. status symbol
  - Lottery ticket: Chance of a fee waiver vs chance of $ sum
  - Strong positive or negative views -> Black Americans -> increased likelihood similarity of two people judged by race (vs. gender, occupation) (Fazio & Dunton, 1997)
- Situational goals as well as chronic accessibility / existing attitude knowledge structure increase impact -> E
  - Complexity of existing attitude structure -> more noticed (b/c more quickly processed, b/c know where to look)
  - May also categorise at a more detailed level (Rottie vs animal)
Encoding and Expertise

- What’s the difference?
- Chase and Simon (1973):
  - Masters can reproduce meaningful configurations far > novices
  - Both equally bad at random configs
- Expertise – 10,000 hrs – approx 5 yrs at 40 hrs / week or 40 years at 10 hrs / week
- Strong positive attitudes are likely to underlie expertise ;)

“A blind man knows he cannot see, and is glad to be led, though it be by a dog; but he that is blind in his understanding, which is the worst blindness of all, believes he sees as the best, and scorns a guide”

-- Samuel Butler
Attitude can be a heuristic for judgement
See Box 9.1 in text!
- “What I like is good”
- “What I believe is true”
- Halo effect – what’s good in one way is good in another
- “What I wish will happen”

Attitude can also be an anchor for judgement
Internal standard against which new information is judged

Social judgement theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961):
- evaluative dimensions divided into latitudes of acceptance, noncommitment, and rejection
- Assimilation effects such that minimise discrepancy between own attitude and others’ within lat of accept
- Contrast effects such that accentuate discrepancy between own attitude and others’ in lat of rej.
Contrast effects in perception of physical stimuli

The more ego-involved, the fewer beliefs -> non-commitment (polarized responding) and the more likely -> “boomerang effect”
“All of the animals except for man know that the principle business of life is to enjoy it.”

-- Samuel Butler

Elaboration

- Attitude can be an argument in systematic processing – affects processing of ambiguous events
  - Hastorf & Cantril (1954) football foul study
- A trigger for (or inhibitor of) systematic processing
  - See also earlier bit on exposure
  - “group-related attitudes” & processing corr between gender & leadership skills as a function of occupation
Elaboration

- Attitude can be a director of bias in systematic processing, as we learned earlier.
  - Given a detailed version (vs. summary) of mixed / two-sided results about the effects of capital punishment, differences between proponents and opponents became more extreme (polarisation).
  - Defence motivation in HSM
- Not only do we prefer to access congruent info (frequently!) - exposure - given mixed info, we interpret it in light of our biases and become MORE extreme!

Memory

Pro-attitudinal bias:
- Activation of object -> attitude;
  - Primes recall of congruent cognitions (congeniality effect)
  - Recall of attributes justifies attitude (Bartlett, 1932)
- Exposed to + and - info re communism: Recall info to support attitudes 5 wks later (Levine & Murphy, 1943)

Bipolar attitude structure:
- Extreme statements on either side are recalled > moderate statements
- Congruent either side > mixed
- Positive or negative statements > neutral
Disguised attitude measures

- error-choice method (Hammond, 1948):
  Between 1980 and 1995, consumption of electric energy in European Union countries has (a) increased by 25% (b) increased by 75%.
  - forced choice between two wrong answers and infer from direction whether favour conservation (b) vs not (a)
  - Presence of confounds means low construct validity

- Syllogism errors method (Thistlethwaite, 1950):
  a) Given: If production is important, than peaceful industrial relations are desirable. If production is important, then it is a mistake to have Negroes for foremen and leaders over Whites.
  b) Therefore: If peaceful industrial relations are desirable, then it is a mistake to have Negroes for foremen and leaders over Whites.
  Southern US students more likely to agree (b) followed logically from (a) than Northern US students.

- Projective tests (e.g., Haire, 1950: Shopping list)
  - Present ambig info – interpretation reveals bias
  - instant coffee vs filter (drip ground) coffee -> 50% “lazy and disorganized” (!)

What’s it for?

- Speedy, stress-free, good decisions
  - Evaluate att objects (att rehearsal), colour naming of objs (colour naming control) vs no task controls (Blascovich et al., 1993);
    then rapidly eval stimuli (liking/disliking); find reduced physiological stress with well-rehearsed accessible attitude and faster, more consistent DM
  - Accessible academic attitudes (courses, majors, classes, activities = objects) -> buffer against stress: Relationship between negative life events and health was reduced for healthy people with accessible attitudes (Fazio & Powell, 1997)

- At the expense of ability to recognise change
  - Attitude rehearsal increased time necessary to recognise “morph” attitude objects (altered faces)
  - and increased errors with such objects
Attitudes and information processing

- Exposure
  - Strong attitudes correlated with knowledge and with knowledge seeking
  - But confirmation biases mean attitudes tend to be reinforced vs challenged (incongruent info avoided)

- Attention
  - Active attitudes (positive or negative) guide attention – “orienting function”

- Encoding
  - Chronic or situationally salient guide encoding
  - Strong attitudes correlated with depth of encoding (meaningful detail)

- Judgement
  - Attitude can be heuristic or anchor for judgement

- Elaboration
  - Can be argument in sys proc, trigger or inhibit of sys proc, or direct bias

- Memory
  - Congruent > Incongruent > mixed/neutral

- Disguised attitude measures
  - What are they and why do they work?

- Attitudes: what are they good for

Next week: Motivation and effective self-change
- Reading: none

In the tutes this week:
- Mandatory tute on writing the discussion section
- Next week – optional consult on discussion