Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 42, No. 2, 1986, pp. 99–114

The Instrumentality of Attitudes: Toward a Neofunctional Theory

Gregory M. Herek
Graduate Center of the City University of New York

This paper proposes that attitudes should be viewed as strategies for meeting personal needs; they serve psychological functions. After reviewing the early functional attitude theories proposed by Katz and by Smith, and some of the problems associated with them, a new functional approach is outlined. This neofunctional approach distinguishes two principal sources for the benefit related to attitudes: the attitude's object and the attitude's expression. Within these two major categories, specific functions are described based on the author's research and that of earlier functional theorists. The personality, situational, and domain characteristics likely to influence the functional value of attitudes are also discussed. Strategies suggested by this approach for changing attitudes are briefly considered.

How are social issues related to personal life? What connections exist between abstract ideological systems and the concrete realities of everyday existence? How do people develop personal stances toward objects and events of the world? The articles in this number of the *Journal of Social Issues* make it abundantly clear that the answers to these questions are elusive and complex. As Crosby and Clayton (1986) point out in their introduction, it is necessary to consider how people view their own objective situation, their reference groups, and their society. Similarly, the present paper proposes that understanding individual attitudes requires analysis of subjective perceptions of self, significant others, and society. Attitudes, it is argued, are strategies for satisfying psychological needs.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Gregory M. Herek, Social-Personality Psychology Program, CUNY Graduate Center, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036-8099.

0022-4537/86/0600-0099$05.00/1

Many readers will recognize this assertion as the basic assumption of the functional approach to attitudes first articulated three decades ago (Katz, 1960; Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956) but now largely neglected. The present paper represents one step in an effort to revitalize this approach: to reexamine its assumptions, to remedy its failings, and to salvage its strengths. It is argued that a new functionalist view of attitudes can permit a synthesis of existing theories by specifying the conditions under which each is applicable. First, the need for such synthesis is illustrated by considering two competing conceptualizations of attitudes: reasoned action and symbolic politics.

Instrumental vs. Symbolic Attitudes

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), behavior is shaped largely by the intention to behave, which results from attitudes toward the specific behavior that, in turn, are shaped by beliefs about the utility of the behavior for meeting personal goals and by perceived social norms governing the behavior. Global attitudes toward issues or groups associated with the behavior are several steps removed in the causal chain and have minimal immediate importance. The theory would propose, for example, that whether a white person will vote for a black gubernatorial candidate can be predicted only by assessing the voter's attitudes toward casting that vote, her or his beliefs about the efficacy for personal goals of voting in that way, and her or his perception of social approval or disapproval associated with that voting behavior. The theory gives little weight to the person's general attitudes toward blacks or minority groups, or the person's general ideology concerning racial equality, political participation, or liberalism-conservatism. Abelson (1982) has pointed out that, while potentially useful for prediction and methodologically defensible, this approach sacrifices considerable insight into the psychological processes that underlie behavior and intentions.

A contrasting view is offered by Sears, Kinder, and their colleagues (Kinder & Sears, 1981, 1985; Sears, Hensler, & Speer, 1979; Sears, Lau, Tyler, & Allen, 1980). They have presented data that call into question the assumption that global attitudes are inconsequential for understanding behavior. They observed that racist and conservative ideologies are powerful predictors of whites' voting patterns for white or black candidates, and of their opposition to busing. Such ideologies predict attitudes and behavior better than objective measures of self-interest, such as living in a neighborhood likely to become integrated or having a child likely to be bused (Kinder & Sears, 1981; Sears et al., 1979). These global attitudes were labelled "symbolic," to distinguish them from attitudes based on instrumental or utilitarian considerations. Symbolic attitudes are "formed mainly in congruence with long-standing values about society and the

polity, rather than short-term instrumentalities for satisfaction of one's current private needs." These values are seen as deriving primarily from conditioning early in one's life (Sears, et al., 1980, p. 671; see also Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay & Hough, 1976). Symbolic attitudes are likely to involve emotional responses and to invoke abstract values, to be anchored in identification with an issue-relevant group, and to be relatively unresponsive to rational arguments (Abelson, 1982).

The symbolic politics approach has not escaped criticism. Sears, Kinder, and their colleagues have been accused of relying upon an overly narrow definition of self-interest (Bobo, 1983). Sniderman and Tetlock (1986) point out the need for a more systematic formulation and operationalization of symbolic attitudes (for replies, see Kinder, 1986; Sears & Kinder, 1985). Nevertheless, critics acknowledge the importance of the concept of symbolic politics, and of its potential utility for explaining political attitudes and behavior.

The reasoned action and symbolic politics perspectives both are defensible depictions of reality. In line with the former approach, behavior toward an attitude object sometimes is the result of rational utilitarian considerations. Consumer behavior, for example, is often (though not always) based on one's past experiences with a product. Another example is voting behavior; voters are likely to support a candidate who will provide direct benefit to them in the form of patronage employment, specific governmental services, and the like. Other behaviors, however, better fit the symbolic attitudes paradigm. For example, a socially conscious consumer who boycotts products she or he personally enjoys does so for reasons not immediately understandable in terms of reasoned action. Similarly, many people base their voting behavior less on expected direct benefit and more on ideological considerations. More examples could be cited for each approach. Rather than arguing whether symbolic politics or reasoned action is the one true attitude theory, therefore, it is more valuable to explain the conditions under which each applies.

The remainder of this paper outlines a theoretical model of attitude functions that specifies these conditions. It is argued that the symbolic attitudes view is appropriate for certain persons, certain domains of attitudes, and in certain situations, while the reasoned action view is more descriptive of others. The key variable for selecting the applicable perspective is the psychological need met by the attitude, that is, the function it serves (Katz, 1960; Smith et al., 1956). Symbolic attitudes are conceptualized as deriving their affective content from personal needs that are met by the attitude's expression, needs broadly related to issues of self and identity. The object of these attitudes primarily serves as a symbol for values integral to self-concept, for an intrapsychic conflict, or for acceptance or rejection by important others. Other attitudes, in contrast, are principally based on appraisals of the attitude object in terms of its utility for the

person; the object is perceived as it is rather than as a symbol, and the attitude's affect derives from whether the object is a source of benefit or detriment. With these attitudes, the reasoned action perspective is applicable.

The Functional Approach to Attitudes

Before describing a new model based on the functional approach to attitudes, it is appropriate to review briefly past work within this framework. The functional approach assumes that people hold and express particular attitudes because they derive psychological benefit from doing so, and that the type of benefit varies among individuals. Attitudes are understood according to the psychological needs they meet—the functions they serve (Katz, 1960, 1968; Katz & Stotland, 1959; Sarnoff & Katz, 1954; Smith, 1947; Smith et al., 1956). The approach enjoyed its greatest prominence in the 1950s and 1960s, and has received only occasional attention since then (Smith, 1973, 1980; P. Smith & Brigham, 1972).

Although no exhaustive list of functions was ever agreed upon, some major psychological needs were consistently assumed to be met by attitudes. Attitudes help organize and categorize the world in a meaningful and consistent fashion, providing order, clarity, and stability in one's frame of reference (a *knowledge* function; Katz, 1960). Attitudes also help maximize rewards and minimize punishments from the environment—this is the *utilitarian* or *instrumental* function (Katz, 1960). Smith et al. (1956) described an *object appraisal* function that to some extent combined the knowledge and the utilitarian by proposing that we organize for action the objects of the world according to our major interests and ongoing concerns. Alternatively, attitudes can be strategies for coping with anxiety generated by an intrapsychic conflict—the function of *ego defense* (Katz, 1960; Sarnoff, 1960) or *externalization* (Smith et al., 1956). Attitudes also can mediate one's interpersonal relations (the function of *social adjustment:* Smith et al., 1956; or *mediation of self–other relationships:* Smith, 1973) and express values important to one's self-concept (a *value-expressive* function: Katz, 1960).

Despite its intuitive appeal, its integrative nature, and its explanatory potential, the approach was displaced during the 1960s and 1970s by competing perspectives in personality and social psychology. In part, this reflected larger changes in psychology. Functionalism was identified with trait approaches at a time when many psychologists were turning to situationist and interactionist explanations of personality. Further, it was a *convergent* approach, bringing together many theories to study a single phenomenon. But the 1960s saw a shift to *divergent* approaches, such as cognitive dissonance theory, which applied a single theory to many different phenomena (McGuire, 1985).

Additionally, the approach itself was criticized for a variety of problems. Kiesler, Collins, and Miller (1969), for example, complained that it generated no new hypotheses—that it attempted an integration of several psychological theories but did not specify the conditions under which each should apply. Some charged that the functional theorists formulated testable hypotheses only for the ego-defensive function and did not describe the nondefensive functions clearly enough to permit others to study them. This was part of a larger complaint that the functional approach lacked experimental validation (Insko, 1967; Kiesler et al., 1969). These arguments tended to ignore or to discount several experimental tests of functional hypotheses that were conducted with encouraging results (Culbertson, 1957; Katz, McClintock, & Sarnoff, 1957; Katz, Sarnoff, & McClintock, 1956; McClintock, 1958; Stotland, Katz, & Patchen, 1959) and to dismiss many relevant nonexperimental studies (see Elms, 1976). Nonetheless, they were correct in their criticism that the functional approach never enjoyed widespread empirical testing.

This empirical neglect resulted from the approach's principal problem: the lack of an adequate method for assessing functions. Methodological strategies used in early studies treated attitudes as dispositions closely tied to personality traits. Although theoretical formulations paid some attention to situational factors and the characteristics of particular domains of attitude objects, empirical methods generally focused on person variables as the key to detecting attitude functions. It was assumed, for example, that a defensive person would have attitudes serving a defensive function. Consequently, functions usually were assessed indirectly through personality measures such as the *F* scale, MMPI items, and special TAT cards (e.g., Katz et al., 1956, 1957; McClintock, 1958). This operationalization presumed that a person's attitudes in one domain (say, a white Protestant's attitudes toward blacks) serve the same function as those in another domain (the same person's attitudes toward Jews or Catholics). It is theoretically defensible, however, to argue that a person's attitudes can serve entirely different functions in different domains. Such variation cannot be observed unless the method used to assess the functions focuses directly on attitudes rather than on more global personality characteristics. Smith et al.'s (1956) case study approach is more sensitive to domain and situational characteristics, but it is impractical with large data sets and experimental studies.

In summary, because it lacked an adequate methodology, the functional approach did not enjoy extensive empirical testing. Consequently, it always remained only "an approach"; it never developed into a systematic theory specifying the conditions under which particular functions should prevail. Thus it could not compete with divergent approaches that took center stage in social psychology, or with situationist and interactionist approaches that became popular in personality research.

To address these methodological weaknesses, I recently developed two procedures for directly assessing attitude functions (Herek, 1986). First, a content-analysis procedure was applied to samples of verbal behavior concerning heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Respondents wrote short essays explaining their attitudes, and patterns of themes in those essays were categorized according to function. I found evidence of three major functions: (1) Some respondents based their attitudes primarily upon their past experiences with specific homosexual persons. The positive or negative affect associated with those interactions was subsequently generalized to establish an overall evaluation of the entire group. Such attitudes correspond roughly to Katz's adjustment and knowledge functions and to Smith's object-appraisal function. I called them *experiential-schematic* attitudes to highlight their foundation in experiences with members of the target group; those experiences formed the basis for cognitive schemata concerning lesbians and gay men in general. (2) Other respondents' attitudes were based on insecurities and intrapsychic conflicts concerning their own gender or sexuality; these attitudes, which protected the self from anxiety associated with the conflicts, were described as serving a *defensive* function. (3) Some attitudes reflected values that were integral to the respondents' self-concept and that mediated their social relationships—a *self-expressive* function.

In a second study, an objectively scored Attitude Functions Inventory (AFI) was developed and tested. Factor analysis and correlations with relevant personality variables supported the AFI's validity. The AFI assesses the experiential-schematic and defensive attitude functions noted in the content analysis. It also permits separation of the self-expressive function into two components. The first is a *value-expressive* function, associated with attitudes whose primary motivation results from a need to affirm one's sense of self by articulating basic values integral to that self-concept. The second component is a *social-expressive* function, associated with attitudes motivated by a need to be accepted by important others (Herek, 1986).

These methods permit more refined empirical research with the functional approach and eventual development of a testable theory specifying the conditions under which each function is likely to be dominant. A basic foundation for such a theory is proposed in the remaining sections of this paper. It is referred to here as a *neo*functional approach because it involves a substantial reworking of the ideas put forward by Katz, Smith, and their colleagues.

A Neofunctional Approach to Attitudes

The neofunctional approach shares with its predecessors the assumption that attitudes benefit the person holding them. All attitudes are, in this sense, instrumental. Based on earlier research (Herek, 1986), it seems useful to distinguish

two different categories of functions, each describing a different source of benefit. First, such benefit can be associated mainly with rewards and punishments from the attitude object itself. Within this *evaluative* category of functions (it might also be called "descriptive" or "appraisal"), the attitude object is treated as an end in itself because of its perceived association with rewards or punishments. This is the general view of attitudes advanced by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). It also describes my own observations of experiential-schematic attitudes (Herek, 1986). Put simply, positive attitudes toward an object tend to result when it is perceived as a source of benefit, reward, or pleasure; negative attitudes result from past or anticipated detrimental, unpleasant, or punishing experiences with it. Such attitudes enable people to organize the world's objects according to their own self-interest that, along with the predictability and order resulting from such categorization, makes the attitude "functional" (Katz, 1960; Smith et al., 1956).

There are at least three evaluative functions. First, attitudes may be experiential and specific: after interacting with a particular instance of the attitude object category, it is treated as a unique entity, differentiated from its membership in the larger category, and evaluated in terms of its individual utility for the person. For example, a white person may develop positive attitudes toward a specific black co-worker after favorable interactions with her, although this positive attitude does not generalize to include all blacks. These experiential-specific attitudes are directed toward a single attitude object (rather than a category of objects); consequently, they are highly idiosyncratic to the interaction between person and object. Attitudes also can be experiential and schematic, treating the attitude object as representative of a larger category perceived as either beneficial or detrimental to oneself. In this case, past experiences with representatives of the category have led to the development of a cognitive schema that guides subsequent interactions with members of the category. This was the case with experiential-schematic attitudes observed in earlier research (Herek, 1986). For example, another white person with a black co-worker may become favorably disposed toward blacks in general. Both the schematic and specific forms of evaluative functions described here are experiential, i.e., based on past interactions with the attitude object. Evaluative attitudes also can be based on expected future utility rather than direct experience. This third evaluative function might be labeled "anticipatory-evaluative."

There is a second general class of attitude functions, which are manifested when an attitude's benefit comes primarily from its *expression*. The attitude object in this case is a means to an end—it provides a vehicle for securing social support, for increasing self-esteem, or for reducing anxiety. Symbolic attitudes are best categorized in this expressive category of functions. While symbolic attitudes are likely to be based upon conditioned affective responses, such condi-

tioning need not always have its roots in a person's preadult life (as proposed by Sears et al., 1979, 1980). Instead, responses to the attitude object may be largely shaped by more immediate influences that may or may not ultimately be traced to earlier experiences. There are at least three expressive functions: *social-expressive*, based on needs to be accepted by others in one's own immediate social environment; *value-expressive*, based on needs to define oneself by expressing important values and aligning oneself with important reference groups; and *defensive*, based on needs to reduce anxiety caused by intrapsychic conflicts, usually unconscious.

Previous research (Herek, 1986) has shown that heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men often serve one of these expressive functions. Lesbians and gay men (the attitude object) seemed to serve primarily as a symbol or vehicle, and the attitude's function lay primarily in the social and psychological benefits derived from its expression (e.g., acceptance by others, enhancement of self-esteem, reduction of anxiety). Because they treat the attitude object as a symbol, the psychological processes related to the formation, maintenance, and change of expressive attitudes differ from those with evaluative attitudes. Instead of analyzing the person's relationship to and perceptions of the object in terms of personal utility, these attitudes are better understood by analyzing the individual's group identifications, self-concept, and intrapsychic dynamics.

The ideas presented here are summarized in Table 1. The categories of attitude functions can be understood in terms of two independent motivational criteria, each describing a source to which the person attaches value, whether positive or negative. When a high level of value is attached to the attitude object itself but little value is associated with expressing the attitude, the attitude serves an evaluative function. When the opposite situation obtains and a high level of value is attached to the attitude's expression but not to the object, the attitude

Table 1. Categories of Attitude Functions

	Amount of benefit derived from object	
	Low	High
Amount of benefit derived from attitude's expression		
Low	Nonfunctional attitudes	Evaluative function
High	Expressive function	Complex function

serves one of the expressive functions. When neither valence is high, the attitude is *nonfunctional;* such attitudes are not strongly held and can be easily changed. Attitudes serving both kinds of function are referred to as *complex.*[1]

Sources of Attitude Functions

Different people are predisposed psychologically to manifest one kind of function more than another. A person also may express the same attitude for different reasons on different occasions, and may express attitudes about two different objects for entirely different reasons. Thus, while Katz, Smith, and their colleagues tended to see attitude functions as comparable to personality traits (and therefore fairly stable), the neofunctional model allows attitude functions to vary across situations and attitude domains as well. Each of these three sources of attitude functions are discussed briefly.

Person characteristics. Person characteristics are relatively stable psychological needs, values, and orientations toward the world. Herek (1986) found that persons with experiential-schematic attitudes tended to score high on self-monitoring, as well as on measures of public and private self-consciousness. He suggested that experiential-schematic intergroup attitudes involve a combination of sensitivity to one's social surroundings (which include outgroup members), and awareness of one's inner feelings and values. Other evaluative functions (experiential-specific, anticipatory-evaluative) probably are also related to these characteristics. Additionally, the evaluative functions are more common in persons who exhibit strong concern for their personal well-being and manifest a means-end orientation toward the world.

For expressive functions, different personality characteristics are relevant. Social-expressive attitudes are most likely among people with a high need for affiliation, a strong approval motive, and high awareness of their self-presentation in social settings (Herek, 1986). Value-expressive attitudes are likely to be manifested by people with strong beliefs and affects associated with a particular ideological system. Persons with value-expressive attitudes also are likely to pay less attention to social cues, and more attention to internal beliefs and values (Herek, 1986; Snyder & DeBono, 1985). Defensive attitudes should be more

[1]Intergroup attitudes often are complex. This is because interactions with a minority group member (which form the basis for evaluative functions) inevitably require confronting the political and social values attached to minority group membership by the dominant majority (which are associated with expressive functions). Thus, a member of the dominant group rarely can express attitudes toward the minority that are simply descriptive of past interactions. Those attitudes typically acquire a political character through their expression, whether they support or challenge the status quo. Intergroup attitudes, therefore, are likely to serve both evaluative and expressive functions.

common among people with strong intrapsychic conflicts that they tend to externalize, e.g., through projection (Herek, 1986).

Domain characteristics. Attitude domains are groups, objects, issues, or behaviors toward which people hold attitudes. A synonym might be attitude *topic.* A single domain can include different kinds of attitudes. For example, the general domain of attitudes concerning Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) can be divided into attitudes toward persons with AIDS (intergroup attitude), attitudes toward allowing one's children to attend school with a child diagnosed for AIDS (behavior attitude), and attitudes toward governmental funding for AIDS research (issue attitude). While interrelationships are likely, the various manifestations of an attitude domain need not all evoke the same response from an individual.

Social psychologists often have assumed that attitudes in various domains involve identical psychological processes. Certain domains, however, may not arouse all functions. Attitudes toward consumer products, for example, are likely to tap evaluative functions. Intergroup attitudes are more likely to arouse the expressive functions. Attitudes "created" in laboratory settings are likely to lack strong affect and perhaps will be nonfunctional; alternatively, they may serve an evaluative function, owing to the salience of rational, problem-solving thought in many laboratory settings (e.g., Fazio, Lenn, & Effrein, 1983–1984).

Evaluative attitudes are most likely to be associated with attitude objects that have clear benefits or liabilities for the person. Experiential-specific and experiential-schematic functions additionally require past interactions with the object or another member of the object category. Anticipatory-evaluative attitudes can arise from the mere expectation of future interaction with a neutral object (Fazio et al., 1983–1984). Expressive functions are likely when the attitude object lends itself to symbolism. Social-expressive attitudes should most often be associated with an attitude target for which the person's social group has a definite evaluation to which it attaches some importance. Value-expressive attitudes are consonant with attitude targets that provide an example or metaphor for some important part of the individual's ideological system. Defensive attitudes are more likely when the attitude target resonates with an intrapsychic conflict.

Situational characteristics. Situations are defined here as relatively transient social episodes. Characteristics of situations include the setting (time and place), the actors, and the context (events preceding and following the episode). The characteristics most germane to the present discussion are those perceived by the person as somehow relevant to her or his attitudes toward the attitude domain in question. Evaluative attitudes will be more likely in social episodes where specific personal goals are salient (Peak, 1960). Experiential-schematic and ex-

periential-specific functions will be stimulated when the person interacts with the attitude object, or when memories are evoked of past interactions with instances of the attitude object. Anticipatory-evaluative attitudes will be common in situations that focus the person's attention on future well-being. The various expressive functions, in contrast, are more likely to dominate in situations that highlight identity and affiliative needs. A social-expressive function will be fostered when group membership and social acceptance are salient. Value-expressive functions are likely to emerge when personal values and ideology are made salient, as in Rokeach's (1968, 1973) value-confrontation approach. Defensive attitudes will be more dominant when personal insecurities, intrapsychic conflicts, and issues relating to self-esteem are salient; an example is the situation created when undergraduate males were led to believe they had homosexual impulses, which presumably were viewed as undesirable (Bramel, 1963).

Table 2 lists some characteristics of persons, situations, and domains that interact to evoke particular functions. Despite these multiple sources of influence, attitude functions need not be viewed as continually in a state of flux. It seems likely that they usually are stable, shaped by an interaction of personality and domain variables; attitudes generally fulfill a person's ongoing needs that are resonant with the attitude object. Situations can intervene, however, by exacerbating individual needs or changing perceptions of attitude domains. Sometimes this can result in permanent alteration of an attitude's function. Persons with complex attitudes should be especially susceptible to situational variables that focus their attention on either the evaluative or expressive aspects of their attitudes.

Table 2. Hypothesized Sources of Attitude Functions

	Person	Domain	Situation
Experiential-specific	Person has strong concern for personal well-being	Object itself has been source of reward or punishment	Situation evokes memories of interaction with specific object
Experiential-schematic	Person has strong concern for personal well-being	Object is viewed as member of larger category that has been source of reward/punishment	Situation evokes generalization from past interactions as they relate to personal well-being
Anticipatory-evaluative	Person has strong concern for future well-being	Object has not been experienced, but information is available abut it	Situation evokes anticipation of interaction with specific object
Value-expressive	Person has strong ideology	Object is relevant to values	Situation makes values salient
Social-expressive	Person has strong need for affiliation	Object is salient to important others	Situation makes group salient
Defensive	Person has intrapsychic conflicts	Object exacerbates conflicts	Situation makes conflicts salient

An Example

To clarify the relative influence of person, domain, and situational characteristics, let us compare two attitude domains: attitudes toward a neighborhood residential treatment facility for deinstitutionalized psychiatric patients, and attitudes toward a similar facility for persons with AIDS. Consider two hypothetical individuals, Ms. Wagner and Mr. Adams, both of whom are opposed to the two facilities but for different reasons.

Ms. Wagner is a self-made woman who has worked hard to be where she is today, and who has a general philosophy of looking out for her own interests while still trying to be a decent human being. She is a devout fundamentalist Christian. She opposes the mental health facility because she perceives that ex-patients are very likely to be violent and so would threaten her own personal safety and that of her family, as well as her property values. Her concern is particularly acute right now because she was mugged recently and a neighbor's home was burglarized last week. To the best of her knowledge she has never interacted with a former or current patient. Her opposition to the AIDS facility is based on her perception that most persons with AIDS are homosexual men, whom she considers unrepentant sinners. Because she views AIDS as God's punishment for sin, she does not think tax money should be spent to help people with the disease. Her religious beliefs are particularly salient to her right now because she has recently become more involved with her church.

Mr. Adams has a very strong need to be liked by the people around him, especially since his best friend recently moved from the neighborhood. He is not very comfortable with his own sexuality, and he prefers not to talk about topics that he labels "dirty." A prime example of such a topic is the march for lesbian and gay rights that he inadvertently witnessed last weekend, where many same-sex couples were kissing and embracing publicly. Like Ms. Wagner, Mr. Adams is opposed to both neighborhood facilities. He does not want the mental health facility mainly because his friends and neighbors are openly opposed to it, and he trusts their judgment. He says that he really does not want to discuss AIDS, much less have a treatment facility in his neighborhood, because it is "a disgusting topic" that he associates with "sexual perversions" like those he saw in the parade.

Ms. Wagner's attitudes toward the mental health facility serve an evaluative function based on a general conception of mentally ill persons. Because her attitudes are not based on actual experiences with psychiatric patients, their function is anticipatory-evaluative. They derive from her orientation to look out for her own interests (person characteristic), her perception of the mentally ill as dangerous (domain characteristic), and the salience of neighborhood safety due to recent events (situational characteristic). Mr. Adams' attitudes, on the other hand, serve a social-expressive function. He tends to need social support (person

characteristic), which is exacerbated by his friend's recent departure (situation characteristic). Further, the mental health facility has been strongly opposed by his neighbors (domain characteristic).

Mr. Adams' opposition to the AIDS facility also serves an expressive function: defense. He is generally anxious about the topic of sex (person characteristic) and he associates AIDS with homosexuality (domain characteristic). His negative feelings about homosexuality became salient recently when he witnessed behavior that aroused his own sexual anxieties (situation characteristic). His negative experience at the march resulted from his pre-existing negative emotions surrounding homosexuality; thus his attitudes do not serve an evaluative function. Like Mr. Adams, Ms. Wagner's opposition to the AIDS facility reflects an expressive function, but in her case it is a value-expressive function. Ms. Wagner also associates AIDS with homosexuality, but she views it in moral terms (domain characteristic). Her religious beliefs are very important to her sense of self (person characteristic) and this is more the case since she increased her involvement with church activities (situational characteristic).

This example illustrates how the same attitude can serve different functions for different people, and different functions can be the basis for one individual's attitudes in different domains.

Attitude Change

Since person characteristics tend to be stable over time, persuasive efforts should focus on changing perceptions of the attitude domain and creating situations that foster such change. The distinctions described here suggest that different strategies are required for changing attitudes serving different functions. Since evaluative attitudes are based largely upon calculations of the attitude object's specific, schematic, or anticipatory utility to the person, changes in perceived utility will change attitudes. With expressive attitudes, in contrast, changes in the consequences for asserting the attitude will be of primary importance.

Messages are most likely to change attitudes when they are resonant with the person's predominant function. Returning to the hypothetical individuals described earlier: Ms. Wagner might change her attitudes toward the mental health facility if she can be convinced that only a small minority of the mentally ill are violent and that no violent ex-patients would be placed in her neighborhood. Personal interaction with residents might be persuasive. Mr. Adams might change his attitudes if he can be convinced that his neighbors are not unanimous in their opposition, or that they will continue to like him even if he disagrees with them.

Ms. Wagner's opposition to the AIDS residence might best be changed through a message appealing to her religious values, e.g., that AIDS is not a

divine punishment but rather a challenge from God to test love of her neighbor. Defensive attitudes, such as those held by Mr. Adams, would not change unless the intrapsychic conflict can be eliminated (a difficult task) or the attitude object can be stripped of its symbolic link to the conflict. One strategy would be to teach Mr. Adams that AIDS is not unique to gay men, but that it also attacks heterosexuals. Another possibility is to promote insight into the psychological dynamics that underlie the attitudes, perhaps thereby short-circuiting them.

To the extent that attitudes are complex, i.e., serving multiple functions, a message will be more effective in changing attitudes when situational factors "prime" the person to be receptive to the function stressed in the message. For example, although Ms. Wagner's attitudes toward the mental health facility serve an evaluative function, she might be susceptible to a value-oriented persuasive message if she were first primed by asking her to discuss her belief in the right of all Americans to a fair chance.

Conclusion

I have argued here for the value of conceptualizing attitudes in terms of the psychological functions they serve. Such a view helps make sense of the relationship between social issues and personal life: personal attitudes toward social issues help people to meet their needs, either through benefits received from the attitude object or from the attitude's expression. Although I have not discussed ideologies (which are *systems* of attitudes, beliefs, and values), the general perspective outlined here seems applicable to these as well. Rather than expecting ideologies to be consistent with reference to a particular political or ethical system, the present paper suggests that they are organized primarily in terms of their instrumentality for achieving important goals. Like their component attitudes, ideologies can focus on the objective characteristics of a target as well as its symbolic and expressive value. Most sociopolitical ideologies, with their emphasis on abstract values and alignment with social groups, probably tend toward the latter focus. In this sense, they are central to personal identity and might be called *ideologies of the self.* Understanding them thus requires a better understanding of personal goals and identity (see Smith, 1980).

The formulation in this paper is tentative and exploratory. Undoubtedly it will be refined as new empirical data are obtained. For the present, it will serve its purpose if it broadens discussion of attitudes and ideology to include issues of motivation and identity.

References

Abelson, R. P. (1982). Three modes of attitude-behavior consistency. In M. P. Zanna, E. T. Higgins, & C. P. Herman (Eds.), *Consistency in social behavior: The Ontario symposium* (Vol. 2, pp. 131–147). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bobo, L. (1983). Whites' opposition to busing: Symbolic racism or realistic group conflict? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 45,* 1196–1210.

Bramel, D. (1963). Selection of a target for defensive projection. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 66,* 318–324.

Crosby, F., & Clayton, S. D. (1986). Introduction: The search for connections. *Journal of Social Issues, 42*(2), 1–9.

Culbertson, F. M. (1957). Modification of an emotionally-held attitude through role playing. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 54,* 230–233.

Elms, A. C. (1976). *Personality and politics.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Fazio, R. H., Lenn, T. M., & Effrein, E. A. (1983–1984). Spontaneous attitude formation. *Social Cognition, 2*(3), 217–234.

Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Herek, G. M. (1986). Can functions be measured? A new perspective on the functional approach to attitudes. Unpublished paper submitted for editorial review.

Insko, C. A. (1967). *Theories of attitude change.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Katz, D. (1960). The functional approach to the study of attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 24,* 163–204.

Katz, D. (1968). Consistency for what? The functional approach. In R. P. Abelson, et al. (Eds.), *Theories of cognitive consistency: A sourcebook* (pp. 179–191). Chicago: Rand-McNally.

Katz, D., McClintock, C., & Sarnoff, I. (1957). The measurement of ego defense as related to attitude change. *Journal of Personality, 25,* 465–474.

Katz, D., Sarnoff, I., & McClintock, C. (1956). Ego-defense and attitude change. *Human Relations, 9,* 27–46.

Katz, D., & Stotland, E. (1959). A preliminary statement to a theory of attitude structure and change. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A study of a science* (Vol. 3, pp. 423–475). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kiesler, C. A., Collins, B. E., & Miller, N. (1969). *Attitude change: A critical analysis of theoretical approaches.* New York: Wiley & Sons.

Kinder, D. R. (1986). The continuing American dilemma: White resistance to racial change forty years after Myrdal. *Journal of Social Issues, 42*(2), 151–171.

Kinder, D. R., & Sears, D. O. (1981). Prejudice and politics: Symbolic racism versus racial threats to the good life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 40,* 414–431.

Kinder, D. R., & Sears, D. O. (1985). Political behavior. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (3rd ed., Vol. 2, pp. 659–741). New York: Random House.

McClintock, C. (1958). Personality syndromes and attitude change. *Journal of Personality, 26,* 479–493.

McConahay, J. B., & Hough, J. C., Jr. (1976). Symbolic racism. *Journal of Social Issues, 32*(2), 23–45.

McGuire, W. J. (1985). Attitudes and attitude change. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology,* (3rd ed., pp. 233–346). New York: Random House.

Peak, H. (1960). The effect of aroused motivation on attitudes. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 61,* 463–468.

Rokeach, M. (1968). *Beliefs, attitudes, and values: A theory of organization and change.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values.* New York: Free Press.

Sarnoff, I. (1960). Psychoanalytic theory and social attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 24*(2), 251–279.

Sarnoff, I., & Katz, D. (1954). The motivational bases of attitude change. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 49,* 115–124.

Sears, D. O., & Kinder, D. R. (1985). Whites' opposition to busing: On conceptualizing and operationalizing group conflict. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 48,* 1141–1147.

Sears, D. O., Hensler, C. P., & Speer, L. (1979). Whites' opposition to busing: Self-interest or symbolic politics? *American Political Science Review, 73,* 369–384.

Sears, D. O., Lau, R. R., Tyler, T. R., & Allen, H. M. (1980). Self-interest or symbolic politics in policy attitudes and presidential voting. *American Political Science Review, 74,* 670–684.

Smith, M. B. (1947). The personal setting of public opinions: A study of attitudes toward Russia. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 11,* 507–523.

Smith, M. B. (1973). Political attitudes. In J. Knutson (Ed.), *Handbook of political psychology* (pp. 57–82). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Smith, M. B. (1980). Attitudes, values, and selfhood. In H. E. Howe, Jr. (Ed.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation 1979* (pp. 305–350). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Smith, M. B., Bruner, J. S., & White, R. W. (1956). *Opinions and personality.* New York: Wiley.

Smith, P. W., & Brigham, J. C. (1972). The functional approach to attitude change: An attempt at operationalization. *Representative Research in Social Psychology, 3*(1), 73–80.

Sniderman, P. M., & Tetlock, P. E. (1986). Symbolic racism: Problems of motive attribution in political debate. *Journal of Social Issues, 42*(2), 129–150.

Snyder, M., & DeBono, K. G. (1985). Appeals to image and claims about quality: Understanding the psychology of advertising. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49,* 586–597.

Stotland, E., Katz, D., & Patchen, M. (1959). The reduction of prejudice through the arousal of self-insight. *Journal of Personality, 27,* 507–531.