When Actions Reflect Attitudes: The Politics of Impression Management

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A conceptual formulation of the determinants of correspondence between attitudes and behavior suggests that social environments differ in the extent to which they provide salient and relevant "attitudinal" and "situational" guides to action. We constructed experimental situations that differed in the extent to which interpersonal cues to situational appropriateness were available and/or relevant attitudes were made salient. Male students formulated judgments of liability in a sex-discrimination court case. In this basic situation, verdicts were generally unfavorable to the female plaintiff and uncorrelated with previously reported attitudes ($r = .07$). When attitudes toward affirmative action were made salient, covariation between favorability of verdicts toward the female plaintiff and previously measured attitudes was substantial ($r = .58$). Participants who anticipated discussing their verdicts with a disagreeing partner adopted a "moderation" strategy and reached decisions favorable to neither the plaintiff nor the defendant. Their verdicts were uncorrelated with their personal stands on affirmative action, whether or not attitudes had been made salient ($r_s = .14$ and .06, respectively).

To what extent are the attitudes expressed by individuals after contemplating their positions on social issues actually reflected in their actions in relevant life situations? Although most theoretical viewpoints have stressed the links between attitude and behavior, empirical researchers have all too often reported weak and inconsistent relationships between verbal measures of attitude and observations of social behavior (for reviews, see Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kiesler, Collins, & Miller, 1969; Wicker, 1969). Just as it is the case that avowed attitudes are not always reflected in actual behavior, so too is it the case that changes in attitude are not always translated into corresponding changes in behavior (e.g., Festinger, 1964). Similarly, one cannot reliably modify attitudes by altering behavioral experience. Although it is true that under certain conditions individuals who have behaved in a manner discrepant from their initial attitudes may change their attitudes to make them more consistent with their new behavior, this link between behavior and attitude is often small and occasionally hard to demonstrate (e.g., Collins, 1973).

One outcome of the empirical search for links between avowed attitudes and actual behavior has been a critical reassessment of the interplay between attitudes and behavior. Two rather distinct viewpoints appear to have emerged: the assumption of consistency and the assumption of inconsistency.

The assumption of consistency. According to this viewpoint there do exist reliable predictive and causal links between attitudes and behavior, but these relationships are often attenuated or even obscured by the influence of other factors, including low reliability of measurement, differing levels of specificity of the measures of attitude and behavior, the intrusion of other attitudes and competing motives, and the constraints of normative social pressures (e.g., Kiesler, Collins, & Miller, 1969).
The assumption of inconsistency. According to this viewpoint, human social behaviors—including verbal statements of attitude—are sufficiently sensitive to even subtle differences in situational factors and normative pressures to preclude the existence of reliable links between behavior and inner dispositional states including attitudes. Thus, any apparent consistencies between measured attitude and observed behavior may only reflect the operation of converging pressures within the verbal and behavioral response domains. This viewpoint has been bolstered by developments within personality theory that have questioned the utility of the trait concept (e.g., Mischel, 1968).

Personal Determinants of Consistency

Which view of human nature is correct, the assumption of consistency or the assumption of inconsistency? It may be that both perspectives have captured a part of reality but that neither viewpoint is a full and adequate characterization of the relationship between attitudes and behavior. Recent empirical research has indicated that people differ in the extent to which their social behavior covaries with measures of relevant attitudes: Some people are more consistent than others (e.g., Norman, 1975; Schwartz, 1973; Snyder & Tanke, in press). These differences in congruence between attitude and behavior can be conceptualized in terms of the social psychological construct of self-monitoring (Snyder, 1974). According to this formulation, an individual in a social setting actively attempts to construct a pattern of social behavior appropriate to that particular context. Diverse sources of information are available to guide this choice, including (a) cues to situational or interpersonal specifications of appropriateness and (b) information about inner states, dispositions, and attitudes.

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

Social Determinants of Consistency

Similarly, it may be possible to partition situations according to their self-monitoring characteristics. Perhaps some social settings more than others stress the relevance and utility of attitudes, dispositions, and other personal characteristics as guides to action. These settings should foster behavior characteristic of the low self-monitoring individual: In such settings, covariation between measures of attitude and observations of social behavior should be substantial, and the impact of situational and interpersonal cues to appropriateness of social behavior should be minimal.

It may be possible to strengthen the link between attitude and behavior by constructing a situation that encourages individuals to reflect privately upon and articulate their attitudes and the behavioral implications of these viewpoints before choosing a course of action. Such a procedure of increasing the salience of relevant attitudes might have several of the following effects, each of which ought to increase the correspondence between attitude and behavior:

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

2. To the extent that one ponders and reflects on one's attitudes, it is more likely that one will be aware of the behavioral implications inherent in one's viewpoints (cf. Cartwright, 1949).
3. To the extent that inconsistencies exist between the cognitive, affective, and intentional components of one's attitude, procedures that increase the salience of these attitudes may also lead to resolutions or eliminations of these inconsistencies and therefore place the individual in a better position to use attitudes as relevant and functional guides for monitoring behavioral choices (cf. Norman, 1975).

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

5. To the extent that one is encouraged to consider and contemplate one's attitudes, any processes of avoiding and reinterpreting commitment (cf. Kiesler, Roth, & Pallak, 1974) will be short-circuited, and it will not be possible to define one's attitudes as irrelevant to the action choices at hand.

As a result of these specific effects of attitude salience, when an actor adopts a contemplative orientation to choosing a course of action, the relatively impulsive situation in which "behavior" is observed may become more similar to the reflective situation in which "attitudes" are typically measured (cf. Harré & Secord, 1973). It is then more likely that the cognitive structures that guide actions will match those from which verbal statements of attitude are generated.

Similarly, it ought to be possible to construct other social situations that promote the behavioral orientation characteristic of the high self-monitoring individual. Individuals may be particularly motivated to monitor their behavioral choices on the basis of salient and relevant situational cues in settings that motivate a strategic approach to social interaction (cf. Goffman, 1959). Considerable research on self-presentation suggests that the way an individual expresses attitudes in dyadic interaction is very sensitive to characteristics of the other person (e.g., Cialdini, Levy, Herman, & Evenbeck, 1973; Jones, 1964; Newtonson & Czerlinsky, 1974). In such "impression-management" situations, words and deeds seem to be chosen not so much for the information they communicate about one's actual attitudes but rather for their strategic value in winning friends and influencing people. In settings that motivate a strategic orientation to social interaction, behavior ought to be quite sensitive to social and interpersonal cues to situational appropriateness; at the same time, covariation between social behavior and individual attitudes may be minimal.

To investigate these notions, we examined the relationship between measured attitudes toward affirmative action and later verdicts in a court case involving a female plaintiff who alleged that she had been a victim of sex discrimination in hiring. These behavioral decisions were formulated in anticipation of a discussion of the verdict with a partner. For half of our participants, attitudes towards affirmative action were made salient before consideration of the affirmative action law suit; for the other half of our participants, attitudes were not made salient. In addition, half of our participants learned information about their partners that could potentially serve as a guide to expressing their verdict on the law suit; others learned nothing about their partners.

According to our theoretical formulation, when attitudes have not been made salient, we would expect that (a) the situational manipulation of potentially relevant information about the partner should substantially affect judgments on the law suit, and (b) covariation between measured attitudes toward affirmative action and judgments on the law suit should be minimal. By contrast, when attitudes have been made salient, we would expect that (a) impact of the situational manipulation of information about the partner on judgments of the law suit should be minimal, and (b) covariation between personal attitudes toward affirmative action and decisions in the sex-discrimination case should be substantial.

Method

Overview

One hundred twenty undergraduate male students in introductory psychology participated in a decision-making experiment in which they individually considered a mock affirmative action law suit. In anticipation of discussing his verdict with a
partner, each participant prepared a written explanation and justification of his verdict in the case. Before learning about the specific case, some participants were encouraged to consider privately their attitudes on the issue of affirmative action (attitude salient); others considered the specific case without this opportunity (attitude not salient). Before considering the case, some participants learned that their partner disagreed with them about the value of affirmative action (disagreeing partner); others learned nothing about their partners’ beliefs (no information).

The Measurement of Initial Attitudes

Attitudes were measured 2 weeks before the experiment (as part of a considerably larger questionnaire survey) by responses on 10-point scales to four statements that had been written to tap general attitudes toward affirmative action. The mean of each participant’s self-ratings on this four-item measure constituted our index of initial attitudes toward affirmative action.1

The Judicial-Judgment Task

Participants had been scheduled in pairs of previously unacquainted students. Their only contact was a brief introduction by the experimenter as he escorted the “partners” from their separate waiting rooms to their separate experimental rooms. Each participant received a booklet that contained instructions for the experiment.

The manipulation of attitude salience. The following instructions appeared in the booklets of individuals who had been randomly assigned to the attitude-salient conditions:

The material you will be reading describes an affirmative action law suit. The suit concerns a woman who claims that she was turned down for a job because of her sex. Since you will be summing up the main points of the suit right after you read the case history, we will give you a few minutes to organize your thoughts and views on the affirmative action issue (e.g., Is it important to you that everyone is given equal opportunity in obtaining employment? Should women and minorities be actively recruited to help equalize employment ratios? Is it a good idea to have men and women equally represented in employment? If you were an employer, how would you feel about regulations specifying how many women and minorities to hire?).

These instructions were designed to encourage participants to consider privately and articulate their attitudes on the issue of affirmative action and make salient the behavioral implications of their viewpoints (cf. Snyder & Ebbesen, 1972). These participants were allowed 4 minutes to think about their viewpoints.

The manipulation of partner's beliefs. At this point, each participant who had been randomly assigned to the disagreeing-partner conditions read instructions that informed him that his partner had already been in a similar experiment and had written an essay on a different case. Accordingly, the instructions continued, that essay had been included in the booklet to provide a general idea of the format for the participant’s own essay.

The “partner’s essay” was one of two hand-written essays that had been designed to reflect either favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward affirmative action. Participants in the disagreeing-partner conditions always read the essay that reflected the viewpoint opposite to their own as indicated by the pre-experimental assessment. Participants in the no-information conditions were given no opportunity to learn of their partner’s beliefs.

The case history. All participants then read vitae of two biologists, Ms. C. A. Harrison and Mr. G. C. Sullivan, who had applied to the University of Maine for a professorial position. The vitae described each applicant’s training, honors, professional experience, and publications. The University of Maine appointed Mr. Sullivan. Ms. Harrison filed suit: She insisted that the decision reflected a bias against females. Participants then considered arguments advanced in court by attorneys for the plaintiff (Ms. Harrison) and for the defendant (University of Maine).

Participants were instructed to study carefully both sides of the case, weigh all of the evidence, and then prepare a written communication explaining and justifying their verdict, citing evidence which led to the judgment and discussing the implications of their action. All participants then wrote the essay on the blank sheets provided for that purpose.

After the essays had been written, participants expressed their final attitudes toward affirmative action on the same scales used in the premeasure session. The experimenter then explained that the partners would not, in fact, discuss their verdicts on the court case.

The Measure of Behavior 2

To assess each participant’s decision on the court case as reflected and communicated by his essay, all

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1 Originally, five items had been written. An examination of the correlations between individual items and total scores (with that item excluded) revealed that one item was uncorrelated with total scores, \( r(118) = -0.095, n.s. \). Accordingly, to increase the internal consistency of the measure of attitude, that item was deleted from the attitude scale (Nunnally, 1967). The internal consistency of the four-item attitude measure is .63, as assessed by Cronbach’s (1951) coefficient alpha. Participants’ scores on the attitude measure ranged from 1 to 9.75, with a mean of 5.01 and standard deviation of 1.75.

2 We recognize, as do most students of the relationship between attitude and behavior, that there is some ambiguity associated with classifying some responses as “attitudinal” and others as “behav-
TABLE 1
VERDICTS IN THE COURT CASE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Attitude not salient</th>
<th>Attitude salient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagreeing partner</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>5.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>5.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Range = 1 to 10. Higher means indicate greater favorability of the verdict toward Ms. Harrison, the female plaintiff. (n = 30 participants per condition.)

We separately examined the effects of attitude salience and a disagreeing partner on (a) verdicts in the court case, as measured by the coders’ ratings of the essays, and (b) covariation between these verdicts and attitudes toward affirmative action, as measured in the preexperimental assessment.

The Verdicts

What were the effects of salience of initial attitudes and anticipation of a disagreeing partner on verdicts in the court case? We had anticipated that under conditions of low salience of initial attitudes, judicial decisions in the court case would be influenced by anticipation of a disagreeing partner but that when initial attitudes had been made salient, anticipation of a disagreeing partner would have little or no impact on one’s judgment of the court case. The means presented in Table 1 display just such a pattern. There was a reliable interaction between attitude salience and partner’s beliefs, $F(1, 116) = 3.74, p = .055$. A planned comparison revealed that when attitudes were not salient, judgments in the court case were substantially less favorable toward the female plaintiff when nothing was known about the partner’s beliefs than when a disagreeing partner was anticipated, $F(1, 116) = 6.90, p < .01$. Similarly, a planned comparison revealed that, when attitudes were salient, anticipation of a disagreeing partner had virtually no impact on verdicts in the court case, $F(1, 116) = .11, ns$.

Furthermore, it appears that individuals who anticipated a disagreeing partner or who had salient attitudes, expressed and communicated judgments more moderate than those of individuals with neither salient attitudes nor anticipation of a disagreeing partner, whose judgments were relatively less favorable to the female plaintiff, contrast $F(1, 116) = 11.16, p < .002$. In fact, the verdicts of individuals with salient attitudes and/or anticipation of a disagreeing partner were in no case reliably different from the neutral point (5.5) of the scale used by coders, all $t < 1, ns$. By contrast, individuals with neither salient attitudes nor anticipation of a disagreeing partner rendered judgments relatively unfavorable to the female plaintiff; their judgments differed reliably from the neutral point of the coders’ scale, $t(29) = -4.96, p < .001$.

Why do attitude salience and anticipation of a disagreeing partner produce “middle-of-the-road” verdicts in the court case? Perhaps, as Cialdini et al. (1973) have suggested, such

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8 This measure could range from 1 (a verdict strongly unfavorable to Ms. Harrison) to 10 (a verdict strongly favorable to Ms. Harrison). The interrater correlations for this measure ranged from .80 to .91, with an average interrater correlation of .87. The measure of behavior may be viewed as a four-item scale in which the individual items are the responses of the four raters. From this perspective, the internal consistency of the measure is .95, as assessed by coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951).
middle-ground decisions are the outcome of a strategic process of impression management designed to afford the best possible preparation for a discussion of these decisions. A moderate position affords at least two advantages: (a) The middle ground allows the individual to draw supportive arguments from both sides of the issue without appearing to be inconsistent; (b) An individual with a moderate position is likely to be viewed favorably because he creates the impression of openness and rationality. Accordingly, by strategically choosing a moderate decision on the court case, an individual increases his chances both of making a favorable impression on his partner (winning friends) and of having his verdict prevail in the discussion (influencing people).

Are the effects of attitude salience and a disagreeing partner actually the behavioral outcome of strategic impression management, or are they perhaps a reflection of actual "moderation" shifts in attitudes toward affirmative action? To assess this possibility, we examined the effects of our independent variables on differences between attitudes toward affirmative action reported in the preexperimental session and those expressed after consideration of the court case. Attitude change scores were calculated so that positive values always indicated shifts away from one's initial position (e.g., from "agree" toward "disagree" for individuals with initial attitudes favorable to affirmative action). An unweighted-means analysis of variance revealed neither significant main effects nor reliable interactions (all Fs < 1). Thus, it appears that differences in verdicts after consideration of the court case reflect strategic choices of the moderation strategy of behavioral self-presentation rather than any shifts in general attitudes.

That the anticipation of a disagreeing discussion partner should motivate strategic impression management is clearly consistent with other research on social communication and self-presentation (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1973; Newton & Czerlinsky, 1974). Why, however, should thinking about one's own attitudes in anticipation of discussing one's decisions with an unknown partner (attitude-salient/no-information condition) induce individuals to adopt a moderation strategy of self-presentation? Perhaps as these individuals became increasingly aware of their own attitudes and the behavioral implications of their viewpoints, they also became increasingly aware that they knew nothing of their partners' attitudes toward affirmative action. A middle-of-the-road strategy of moderation would best permit them to cope with either an agreeing or a disagreeing partner by minimizing the possibility of being extremely different from the other individual (cf. Kelley & Thibaut, 1954).

**Covariation Between Attitude and Behavior**

What is the relationship between attitudes expressed by individuals 2 weeks prior to the experiment and their verdicts in the court case? We computed product-moment correlations between the behavioral measure (the coders' ratings of the verdicts) and the attitudinal measure (the preexperimental assessment of attitudes) for all 120 participants and separately for each experimental group. These correlations are reported in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Attitude not salient</th>
<th>Attitude salient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagreeing partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance: Attitude measure</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance: Behavior measure</td>
<td>10.37</td>
<td>11.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.58*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance: Attitude measure</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance: Behavior measure</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>8.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .001.

Overall, for all 120 participants, the correspondence between initial attitudes and judgment behavior was, at best, modest, \( r(118) = .22, p < .05 \). The magnitude of this correlation is quite comparable to that most frequently observed in studies of the predictive relationship between attitude and behavior (e.g., Wicker, 1969).
However, when we considered the relationship between attitudes and behaviors separately for the four conditions defined by the experimental manipulations, a rather striking pattern emerged. When initial attitudes were not salient, measured attitudes and actual behavior were uncorrelated whether one anticipated a disagreeing partner, \( r(28) = .06, \) ns, or knew nothing about the partner's beliefs, \( r(28) = .07, \) ns.

By contrast, when attitudes were salient and one had learned nothing of the beliefs of one's discussion partner, initial attitude toward the general issue of affirmative action served as a reliable predictor of verdicts in the specific court case, \( r(28) = .58, p < .001. \) When corrected for the attenuation caused by the less than perfect reliability of the measures of attitude and behavior, this observed correlation is equivalent to one of .73. Thus, although these individuals may have been following a moderation strategy of self-presentation, their verdicts nonetheless reflected their general attitudes toward affirmative action policies and procedures.

However, when attitudes were salient and one also anticipated a disagreeing partner, there was only minimal covariation between these attitudes and verdicts in the court case, \( r(28) = .14, \) ns. Apparently, in these circumstances, the forces of impression management stimulated by anticipation of interaction with a disagreeing partner outweighed the effects of attitude salience.

Thus, only when attitudes were salient and nothing was known about the partner's beliefs was there a substantial predictive relationship between measured attitudes and verdicts in the court case. The correlation between attitude and behavior for individuals in this attitude-salient/no-information condition was reliably larger than that for persons in any of the attitude-not-salient/no-information, \( z = 2.19, p = .029, \) attitude-not-salient/disagreeing-partner, \( z = 2.22, p = .026, \) or attitude-salient/disagreeing-partner, \( z = 1.91, p = .056, \) conditions.

The Effects of Self-Monitoring

To examine differences in the relationship between attitude and behavior as a result of variation in self-monitoring, we computed product-moment correlations between the attitudinal measure and the behavioral measure separately for the high self-monitoring \((n = 57)\) and low self-monitoring \((n = 62)\) groups defined by a median partition of Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974) scores collected during the preexperimental session.\(^4\) Covariation between attitude and behavior was reliably larger for low self-monitoring individuals \((r = .42, p < .005)\) than for high self-monitoring individuals \((r = .03, \) ns\()\), \( z = 2.22, p = .026.\) These data provide further support for the notion that congruence between attitudes and behavior will be greatest for persons who regard their overt behaviors as accurate reflections of corresponding dispositions (cf. Snyder & Tanke, in press).

Conclusions

Behavioral scientists who have searched for evidence of pervasive consistencies between attitude and behavior have typically found only weak and inconsistent relationships between measures of attitude and observations of social behavior. Such outcomes have generated considerable skepticism about the existence of close ties between attitude and behavior. However, our conceptual formulation suggests that social settings and interaction contexts may differ in the extent to which attitudinal and situational guides to action are salient and relevant for the individual. In the presence of clear and unambiguous social or interpersonal cues to situational appropriateness, correspondence between social behavior and these situational factors should be substantial. At the same time, covariation between attitude and behavior might be minimal. By contrast, in situations that stress the relevance of attitudes and dispositions as guides to action, social behavior ought to be less responsive to situational and interpersonal specifications of behavioral appropriateness. Behavior in these situations should, however, be well predicted from knowledge of personal characteristics, including measures of social attitudes.

\(^4\) One participant did not complete the Self-Monitoring Scale. His data were not entered into these analyses.
In our empirical research, we increased the correspondence between attitude and behavior by the manipulation of attitude salience. Similarly, individuals may be particularly likely to monitor their behavioral choices on the basis of dispositional guides in environments that (a) enhance either one's sense of commitment or personal responsibility for one's actions (cf. Kiesler, 1971; Schwartz, 1973); (b) heighten one's awareness of self as a potential cause of behavior (cf. Wicklund, 1975); (c) short-circuit the process of avoiding and reinterpretation of commitment (cf. Kiesler, Roth, & Pallak, 1974) and therefore make it impossible to define one's attitudes as irrelevant to one's actions; and (d) provide normative support for congruence between behavior and belief (cf. Kiesler, Nisbett, & Zanna, 1969).

We have suggested that individuals will be particularly likely to regulate their self-presentation on the basis of situational cues in those interaction contexts that promote a strategic orientation for purposes of impression management and social influence. This self-monitoring process may also be characteristic of social settings that (a) are novel, unfamiliar, and contain sources of social comparison (cf. Festinger, 1954; Sherif, 1937); (b) make individuals uncertain of or confused about their inner states (cf. Schachter & Singer, 1962); (c) suggest that one's attitudes are socially undesirable (cf. Dutton & Lake, 1973) or deviant (cf. Freedman & Doob, 1968); and (d) sensitize one to the perspective of others and motivate concern with social evaluation and conformity with reference-group norms (cf. Charters & Newcomb, 1958; Zimbardo, 1969). In such contexts, individuals will be particularly likely to monitor their behavior on the basis of available situational cues, including the actions of others who appear to be behaving appropriately in the situation.

Both our conceptual formulation and our empirical research suggest that correspondence between attitude and behavior will be greatest in situations that stress the relevance of attitudes, dispositions, and other personal characteristics as guides to action. However, we do not mean to imply that when an individual is monitoring behavioral choices on the basis of salient and relevant attitudes, situational factors are not important in the determination of social behavior. For even when an attitude and its behavioral implications have been carefully articulated, any behavioral manifestation of this attitude must nonetheless be carefully molded and shaped to fit a specific situational context. Thus, a participant in our experiment may turn to his attitude toward affirmative action to define his stand on the court case, but he must still look to situational cues to learn that the appropriate expression of his attitude is a hand-written essay phrased in language appropriate for a college-aged male reader with whom he will later discuss the content of the essay.

Similarly, we do not mean to imply that the impact of situational pressures on social behavior necessarily precludes the influence of stable individual attitudes and dispositions. For example, even if all people donate more money to Charity X when pressed by their peers, the rank ordering of the size of individual donations may continue to reflect the ordering of individual attitudes toward Charity X. More generally, situational influences may affect the likelihood of behavior independently of the impact of such influences on the correlation between behavior and attitude. Thus, even when participants with salient attitudes strategically chose middle-of-the-road self-presentations to cope behaviorally with unknown partners, they nonetheless expressed verdicts that were highly correlated with and predictable from their personal attitudes toward affirmative action.

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