ATTITUDE CONSTRUCTION: EVALUATION IN CONTEXT

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Most theories treat attitudes as enduring evaluative tendencies; the dispositional focus enjoys intuitive appeal because it is compatible with observers' preference for dispositional explanations (aka fundamental attribution error). From the actor's perspective, evaluation stands in the service of action. Any adaptive system of evaluation needs to be highly sensitive to the specifics of the present, turning deplorable "context dependency" into laudable "context sensitivity." Attitude construal theories conceptualize the context sensitivity of evaluative judgment and provide a parsimonious account of core findings of the attitude literature without assuming enduring dispositions; their assumptions are compatible with theories of situated cognition.

> *What can be accounted for by fewer assumptions is explained in vain by more.*
> —William of Ockham (c. 1280–1349)

Attitudes are hypothetical constructs that psychologists invented to explain phenomena of interest. As Gordon Allport put it seven decades ago, "How does one know that attitudes exist at all? Only by necessary inference. *There must be something* to account for the consistency of conduct" (Allport, 1935, p. 836, italics added). Like all hypothetical constructs in science, attitudes derive their right to life from their explanatory power and live at the mercy of Ockham's razor (Moody, 1974), quoted above. On both accounts, the attitude concept has seen serious challenges. Some 30 years after Allport's (1935) writing, Wicker's (1969) review of the available data on attitude–behavior consistency indicated that the explanatory power of the attitude concept was less than impressive—"only rarely can

as much as 10% of the variance in overt behavioral measures be accounted for by attitudinal data" (Wicker, 1969, p. 65). More recently, a number of related conceptual analyses (e.g., Lord & Lepper, 1999; Schwarz & Bless, 1992; Schwarz & Bohner, 2001; Smith & DeCoster, 2000; Tourangeau, 1992) suggested that it is more parsimonious to think of attitudes as evaluative judgments, formed when needed, rather than as enduring personal dispositions. However, such empirical and conceptual challenges have not threatened the popularity of a dispositional conceptualization that treats attitudes as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1; see also Eagly & Chaiken, this issue). This conceptualization derives its intuitive appeal from its compatibility with humans' pervasive tendency to explain others' behavior in terms of their dispositions. Ironically, we call this tendency the "fundamental attribution error" (Ross, 1977) when exhibited by laypersons, but endorse the same explanatory structure as the field's "most indispensable concept" (Allport, 1935, p. 784) when the disposition is labeled an "attitude" (see Schuman, 1983 for a related discussion).

This article is organized as follows. The first section emphasizes the pragmatic functions of evaluative judgment and highlights the adaptive nature of context-sensitive evaluation. The second section addresses how attitude construal models, which treat attitudes as evaluative judgments formed on the spot, can account for variability as well as stability in attitude reports across time, situations, and measures. The third section discusses the relationship between attitude judgments and behavior and shows that what is known about attitude–behavior consistency is fully compatible with a construal perspective. The fourth section responds to recent attempts to reconcile the dispositional view of attitudes with the observation of pervasive context effects by treating attitudes as latent constructs. The fifth section addresses additional questions posed by the editor of this Special Issue. The concluding section notes that the controversy over whether people "have" or "construct" attitudes cannot be settled on the basis of critical experiments but rests on issues of parsimony and heuristic fruitfulness.

EVALUATION IN CONTEXT: SITUATED COGNITION AND ATTITUDE CONSTRUCTION

As William James (1890, p. 333) observed, "My thinking is first and last and always for the sake of my doing." Few psychologists doubt this truism, yet its implications for the psychology of evaluation are often overlooked. To serve action in a given context, any adaptive system of

evaluation should be informed by past experience, but highly sensitive to the specifics of the present. Moreover, it should overweight recent experience at the expense of more distant experience, and experience from similar situations at the expense of experience from dissimilar situations. In addition, it should take current goals and concerns into account to ensure that the assessment is relevant to what we attempt to do now, in this context. In short, only *context–sensitive* evaluation can guide behavior in adaptive ways by alerting us to problems and opportunities when they exist; by interrupting ongoing processes when needed (but not otherwise); and by rendering information highly accessible that is relevant now, in this situation. A large body of diverse findings suggests that human cognition is superbly tuned to meet these requirements and research into the situated and embodied nature of cognition increasingly illuminates the underlying processes (for reviews see Barsalou, 2005; Gibbs, 2006; Niedenthal, Barsalou, Winkielman, Krauth-Gruber, & Ric, 2006; Schwarz, 2002; Smith & Semin, 2004; Yeh & Barsalou, 2006).

From the actor's perspective, context-sensitive evaluation is an asset, not a liability.[1] However, what is an advantage for the actor is a disadvantage for the observer, who hopes to predict the actor's thoughts and behaviors from knowledge about the actor's enduring attitudes (i.e., enduring evaluations formed by past experience). To date, attitude research has predominantly taken the observer's perspective, deploring the context "dependency" of attitude reports, which presumably clouds the actor's "true" attitude. Once we adopt the actor's perspective, deplorable context "dependency" turns into laudable context "sensitivity." It is therefore not surprising that ever more sophisticated attempts to assess the actor's true and enduring attitude have mostly resulted in a reiteration of the same basic lesson: evaluations are context sensitive.

STALKING THE "TRUE" ATTITUDE

From a dispositional perspective, context effects in attitude measurement reflect undesirable noise that may be due to strategic responding in light of social desirability and self–presentation concerns or to the deliberate consideration of contextual information (for recent discussions see Eagly & Chaiken, 2005; Ferguson & Bargh, 2007). The development of implicit attitude measures promised to attenuate or eliminate both

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1. Similar considerations apply to other forms of trait-behavior consistency (see Mischel, 1984), but the numerous parallels between the trait and attitude literatures are beyond the scope of this article.

sources of noise through procedures that are not transparent to respondents, thus limiting strategic responding, and very fast-paced, thus limiting deliberation (for reviews see the contributions in Wittenbrink & Schwarz, 2007). These measures are assumed to assess previously formed attitudes, conceptualized as stored object–evaluation links that are automatically activated upon exposure to the attitude object (Fazio, 1995; see also Fazio, this issue). As Ferguson and Bargh (2007) review, automatic attitudes were initially assumed "to be contextually independent (. . .), to the point that an implicit attitude measure was regarded as a potential 'bona fide pipeline' to people's inner attitudes" (p. 220).

These hopes were not met. As research into implicit attitude measurement progressed, it became increasingly apparent that evaluative and conceptual priming procedures (for a review see Wittenbrink, 2007) as well as response competition procedures (like the Implicit Association Test [IAT]; for a review see Lane, Banaji, Nosek, & Greenwald, 2007) show pronounced context sensitivity. Moreover, the observed contextual influences usually parallel the context effects observed on explicit attitude measures. For example, Dasgupta and Greenwald (2001) found that exposure to pictures of liked African Americans and disliked European Americans resulted in shifts on a subsequent IAT that paralleled previously observed effects of exposure to liked or disliked exemplars on explicit measures of attitudes (e.g., Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Wänke, 1995). Similarly, Wittenbrink, Judd, and Park (2001) found that the same Black face primes elicited more negative automatic responses when the faces were presented on the background of an urban street scene rather than a church scene. Other studies showed that implicit measures are sensitive to the actor's goals (e.g., Ferguson & Bargh, 2004) and current states of the organism, like hunger or thirst (e.g., Seibt, Häfner, & Deutsch, 2007). Moreover, they reflect the use of declarative information and metacognitive experiences as sources of information (e.g., Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2005), again paralleling explicit measures (Schwarz, 2004). Most important, automatic evaluative responses have also been obtained for novel objects, for which no previously acquired object–attitude links could have been be stored in memory (e.g., Duckworth, Bargh, Garcia, & Chaiken, 2002).

The automatic evaluation of novel stimuli, and the high context sensitivity of any automatic evaluation, is difficult to reconcile with the hope that automatic evaluations capture enduring object–evaluation links established by past experience. However, these findings (more extensively reviewed by Blair, 2002 and Ferguson & Bargh, 2003, 2007) are consistent with a situated cognition perspective. As Smith and Conrey (2007) noted, only context-sensitive cognition allows "the mind to re-

spond efficiently and accurately to a constantly changing environment that calls for situated knowledge and behaviors" (p. 256). From this perspective, implicit measures provide a promising avenue for understanding the nature of context-sensitive automatic evaluation (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2007). However, they are likely to disappoint researchers who hope for a "bona fide pipeline" (Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995) to people's true and enduring attitudes.

STABILITY AND CHANGE
IN EXPLICIT ATTITUDE JUDGMENTS

The development of attitude construal models (e.g., Lord & Lepper, 1999; Schwarz & Bless, 1992, 2007; Schwarz & Bohner, 2001; Smith & DeCoster, 2000; Tourangeau, 1992; Wilson & Hodges, 1992) was prompted by the observation that attitude reports are highly context sensitive. These models have faced a number of challenges, which are essentially the flipside of the challenges faced by traditional attitude models. Most important, their emphasis on contextualized construction suggested to some observers that construal models excel at explaining variability in attitude judgments across time and contexts (the weak point of traditional attitude theories), but fail at explaining stability (the strong point of traditional attitude theories). In addition, a long-standing contention holds that strong or crystallized attitudes are stable and context independent and that contextual influences are limited to weak attitudes or "nonattitudes" (e.g., Converse, 1964). Hence, construal models mostly address the "wrong" thing.

STABILITY AND CHANGE

Attitude researchers infer that a person's attitude is "stable" when the person provides similar attitude reports at different times and/or in different contexts. From the perspective of construal models, dispositional assumptions are not needed and the conditions of "stability" (i.e., similar judgments across time and contexts) and "change" (i.e., dissimilar judgments across time and contexts) can be derived from general judgment models: the conditions under which judges arrive at similar or different evaluations correspond to the conditions under which contextual influences are small (resulting in observed stability) rather than large (resulting in observed change).

    First, evaluative judgments are similar across time and contexts when judges draw on similar inputs (see Bless, Schwarz, & Wänke, 2003; Schwarz & Bless, 2007 for a more detailed discussion). Hence, (i) similar

judgments are expected when the context of judgment remains the same, thus rendering the same information temporarily accessible at Time 1 and Time 2; conversely, changing inputs give rise to changes in judgment (e.g., Lord, Paulson, Sia, Thomas, & Lepper, 2004). Similarly, (ii) no change is expected when the judgment is based on chronically accessible information that comes to mind at both points in time; this situation may arise when the context does not provide relevant information (e.g., Sia, Lord, Blessum, Ratcliff, & Lepper, 1997). Moreover, (iii) repeated use of information increases its accessibility in memory and the likelihood that it comes to mind again at a later occasion. This self–perpetuating nature of information accessibility (Wyer & Srull, 1989) fosters similarity of repeated evaluations in the absence of strong contextual influences.

Second, when judges draw on different inputs at Time 1 and Time 2, they will only arrive at different judgments when the new inputs have different evaluative implications; merely replacing one piece of information with a different one of similar valence will not change the evaluative judgment (e.g., Sia et al., 1997). Conversely, high accessibility of information with opposite evaluative implications fosters low stability over time, as different subsets of information may be accessed at Time 1 and Time 2 (e.g., Jonas & Diehl, 2000a).

Finally, when the evaluative implications of accessible inputs differ from Time 1 to Time 2, the resulting shift in judgment depends on the specifics of the mental construal process (for more detailed discussions see Bless et al., 2003; Schwarz & Bless, 2007). On the one hand, including a piece of accessible information in the representation of the attitude object results in assimilation effects (i.e., more positive [negative] judgments when positive [negative] information is included in the representation). The size of these assimilation effects decreases as the amount and evaluative consistency of other information included in the representation of the target increases. In general, adding an additional piece of information at Time 2 to a representation of the object that is otherwise identical with the representation used at Time 1, will only result in change if the initial representation was (a) based on a small amount of information, was (b) evaluatively inconsistent (in which case the new piece of information may tip the balance), or (c) the new information is more extreme than the average implications of the old information. On the other hand, including positive (negative) information in the representation of the standard against which the attitude object is evaluated, results in contrast effects. The size of these contrast effects is again a function of the amount and evaluative consistency of other information used in forming a standard, paralleling the discussion of the size of

assimilation effects (for empirical examples see Bless, Igou, Schwarz, & Wänke, 2000; Bless et al., 2003).

In short, the variables that determine the size of context effects are also the variables that determine the stability or change of attitude judgments over time. Hence, construal models are compatible with the observation of change as well as stability in attitude reports and specify the conditions under which each one will be observed without assuming that people "have" enduring attitudes.

ATTITUDE STRENGTH

The issue of attitude strength has long been central to the discussion of attitude stability and change. From the perspective of dispositional (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; or "file–drawer," Wilson & Hodges, 1992) models of attitudes, similar attitude reports at different points in time suggest that respondents have a "strong" or "crystallized" attitude that is accessible in memory. In contrast, instability in the reports suggests that we are assessing "nonattitudes," for which answers need to be made up on the spot (e.g., Converse, 1964).

As Krosnick and Abelson's (1992) review of the attitude strength literature indicates, the available findings present a challenging divergence of observations. On the one hand, the persuasion and social influence literatures show that strong attitudes (as characterized by various attitude strength measures) are indeed more resistant to change than weak attitudes. On the other hand, the classic hypothesis that context effects in attitude measurement "are greater in the case of weaker attitudes has clearly been disconfirmed" (Krosnick & Abelson, 1992, p. 193; see also Krosnick & Schuman, 1988 who failed to find support in multiple experiments). These divergent observations parallel a more general divergence in the literatures on persuasion and context effects: The persuasion literature indicates that *changing* people's attitudes is difficult and requires considerable skill (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986); in contrast, the literature on context effects indicates that not changing people's attitudes in the process of mere measurement is difficult and requires considerable skill (e.g., Sudman, Bradburn, & Schwarz, 1996). These diverging observations are difficult to reconcile in the framework of traditional attitude models, which suggest that "crystallized" attitudes should be resistant to influence under both conditions. However, the pattern is highly plausible from a situated cognition perspective.

If human cognition is context sensitive, persuasion and influence situations should give rise to close scrutiny of the presented information; after all, following the communicator's agenda may not be in the

recipient's best interest. Not surprisingly, the motivation for critical message elaboration increases with the personal relevance of the topic (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), personal relevance also feeds into the judgments of attitude importance and centrality that serve as indicators of attitude strength. Hence, ceteris paribus, the effectiveness of counterattitudinal messages decreases with increasing attitude strength. Compare this to a survey interview as the prototypical measurement situation. Here, the mutually understood (and explained) purpose of the enterprise is to get an unbiased portrait of the respondent's opinions. No persuasive arguments are (ostensibly) presented, respondents perceive the researcher as a cooperative communicator (Schwarz, 1996), accept the common ground of the conversation, interpret the questions in the context in which they are presented, and answer them. Respondents are not aware that other question wordings, sequences, and formats would bring other information to mind that might result in a different judgment. Instead, they experience the contextually primed information as their own thoughts and rely on these thoughts in arriving at a judgment. As a result, contextual influences go unnoticed and answering a single question can influence consequential behavior (like the purchase of big-ticket items; e.g., Morwitz, Johnson, & Schmittlein, 1993) in ways that are difficult to achieve with persuasive messages—unless respondents recognize "benign" questions as persuasion attempts, which undermines their influence (Williams, Fitzsimons, & Block, 2004).

   The observation that "strong" attitudes resist explicit persuasion attempts but succumb to the influence of question order is difficult to reconcile with traditional attitude models (and mostly ignored by attitude strength researchers). From a construal perspective, there is nothing that "resists" in the first place. Instead, the different pragmatic implications of measurement and persuasion situations give rise to differences in the judgment process: people are more likely to rely on what seem to be their own thoughts rather than the arguments presented by someone else, consistent with the general observation that awareness of a likely influence undermines the impact of accessible information in judgment studies (e.g., Martin, 1986; Strack, Schwarz, Bless, Kübler, & Wänke, 1993).

ATTITUDE–BEHAVIOR RELATIONSHIP

Following Wicker's (1969) conclusion that the correlation between attitude reports and behavior is "rarely above .30, and often near zero" (p. 65), attitude researchers reconsidered basic conceptual issues (cf. Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Schuman & Johnson, 1976) and explored nu-

merous moderating variables. Many of these explorations were informed by social cognition theorizing and introduced judgment variables into the mix without giving up the dispositional attitude concept. The effort paid off and recent meta–analyses converge on the conclusion that the relationship between attitude reports and behaviors increases to around $r = .40$ when moderating variables are taken into account (e.g., Kraus, 1995; Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988; Wallace, Paulson, Lord, & Bond, 2005). More important for the present discussion, the conditions under which reliable relationships between attitude reports and behavioral measures are, or are not, observed are fully compatible with a construal approach.

Paralleling the previous discussion of attitude stability over time, judgments formed at Time 1 are only likely to predict behavior at Time 2 when the judgment and the behavioral decision are based on similar mental representations. Hence, a general *matching principle* (Lord & Lepper, 1999; Schwarz & Bohner, 2001) provides a parsimonious conceptualization of the conditions under which we will observe (i) similar evaluative judgments across time and contexts (the issue of attitude stability) and (ii) a close relationship between evaluative judgments and overt behaviors (the issue of attitude–behavior consistency). A review of some core findings from the attitude–behavior literature may illustrate the latter point.

First, the observed consistency between evaluative judgment and behavior is higher when both are assessed in the same experimental session, thus keeping the relevant context constant and avoiding time–related changes in information accessibility (Wallace et al., 2005).

Second, evaluation–behavior consistency is higher when the mental representations formed at the time of judgment match the representations formed at the time of behavior.

For example, Ramsey, Lord, Wallace, and Pugh (1994) observed that participants' evaluations of the category of former substance abusers were a better predictor of their behavior toward an exemplar when the description of the exemplar matched rather than mismatched their representation of the category, assessed two weeks earlier. Because many exemplars provide a poor match with category representations it is difficult to predict behaviors toward exemplars from judgments about the category, resulting in the usually observed low evaluation–behavior relationship. Similarly, suppose that the attitude report is based on respondents' mood at the time of judgment (e.g., Schwarz & Clore, 1983). In this case, we may be hard put to detect any evaluation–behavior consistency unless respondents happen to be in the same mood in the behavioral situation and consult their feelings as a source of information, which depends on a host of different variables (for a review see Schwarz & Clore, 2007).

Third, any differences in processing motivation at the time of judgment and behavior are similarly likely to attenuate evaluation–behavior consistency (e.g., Blessum, Lord, & Sia, 1998). When asked in a consumer survey how much we like a Volvo, for example, we are likely to draw on fewer features of the Volvo than when pondering whether to actually buy one, thus increasing the likelihood of mismatches between the two representations. In a similar vein, Wilson and his colleagues (for a review see Wilson & Hodges, 1992) observed that writing an essay that justifies one's attitude judgment can undermine the evaluation–behavior relationship — in writing the essay, participants draw on many aspects that they may not consider in the behavioral situation, thus reducing the match between the relevant representations.

Fourth, as Millar and Tesser (1992) noted, we engage in some behaviors for their instrumental value in reaching a goal and in other behaviors for the pleasures they provide. If so, judgments should be a better predictor of instrumental behaviors when the judgment is based on a consideration of the behavior's instrumental rather than hedonic implications. But judgments based on our hedonic assessments should be excellent predictors for consummatory behaviors (i.e., behaviors in which we engage for enjoyment). Millar and Tesser (1992) report extensive support for this variant of the general matching hypothesis.

Fifth, numerous studies have shown that evaluation–behavior consistency is higher when the individual has direct behavioral experience with the target (see Fazio & Zanna, 1981). For example, Regan and Fazio (1977) observed that participants' evaluations of a set of puzzles were better predictors of how much time they spent on each puzzle in a subsequent free play period when their ratings were based on prior behavioral experience than when they were not. Presumably, the behavioral experience resulted in a temporary representation that provided a better match with participants' experiences during the free play period.

Sixth, evaluation–behavior consistency is likely to be higher when individuals take the context in which the behavior is to be performed into account when they form a judgment. In most cases, however, evaluative judgments are assessed without mentally instantiating the relevant context, resulting in low judgment–behavior consistency. Hence, evaluations assessed in a "cold" state (e.g., attitudes toward condom use assessed in a research setting) are poor predictors of actual behavior in a "hot" state, like a romantic encounter (for a review see Loewenstein & Schkade, 1999).

Seventh, evaluation–behavior consistency decreases as other considerations—like the possible reactions of others or the cost of engaging in the behavior—become more prominent in the behavioral context

(Wallace et al., 2005), thus introducing elements that were not considered at the time of judgment.

Finally, the matching assumption also accounts for why some research procedures are dramatically more likely to identify evaluation–behavior consistency than others. As Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) emphasized, we are more likely to observe a close relationship between attitude reports and behavior when we (i) assess the "attitude toward the behavior" rather than the "attitude toward the target;" (ii) ensure a close match between the judgment measure and the behavioral measure, right down to specifying the behavioral context when asking for the judgment; and (iii) use multiple behavioral criteria rather than a single criterion. All of these steps simply increase the likelihood of matching representations.

In combination, the examples mentioned above illustrate that evaluative judgments at Time 1 are only likely to predict behavior at Time 2 when the judgment and the behavioral decision are based on similar mental representations; they also highlight that attitude stability and attitude–behavior consistency follow the same logic. If so, we may hesitate to conclude that some preexisting enduring attitude plays a causal role in the behavioral decision; instead, the observed relationship may be rather spurious, reflecting factors that rendered similar inputs accessible at both points in time.

ATTITUDES AS LATENT CONSTRUCTS

As the preceding sections illustrate, construal models specify the conditions under which we can or cannot expect judgments to be similar across time and contexts and to correspond to overt behavior. The processes underlying these (in)consistencies bear directly on approaches that treat attitudes as latent constructs.

Defending the dispositional approach to attitudes, Eagly and Chaiken (2005, p. 746) suggested that the "attitudes–as–constructions position (. . .) conflates variability in attitudinal responses with variability in the attitude itself." In their view, "context effects should be and are pervasive (. . .) because attitudinal judgments are not pure expressions of attitude but outputs that reflect both attitude and the information in the contemporaneous setting" (p. 747). Despite this variability in attitude expression, the "inner state or latent construct that constitutes attitude can be relatively stable. Therefore, judgments often vary around an average value that is defined by the tendency that constitutes the attitude" (p. 747).

Technically, the assumed latent construct can be treated as a latent variable in structural equation models and estimated from multiple atti-

tude measures. Unfortunately, this analytic move remains theoretically inconclusive. Any observed similarity of responses across attitude measures suffers from the same ambiguity as observed similarity of responses over time or consistency of judgment and behavior. In each case, the observed similarity may either derive from a "true" enduring attitude or may merely reflect that respondents arrived at similar judgments for the reasons discussed above.

In my reading, there is no empirical answer to whether people "have" attitudes or construct evaluative judgments on the spot (see also Schwarz & Bohner, 2001). Any of the available findings are compatible with a construal logic as well as with a latent construct logic. Why, then, would we want to postulate a special entity called "attitude" if we can account for all findings with more general process assumptions of wider applicability? I return to this issue in the final section.

THE EDITOR'S QUESTIONS

The editor of this Special Issue posed a number of questions that all contributors should address. Many of his questions have been answered by the preceding discussion and I comment on others below.

Construal models conceptualize attitudes as evaluative judgments, formed on the spot, rather than as trait–like dispositions. From this perspective, people do not "have" attitudes and hence also do not have "multiple" attitudes toward the same object—they merely evaluate the same object differently in different contexts or while pursuing different goals, and so on. What is often referred to as "attitude ambivalence" arises when the person faces a similar number of inputs with similarly extreme but opposing evaluative implications. As construal models would predict (see above), the resulting attitude judgments are less stable over time and less predictive of behavior (e.g., Jonas, Broemer, & Diehl, 2000a, 2000b).

Evaluations differ in intensity, personal involvement, and behavioral relevance and not every evaluation meets the connotations of the traditional attitude concept. However, the underlying processes are highly similar and there is no a priori theoretical reason to treat some evaluative judgments as a special entity, called "attitude."

Not all evaluations are the product of a conscious process. A large body of literature on automatic evaluations suggests that we continuously evaluate all stimuli that we encounter (for a review see Bargh, 1997), including novel stimuli for which no previous "attitude" has been formed (Duckworth et al., 2002). These evaluations are highly sensitive to the current context and the actor's goals (e.g., Ferguson & Bargh,

2004), but presumably only cross the threshold of awareness when they are of sufficient intensity or relevance to current concerns.

Construal models differ in their assumptions about the representation of attitudes in memory. Some (e.g., Schwarz & Bohner, 2001) make no architectural assumptions beyond standard principles of contextualized information accessibility and an emphasis on the role of experiential information in the form of moods, emotions, and metacognitive experiences. From this perspective, there is no attitude stored in memory, although people may remember a previously formed evaluation that may serve as input into new evaluations (Wyer & Srull, 1989). As Schwarz and Bohner (2001) noted, memory for previous evaluations is obviously plausible, but not logically necessary to develop the rationale described in the preceding sections. Because attitudes are treated as evaluative judgments formed on the spot, the question of what happens to "old" attitudes when attitudes change does not arise beyond the possibility that people remember earlier evaluations.

Other authors presented construal models that attempt to preserve the attitude concept. For example, Tourangeau (1992) equates attitudes with the knowledge structures on which judgmental processes operate and assumes that people sample from beliefs stored in memory to arrive at a judgment. Whereas the sampling process is context-sensitive and results in different attitude judgments, the belief base itself is equated with a more enduring attitude. In contrast, Lord (2004; Lord & Lepper, 1999) conceptualizes an attitude as a set of evaluative responses and assumes that contextual variables influence which response is sampled from that set. Such redefinitions allow the authors to maintain something that resembles the familiar attitude concept, while the predictive power of their models derives from construal assumptions.

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As Eagly and Chaiken's (2005, pp. 746–747) discussion of attitudes as latent constructs illustrates, there is no "critical experiment" that can settle the issue of whether people "have" enduring attitudes or construct automatic and deliberate evaluative judgments on the spot. The latent construct view acknowledges that any expression of attitude is likely to be context dependent, but holds that contextual influences merely produce variations around some average value that corresponds to the attitude. The attitude construal perspective counters that there is no need to postulate a special entity called "attitude" if general principles of judgment can account for stability as well as change, and can specify the conditions of evaluation–behavior consistency, without assuming an underlying

enduring disposition. This is an argument of parsimony—and Ockham's razor is not appealing when it applies to a concept that nicely dovetails with robust intuitions in the form of the fundamental attribution error. Illustrating this intuitive appeal, Cohen and Reed (2006) recently acknowledged that "it may not be parsimonious to develop theory that incorporates both traditional attitudes and constructed judgments (*especially since there is no convincing empirical evidence that this distinction is necessary*)" (p. 5, italics added)—and then proceeded to present a model that features "traditional" as well as constructed attitudes side by side.

Like many issues in science, this issue will not be settled on the basis of critical data but on the basis of the heuristic fruitfulness of the theoretical perspective and its compatibility with other bodies of knowledge. From a construal perspective, people do not "have" attitudes; they form judgments. Their judgments stand in the service of action and high context sensitivity is a necessary feature of any adaptive system of evaluation. Allport's (1935) hope that enduring attitudes, formed on the basis of past experience, can account for an actor's "consistency of conduct" in the present is an observer's dream, but an actor's nightmare. After decades of conducting attitude research predominantly from an observer's perspective, it would be refreshing to move beyond our collective fundamental attribution error and to adopt the actor's perspective; the field's developing interest in situated cognition will facilitate this reorientation. There is almost certainly more to be learned from exploring the dynamics of context-sensitive evaluation than from ever more sophisticated attempts to discover a person's "true" enduring attitude—attempts that so far have only reproduced the lessons of context dependency/sensitivity with new measures. Context sensitivity is not noise that we need to overcome—it is the message. We should heed it.

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