

# Theories of Attitudes and Behavior

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## Learning Goals

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- ❑ Understand the relationship between attitudes and behavior
- ❑ Understand the prominent theory of how attitude influences behavior (Theory of Planned Behavior)
- ❑ Understand how behavior can change attitudes (Theory of Cognitive Dissonance)
- ❑ Understand variables that can change the relationship between attitudes and behavior (moderator variables)

## Attitudes and Behavior

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- First Research Question:
  - Do attitudes determine behavior?



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## Attitudes and Behavior

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- LaPiere's Classic Study (1934)
  - American's perception of Chinese
- Corey (1937) attitudes and cheating study
- Wicker (1969) reviewed 42 studies
  - Average correlation between attitudes and behavior was .15
  - Recommended to abandon construct of attitude

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## Attitude Questionnaire Items

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- I think exam malpractice is acceptable.
- HIV/AIDS
  - I feel free around people with HIV/AIDS.
  - I would take food from a person with HIV/AIDS.
  - I think people with HIV/AIDS should be treated the same as others.
- Sharing answers with coursemates is acceptable.
- I like minerals.
- I like bitter lemon.

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## Attitudes and Behavior

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- Reasons why **Attitudes** may not have a strong relationship with **Behavior** in research studies
  - Expressed attitudes may not be the same as true attitudes
  - Aspects of attitude have varying relationships with behavior
    - Affective, Behavioral, or Cognitive
  - Differences in perceptions of the question
  - General vs. Specific Attitudes and Behavior

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## General vs. Specific Attitudes and Behavior

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- Most research studies tried to predict specific behaviors from general attitudes
- Two solutions:
  - Predict wide range of behaviors
  - Measure specific attitudes

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## Attitudes and Behavior

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- **Conclusion:**
  - If measure general attitude, use multiple behaviors
  - If predicting specific behavior, measure attitude toward that specific behavior

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## Conclusion

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- Attitudes do not perfectly predict behavior
- Fishbein & Ajzen concluded that Attitude is one of a number of constructs that influences behavior
- Current research questions:
  - What variables moderate the influence of attitudes on behavior?



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## Theory of Planned Behavior

(Ajzen, 1985)

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- Developed to predict behavior from attitude
  - Predicts deliberate behavior
- Behavior is determined by intention to perform behavior
  - **Intention:** Cognitive representation of readiness to perform a given behavior

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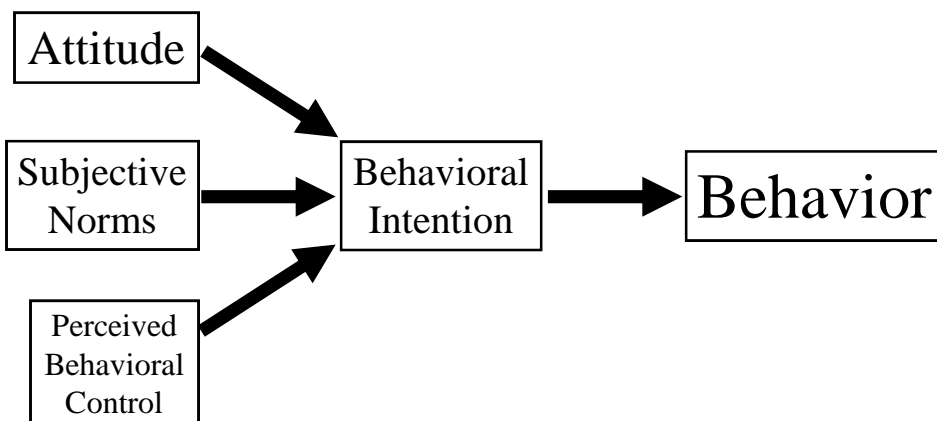
# Theory of Planned Behavior

(Ajzen, 1985)

- Intention determined by:
  - **Specific Attitude** toward specific behavior
  - **Subjective norms:** Belief about how significant people will view the behavior in question
  - **Perceived behavioral control:** Perceptions of ability to perform behavior

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# Theory of Planned Behavior



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## Theory of Planned Behavior

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- Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Control are not equally weighed
  - Depend on person and situation
    - If a person cares little of what others think, Subjective Norms will not influence behavioral intentions quite as much as those who care much of what others think

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## Theory of Planned Behavior: Educational Implications

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- Attitude
  - Positive Attitude
  - Negative Attitude
- Subjective Norms
  - Peers
  - Parents
  - Culture
  - Teacher
- Perceived Behavioral Control
  - Peers
  - Teacher
  - Infrastructure

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## Theory of Planned Behavior: Educational Implications

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- Class Attendance
- Classroom Behavior
- Attitude toward Education in General
- Attitude toward a Particular Subject
- Attitude toward Achievement

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## Theory of Planned Behavior Sample Questionnaire

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For me to attend the meetings of this class on a regular basis is  
extremely difficult: 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : extremely easy

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## Theory of Planned Behavior Sample Questionnaire

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- Attitude
  - For me to attend the meetings of this class on a regular basis is – **extremely good/bad**
  - For me to attend the meetings of this class on a regular basis is – **extremely valuable/worthless**
- Subjective Norms
  - Most people who are important to me think that – **I should/I should not** – attend the meetings of this class on a regular basis.
  - Most of the students in this class with whom I am acquainted attend meetings of this class on a regular basis – **definitely true/false**

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## Theory of Planned Behavior Sample Questionnaire

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- Perceived Behavioral Control
  - For me to attend the meetings of this class on a regular basis is – **extremely difficult/easy**
  - I am confident that if I wanted to I could attend the meetings of this class on a regular basis – **definitely true/false**
- Behavioral Intention
  - I plan to attend the meetings of this class on a regular basis – **extremely likely/unlikely**
  - I will make an effort to attend the meetings of this class on a regular basis – **I definitely will/will not**

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## Cognitive Dissonance

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- ❑ **Dissonance:** Mental conflict
- ❑ Humans have a basic need to avoid dissonance
- ❑ **Cognitive Dissonance:** Humans have a mental conflict when there is a difference between one's Attitude and Behavior
- ❑ To reduce the tension, it is easiest to change an attitude to be consistent with behavior

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## Cognitive Dissonance

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- ❑ **Necessary Conditions for Cognitive Dissonance to Occur:**
  1. The difference between the attitude and behavior is perceived by the individual
  2. A person feels personally responsible for the behavior

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# Cognitive Dissonance

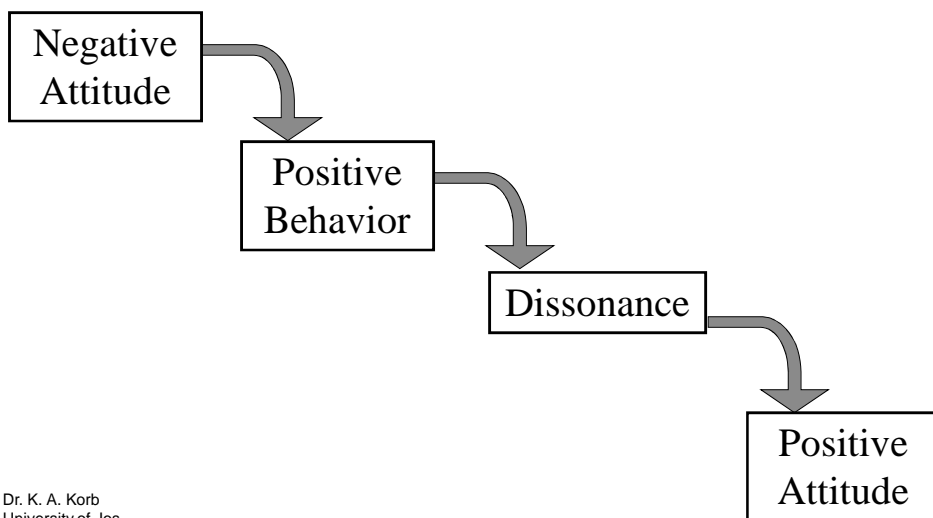
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- Will change attitude to justify:
  - Effort
    - How much is a university degree valued if little effort is put forth to receive it?
  - Money spent
    - More expensive jewelry is more prized than cheap jewelry
  - Time
    - Voter registration
  - Suffering
    - Gangs/Cults

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# Cognitive Dissonance

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## Cognitive Dissonance: Educational Implications

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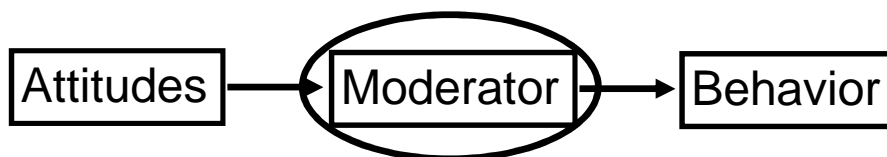
- Attitude change
  - Offer just enough reward or punishment to change behavior
  - Attitude change will follow
  - High pressure and rewards achieve short-term obedience, not long-term attitude change
- Prejudice within the school
  - Enforced policies that dictate how students interact with each other will lead to attitude change

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## Moderators of Attitude-Behavior

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- **Moderator:** Variable that affects the direction and/or strength of the relationship between an independent and dependent variable
  - **Independent Variable:** Proposed cause
  - **Dependent Variable:** Proposed effect



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## Moderators of Attitude-Behavior

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- Characteristics of **Attitude** that increase Attitude-Behavior Relationship
  - Direct Experience with the Attitude
    - Direct experience gives clarity, confidence, and certainty
  - Strength of Attitude
    - For strong attitudes, attitude predicts behavior
    - For weak attitudes, behavior predicts attitudes
    - Strength is a function of:
      - Knowledge
      - How closely related to one's value system
      - Accessibility of attitude
  - Specificity: Specific attitudes predict behavior better than general attitudes

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## Moderators of Attitude-Behavior

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- **Situational factors:** Theory of Planned Behavior
  - Social Norms
  - Perceived Behavioral Control
- **Person factors**
  - **Self Monitoring:** Tendency to adjust behavior to fit the situation
    - Attitudes are better predictors of behavior for low self monitors

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## Self-Monitoring Scale Sample Items (Snyder, 1974)

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1. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people.
2. My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.
3. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like.
4. I can only argue for ideas which I already believe.
5. I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information.
6. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain people.
7. I would probably make a good actor.
8. I rarely need the advice of my friends to choose movies, books, or music.
9. I sometimes appear to others to be experiencing deeper emotions than I actually am.
10. I laugh more when I watch a comedy with others than when alone.
11. In a group of people I am rarely the center of attention.

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