The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 38
Issue 1 *March*

Article 3

2011

Attitudes, Behavior, and Social Practice

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The relationship between attitudes and behavior is not symmetrical. A literature review is used to organize a summary of methodological and practical problems in this area. In turn, these findings are used to comment on how sociology and social work practice can take this into account.

Key words: *attitudes, behavior, sociology*

"Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me." For generations this doggerel has been used by children to mitigate the hurts that come from cruel words. Translate this epigram into social science language and the focus of interest becomes behavior and attitudes and the possible relationship between them. This article is a selective review of the literature which examines their possible connection, especially as they relate to prejudice and discrimination. In turn the implications of this for social work education practice are discussed.

The concept "attitude" is one that has been frequently studied in social science. There is no universally accepted convention where definition and measurement are integrated. This article is not intended to resolve differences among competing definitions. It would not be possible to do this. A recent comprehensive examination of one aspect of this issue had more than 15,000 references (Schneider, 2004).

The difference between psychological and sociological definitions will be used to further the analysis. A psychological definition of attitude identifies a verbal expression as behavior. Those who use a psychological definition of attitude attempt to reduce prejudice and discrimination by changing attitudes. A sociological definition of attitude looks at verbal expression as an intention to act. Common to sociological definitions is the view that an attitude is a "mental position with regard to a fact or state or a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state" (Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary). Those whose use a sociological definition of attitude attempt to reduce prejudice and discrimination by changing behavior. In considering the difference between the two approaches, a practical question concerns the order of change in working with people to handle what life brings them. Is it necessary to change attitudes before behavior can change, is it enough just to change behavior, or must one deal with both simultaneously? These questions reflect a fundamental methodological concern in trying to change prejudice and discrimination. C. Wright Mills (1959) held that the disparity between verbal and overt behavior is the central methodological problem in the social sciences.

Attitudes are Behavior

Those who hold to a psychological definition of attitude recognize that social structure is important in creating and maintaining social order. But they claim that if behavior is to change, attitude change must come first (Dollard, 1949; Krech & Crutchfield, 1948; Kutner, Wilkins, & Yarrow, 1970; Lewin, 1999).

The studies that support this proposition are mainly social psychology laboratory experiments. Their results can't be replicated outside the laboratory. Hovland (1959) has suggested that what accounts for differences between the sociological survey's low correlations and the higher correlations obtained in psychological laboratory experiments are differences in methodology and differences in the way respondents are exposed to the stimulus. He made some methodological suggestions and a plea for reconciling the differences. Researchers continue to hope that this will prove fruitful despite the lack of positive findings (Acock & DeFleur, 1972). Psychologically

oriented social psychologists hold on to their belief that changing attitudes are a precursor to changing behavior even when there are counter indications. Gibbons, (1983) for example, while promoting "self-attention" as a way of increasing the attitude/behavior correlation, notes that it can also work against it. Wicker (1985, p. 1094) says the mind develops "conceptual ruts" and this "... human tendency to think recurring thoughts limits our theories and research."

Mills (1963) said that the abundance of laboratory experiments with attitudes made textbooks artificial because they depend mainly on data derived from supposedly volunteer students. In effect, one of the major sources of information about the nature of prejudice and discrimination comes from a selective population where the theoretical orientation of the researcher assumes that attitudes must change before behavior does.

Behaviorists introduce a variation by saying that changing attitudes may be a way to change behavior but it is more cost effective to influence behavior by changing the consequences (Geller, 1992). That is, they focus on behavior and eliminate consideration of attitudes altogether. The extreme empiricist stance is that one cannot directly discern mental states; therefore they are not relevant for study. The increasing importance of the cognitive view in psychology has tended to reduce the influence of the empiricist behaviorists.

While there is some support for being able to predict verbal attitudes, the correlations are not strong or consistent (Sjoberg, 1982). Wicker (1969) suggested that a "threshold" helps explain findings where a person may be willing to express negative attitudes on paper and not verbally. No evidence for this proposition has been found. In short, there is scant evidence for holding that attitudes are behavior and that changing attitudes must occur to change behavior.

Attitudes are not Behavior

Studying attitudes did not begin in the social sciences until the 1920s. When sociology was becoming established, there was concern about the dominance of the University of Chicago Sociology Department and the differences between functionalists and operationists (Kuklick, 1973). Functionalists view

society as a set of social institutions designed to meet needs. The emphasis is on consensus and social order. Operationists think in terms of science and defining concepts with empirical referents.

The Hinkles (1954) characterize this as the case study–statistics debate and note that in the late 1920s Read Bain and Kimball Young were recommending attitude surveys as a middle ground that used both techniques. In a paper written in 1928, Thurstone (1970) said that "attitudes can be measured." He defined an opinion as the expression of attitude and stated that the aim is not to predict behavior but to show that it is possible to measure attitudes. Verbal behavior is taken as an indicator of an underlying attitude. In 1988, Campbell (p. 32) put it this way when he said attitudes are "residues of experience or acquired behavioral dispositions."

In other words, from the inception of the sociological study of attitudes the concern was measuring them and using them to predict behavior but not change them. This was the focus in LaPiere's classic 1934 study which marked the start of modern survey research. A social attitude was defined as "a behavior pattern, anticipatory set or tendency, predisposition to specific adjustment or more simply, a conditioned response to social stimuli" (Dockery & Bedeian, 1989, p. 11). LaPiere had spent the previous two years touring the country with a Chinese couple. This was an era when anti-Asian feeling was high. In 251 attempted hotel registrations they were turned down once. In a follow-up mail survey, 92% of the respondents said they would not serve Orientals and most of the rest were uncertain. LaPiere concluded that questionnaires were not a good basis for predicting behavior.

Another classic study on the attitude/behavior difference played a major role in establishing sociology as a viable discipline. In 1944 Stouffer (Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Star, & Williams, 1949) and his associates interviewed troops about their attitude toward integration of the army. Before integration, more than 80% were opposed. Six months after the army integrated only 7% were opposed.

Dockery and Bedeian (1989, p. 12) say that LaPiere "took the position that behavior is a direct attitude manifestation." Thus, one can only know a person's true attitude by the action

he or she takes. They also say that, "LaPiere's purpose in conducting the study was to highlight the danger of equating questionnaire-measured symbolic attitudes with real life responses to specific social situations" (p. 15). This is a warning consistently ignored by survey researchers (Parten, 1950). Although many specific attitudes have been operationalized, no one hsas found a way to relate any of them to the underlying predispositions that supposedly mark the true link between attitude and behavior conditions.

Sociologists, especially the Chicago School symbolic interactionists, have not only been skeptical about the ability of attitudes to predict behavior but they have questioned the utility of the concept "attitude." Blumer (1955) said that it was a concept that has not been operationalized and has not produced useful knowledge because there is nothing to tie together successive and different operational definitions of specific attitudes. His biggest objection is that it "presupposes a fallacious picture of human action." He points to the inability to track or control events that intervene between checking the attitude and the behavior it is presumed to relate to:

> One will find in the literature well-chosen examples where prediction worked out well. Such examples do not represent the known universe of attitude studies or even the universe of the better studies and, hence, do not constitute proof. The matter is made worse by the ability to select impressive cases where prediction failed. Any fair appraisal of the known universe of attitude studies forces one to conclude that no high conformity has been established between asserted attitudes and subsequent action. (Blumer, 1955, p. 61)

This conclusion has been repeated many times. One which puts it in terms more familiar to a practitioner is:

> What people do is one thing: how they feel about it is quite another. The low correlation between attitudes and behavior has been frequently reported in the literature, leading to a general conclusion that attitudes are not good predictors of behavior. (Maykovich, 1976, p. 693)

Despite this repeated conclusion, there have been continued attempts to improve the ability of attitudes to predict behavior by adding additional variables for which to control. In 1958 DeFleur and Westie suggested that the relationship between verbal attitudes and behavior is mediated by reference groups and opportunities for action. In 1963 they added a situational factor, noting that attitudes can vary according to circumstances. They also stress that while we can identify a specific attitude with a specific measure this does not help build knowledge about the underlying concept *attitude.* They urge further work and conclude "[t]he concept attitude is still in a surprisingly crude state of formulation considering its widespread use. At best it barely qualifies as a scientific concept" (DeFleur & Westie, 1963, p. 30). Weissberg (1965) strongly disputes this and argues for the utility of theorizing about the underlying concept.

Even when studies report positive associations between attitudes and behavior, the findings must be interpreted with caution. Mann (1959) found an overall positive association between prejudiced attitudes and behavior. On further analysis, the initial positive association only held for blacks, did not hold for whites, and whites who were high on verbal prejudice were low on discrimination. Mannino, Kisielewski, Kimbro, & Morgenstern (1968) experienced the same complexity and difficulty in interpreting their data when they examined the relationship between parental attitude and behavior.

Ehrlich (1964) reads the evidence on the relationship between attitudes and behavior positively. Nevertheless, he identifies a series of intervening social variables that might modify this relationship. He adds that there is a major problem because we generally obtain attitudes about a class of people and then try to predict what the behavior would be toward a specific individual. He says that, in the study of prejudice, forced choice questions exaggerate the degree of expressed prejudice, and he concludes that since these scores are only moderately correlated to other measures, it is probable that with more nuanced instruments, even these correlations would disappear.

It is possible, then, that many of the attitudes identified as necessary to change before behavioral change can occur are

spurious themselves. Given the variability of the findings in the literature, it is probable that many of them result from sampling variation. They are random.

Wicker (1969) came to a conclusion similar to that of DeFleur and Westie. He found no evidence for the existence of the underlying stable attitude that is supposed to influence verbal expression and behavior. Warner and Defleur (1969) added social constraint and social distance as factors that intervene in the connection between attitude and behavior. At about the same time, Tittle and Hill (1970) said that the results of attitude measurement are an artifact of the procedures used, and they wondered if it will ever be possible to predict behavior from attitudes. Figa-Talamanca (1972), in an excellent review, notes that the lack of support for linking attitudes and behavior is widespread and says that things won't improve, even when the attempt is made to change attitudes, until there is an examination of the situational constraints that prevent attitudes from being reflected in behavior. Liska (1974) attempted to deal with this issue with a comprehensive review of the factors associated with the attitude/behavior relationship. He concluded that measurement validity and conceptual complexity had to be dealt with, that just examining a single attitude didn't matter much. Also the extent of social support in a given context is a critical matter in improving the relationship's predictability.

Gross and Niman (1975) added additional variables to the factors that interfere in the direct relationship between attitude and behavior. Their review focused on personal, situational, and methodological factors. They left out considerations related to the need for achievement, self, and defenses. They specifically note that, "It does appear that changing behavior alters the attitude, while changing the attitude does not similarly affect behavior. This ... suggests complications for therapeutic interventions that rely on attitude changes to alter behavior (Gross & Niman, 1975, p. 363)." And changing behavior does not automatically enable changing attitudes or predicting them. Jacobson (1978) found that in the face of a legal ruling on desegregation it was possible to predict attitudes only where people's prior attitudes were extreme. For the majority, several factors intervened between the action and the attitude. The

attitude/behavior relationship may be a two way street, but there is no clear way to get from one side to the other.

To solve the methodological and conceptual problems associated with linking attitude and behavior, Gross and Niman (1975) recommend using repeated measures of attitude with repeated measures of behavior. While such studies are routine in medical research, they remain a utopian dream for social research.

By 1976, with increasing methodological and instrument sophistication, Schuman and Johnson could conclude that there was some evidence for a causal association, but that the correlations "... are rarely large enough to suggest that attitudinal responses can serve as mechanical substitutes for behavioral measures, but that assumption was naive to the extent that it was ever made" (Schuman & Johnson, 1976, p. 199). The area of strongest association in this review was on voting behavior. It leaned heavily on laboratory studies and surveys done with college students. They also added new methodological techniques that complicate the attitude/behavior relationship. In particular, they emphasized examining the causal direction in attitude studies. They state somewhat tentatively that it is possible that behavior has more to do with causing attitudes than attitudes have to do with causing behavior (Schuman & Johnson, 1976)

In 1981 Hill concluded that attitudes have "modest utility" in predicting behavior. He hedged this finding with so many qualifications that the last words of his piece are "... much remains to be accomplished before attitudes are well understood or even unambiguously defined" (Hill, 1981, p. 376). His review points to the variability of attitudes in relation to people, time, and place. The number of variables that affect the attitude/behavior relationship and that can intervene between words and behavior has continued to make progress difficult (Davis, 1985; Liska, 1984; Ritter, 1988).

Efforts to work out the relationship between attitudes and behavior persist, though at a reduced pace. More variables continue to be examined to see if they can help in the ability to predict attitudes from behavior. Schultz and Oskamp (1996), in a study that used undergraduate attitudes toward recycling, found those attitudes predicted behavior if a lot of effort was

required but not when this was not a factor. Despite the difficulties inherent in using student respondents, their conclusion that the attitude/behavior relationship will only become understandable through the addition of many more variables is supported by others (McBroom & Reed, 1992).

Holland, Verplanken, and Van Knippenberg (2002) looked at the strength of the attitude. In a laboratory experiment, people were asked both their attitude and the strength of the attitude toward Greenpeace. Later they were asked if they would contribute. Those who had the strongest positive attitudes were the most likely to contribute. Whether laboratory behavior will be the same outside the laboratory is another matter. Related to this is Liska's (1974) finding that attitudes about a specific behavior don't predict action. The prediction is improved when the social support for or against the action is considered. This research path has been extensively explored in recent years. Armitage and Christian (2003) have summed up this line of investigation. They note that there are variables which moderate the attitude/behavior relationship. These include having an attitude that is univalent, easily recalled, and being personally involved. They conclude that, "Both attitude strength and the way in which attitudes and behaviors are measured seem to affect the magnitude of the attitude/behavior relationship (Armitage & Christian, 2003, p. 189). They add this is a difficult area to study because there are many independent measures of attitude strength.

They promote behavioral intentions as a major mediating variable which influences the relationship. This creates a three variable argument—attitudes influence intentions and intentions influence behavior and lead to a complex theory of planned behavior. Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control result in behavioral intentions which, in turn, result in behavior. This can offer some hope for advancing knowledge about the attitude/behavior relationship, but it will be of little use in situations where people object to attitudes and want to change them.

Jonassen (1955) added an important and often overlooked argument, which is that the ability to predict behavior from attitudes is pretty high in non-problematical areas. He showed that people shopped where they intended to shop. He notes

that you can't do this in predicting a correspondence between racial attitudes and behavior.

A 1991 review of the literature by Pestello and Pestello conclude that "Despite the plethora of research, little has been settled about the attitude/behavior relationship. The studies we collected are contradictory on even the most basic points " (Pestello & Pestello, 1991, p. 348). They focused on the behavior variable and concluded that it was inadequately conceptualized, with many researchers using verbal intentions as a measure of behavior.

Zaller and Feldman (1992) say that on most issues people are conflicted so they answer questions in terms of what occurs to them at the moment. High rates of response instability and errors from measurement effects occur because people do not have the kind of attitude that survey researchers assume they have. People "... possess a series of autonomous and often inconsistent reactions to the questions asked by pollsters. Or, to put it another way, most opinions on most issues have both a central tendency and a variance" (Zaller & Feldman, 1992, p. 610). Until it is known to what extent a person's attitudes are consistent and vary from situation to situation, it will be difficult to take even the first steps to codifying what role attitudes play in predicting behavior.

A recent attempt to overcome the difficulties in attitude/behavior prediction has been made by Trafimow et al. (2004) who, while noting that attitudes are not behavior, distinguish between the thinking and feeling component of attitudes and say that they should be measured separately. They also distinguish between attitudes which stem from expectations about the consequences of behavior and subjective norms that relate to symbolic interaction which concern attitudes held with a consideration of others' expectations. They conclude that there has been progress in predicting behavior from attitudes but give no indication of how much.

In sum, each decade the same conclusion is reached by researchers using a sociological definition of attitude; verbal attitudes are not good predictors of behavior. How do we account for the persistence, especially in human relations programs, of the belief that before behavior can change, attitudes must be modified?

One factor is what Seeley (1967) called "The Americanization of the Unconscious." (Seeley's analysis is less stringent than the Marxist view of social psychology, which sees it as dominating all of sociology by substituting an individual psychological perspective on attitudes so as to divert attention from the objective conditions of workers who were exploited by those who controlled the society.) This work posits that a psychological perspective prevails in the social sciences. This view is best represented by Homans (1964), whose view of functionalism and exchange theory reduced sociology to psychology. He was more concerned with explaining than discovering and said that, "The general propositions of all the social sciences are psychological propositions about the behavior of men rather than about societies or other social groups as such" (Homans, 1967, p. 79). The emphasis is on normative behavior, and not how institutions function.

Parenthetically, most major sociological concepts have a different meaning in Europe, where the emphasis is on facts and behavior. This includes such well known ideas as anomie and alienation. The European meaning for these concepts relates to group membership and connection to work. In the United States, they are projected as attitudes and feelings. A second element lies in the investment that many have in methodology. An increased ability to create reliable scales has only resulted in social science fads and the production of thousands of scales that are seldom used more than once (Diesing, 1991).

A third reason for the continued emphasis on individual attitudes is that practitioners find it easier to work with the individual alone or in a randomly formed group rather than his role set (Brown & Turner, 1981; Cohen, 1973). Milner, in addressing prejudice, says that if it is conceived only as a matter of individual attitudes then one has to resort to "improbable equations" to make connections between individual and group behavior and one must "... go back to unoperationalizable assumptions about the underlying nature of attitudes" (Milner, 1981, pp. 140-141). The same is true for trying to link any attitude to group behavior.

What Does it Mean to Say that Attitudes Must Change Before Behavior Can?

We hang on to approaches to research and programs that do not work. Our knowledge of social behavior has not increased. Some critics say that overdependence on attitude surveys contributes to the lack of development of cumulative knowledge in social science (Freese, 1972). Unless one knows how persistent an attitude is, using such data is like reading yesterday's paper to determine what will happen today. Wicker (1971, p. 18) said that, "The repeated failures to demonstrate a strong consistency between attitudes and behaviors have had little impact on most attitude researches." He says that this raises questions about the validity of attitude scales and about using findings based on this to attempt to solve social problems. Gans (1992) adds that sorting out the difference between changing and persistent attitudes does not happen because sociologists have "amnesia" for the past.

There are consequences to holding that one must change attitude before behavior will change. For example, both the 1944 *An American Dilemma* and what is popularly known as *The Kerner Report* conclude that racial prejudice and discrimination are due to a discontinuity between American values and practice (Kerner, 1968; Myrdal, 1962). Accordingly, they recommend that the road to improvement lies in changing attitudes. Merton (1948), in a sharp review of Myrdal's thesis, says that a proposition that aims to reduce racial tension only by changing values neglects the social structure's role. One example of this is a study of domestic violence by Dibble and Straus (1980) where they conclude, "... that a spouse's violence has much greater impact on the respondent's violence than the respondent's own attitudes about violence" (Dibble & Straus, 1980, p. 71). In other words, what counts is action and not words.

From Merton's perspective, when one switches from looking at people's "alleged hypocrisy" to changing discriminatory practices, progress is possible. This critique had great influence in American sociology. It has not had much effect on practice (Southern, 1987).

In a democracy, many forces influence what scientists should work on and what should be done with the results

(Hanna, 1991). Those who uncritically accept attitude data tend to reify it and use it as a basis for programs. Deutscher (1966) says this has led to disastrous consequences in social programming. He cites Merton's questioning of his own survey data when he wondered if Northerners did not treat African Americans worse than they said they did and Southerners did the reverse. In summing up his review of the attitude/behavior issue he says, "In effect, we have achieved over thirty years' worth of cumulative, consistent, and misleading information about prejudice (Deutscher, 1966, p. 250). Merton reinforces this when he says "The appeal to education as a cure-all for the most varied social problems is rooted deep in the mores of America. Yet it is nonetheless illusory for all that" (Merton, 1982, p. 253). Evidence, however, does not deter the true-believer from continuing to deny that the social structure is a greater determinant of behavior than attitude.

Seeman (1981) says that the attempt to find a correspondence between attitudes and behavior should be abandoned. Then what will happen is that "... the attention to attitudes is directed toward the discovery in all its subtlety of how people think and act (and coordinate the two) in realistic social settings" (Seeman, 1981, p. 401) The focus would not be on assessing attitudes and trying to change them but with understanding what leads people to behave as they do. Better theoretical models are needed.

In addition to the already identified factors which mitigate the power of attitudes to predict behavior, I would like to add another, which is that attitude surveys are almost always interpreted from the perspective of the scientists who collect the data. Very seldom are the implications of the attitudes explored for those who provide the data. Brown (1992) has examined the difference between lay persons' and scientific ways of knowing. He concludes that lay involvement has identified many poor scientific studies and pointed to weakness in the standards of proof in "normal" science.

Schneider (2004), in a recent and comprehensive review of the matter, is optimistic, but notes that attempts to change racial attitudes often fail. When they do succeed, they often have limited effects on only a part of the problem. Even where there is positive change, this is usually measured right after the

intervention and there is almost no information on long term effects. He also says:

> One reason why I am not a fan of political correctness is that it often merely suppresses prejudice to a point where it cannot be confronted directly and changed (I would hope) more fundamentally. (Schneider, 2004, p. 415)

The major deficiency in assuming a deep-seated prejudice only on the basis of verbal attitudes is that when "... beliefs are based upon social cues rather than rigorous analysis, they are likely to be simplistic and distorted, i.e., myths that help us cope with widely shared anxieties, but typically fail to analyze problems adequately and rarely solve them" (Edelman, 1975, p. 14). In the late 1980s when there was an outbreak of racial incidents on college campuses, it was widely assumed that young whites were becoming more prejudiced. When this was examined, this was found not to be the case (Steeh & Schuman, 1992). As in most other studies, so many factors went into explaining racial attitudes that the study could not identify them all and it could not hook this behavior to attitude change which, in fact, had remained stable.

The knowledge that one must deal with more than attitudes has been available for a long time (Lewin, 1948). Chein put it this way, "... attitudes are as much a product of patterns of behavior as they are a cause, and that dilatoriness with respect to positive action teaches its own attitudinal lessons" (Chein, 1975, p. 222). He illustrates this point by noting that when the TV networks hired minority people, they just did it with no preparation and there was no reaction. But when the Supreme Court made its 1954 desegregation decision, its order did not call for integration "forthwith" but rather used the phrase "with-all-deliberate-speed." This latter phrase has no implementation boundaries and resulted in a generation of educational disruption.

Howard Zinn, a radical historian, is cited as saying that:

> We now have enough actual experience of social change in the South to say confidently that you *first* change the way people behave by legal or extralegal pressures of

> various kinds, in order to transform the environment which is the ultimate determinate of the way people think. (Joyce, 2003, p. 59)

These are the words of someone who was an active participant in the effort to end segregation and is one of the fiercest antagonists of anything that detracts from promoting equality for all in this society. He italicized "first" to indicate the primacy of changing behavior as the major means of achieving equality.

Those who promote "sensitivity" ignore the experience of Zinn and others who do not agree with them. They have a vested interest in the administrative structures, programs, and consultantships they create, for in many instances it is a good source of income.

Coerced attempts to change attitudes may reinforce the behavior they are trying to eliminate (Rooney, 1992). Given the demonstrated failure of this approach, those who use it express the latent function of punishing the client. Pelton (2001) has argued that "Equal respect for all individuals, conveyed in interaction as well as through nondiscrimination in policies, is based upon our commonality as human beings, not upon the presence or absence of group differences" (p. 435).

Whenever people are not seen as individuals they are judged in terms of their group characteristics. This means that stereotyping is occurring. Stereotypes can be positive or negative. The way to deal with negative stereotypes is through creating interaction situations and not attempting to change attitudes. Perhaps what needs to be examined most is the understanding of those who spend so much time telling others that they don't understand poverty and race. The problem is compounded because, in the name of diversity, affirmative action and multiculturalism, reasonable discussion of racial behavior has been practically suppressed within social work (Perlmutter, 2008).

There is an ambiguity of social work education and practice standards where there is more emphasis on changing attitudes than on changing behavior. Hartman (1991), in a *Social* Work editorial, articulated a postmodernist position that holds "speech is action." This leads her to question court decisions

overturning speech codes and to see social work education as having different goals than liberal arts education where freedom of speech is concerned. She says this is required by the Council on Social Work Education's accreditation standards. It is no wonder that not enough attention is given to the power of fairly enforced organizational rules in changing behavior, regardless of the attitudes that people verbalize. This goes so far as to ignore important countervailing claims. Rather, one should demand that others be stopped from verbalizing "improper" attitudes because they are presumed to lead to discrimination and oppression. In the name of furthering equality in many places, especially universities, speech codes, mandatory sensitivity training, review of course content for racial sensitivity, and at times sanctions such as expulsion, have been used (Campbell, 1988; Kissel, 2009). The purpose of all this activity is that it is presumed that the expression of negative attitudes will lead to discriminatory behavior and worse. It is assumed that the way to improve comes from creating positive attitudes so that people will not do negative things. The lack of evidence for this proposition deters no one.

These ideas are entombed in NASW's and the Council on Social Work Education's codes of ethics and there is little serious examination of their consistency. Longres and Scanlon (2001), in a study of research textbooks and teachers, note that while social work education has made a commitment to social justice the textbooks don't reflect this, that the teachers are only committed to theory in general and not to developing specific new contributions, and that there is a great diversity of opinion about what social justice is.

Practicing professions find it difficult to deal with prejudice and discrimination at the practice level. Bartoli and Pyati (2009) attempt to deal with expressions of prejudice by clients. They note that, "The scarcity of clear guidelines on how to address racial or prejudicial comments in psychotherapy is striking ..." (Bartoli & Pyati, 2009, p. 146). They also note the dilemma caused by contradictory standards in codes of ethics where the professional must work for social justice and the clients' right to say whatever they want, especially if their prejudiced statement is not related to the problem. What they do with this analysis is interesting. They are identified with social justice,

feminism and multiculturalism. They present two cases where the client was not only helped but also changed their prejudiced attitudes. It would have been equally helpful to present a case where the client improved and the prejudiced attitudes were unchanged.

That actions are more important than words in achieving social justice is a lesson that has a lot of support in sociology and other parts of society. Lichtenberg (2009, p. 16) notes that while the feeling part of offering charity is important also says, "Yet in thinking about the alleviation of poverty and suffering, it seems we are primarily concerned with actions and outcomes, rather than motives and dispositions." There is support for an action standpoint among important black opinion leaders. Whitney Young put it in familiar terms when he said that the Urban League was a change agent and that it was racial discrimination and not racial prejudice that had to be controlled.

> The attitude is far less damaging than the act. For those who would assert that action flows from attitudes, it is relevant to point out that to an even greater extent the attitude results from the pattern of action to which individuals and groups have been accustomed. (1968b, pp. 38-39)

He practiced what he preached. In describing how he handled race with his children he said, "Then you begin to teach in your own home, by example and not through exhortation" (Young, 1968a, p. 151). Morgan Freeman, the distinguished actor, in commenting on the way parents of both races continue to perpetuate discriminatory practices said, "Children don't listen to what you say, they watch what you do. I'd use the analogy of a guy walking down the street with his daughter. He's holding her hand, and a dog approaches. He says, 'Don't be afraid,' but he squeezes her hand" (Kaplan, 2009, p. 4).

Martin Luther King Jr. expressed the same sentiments. "Morals cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. The law cannot make an employer love me, but it can keep him from refusing to hire me because of the color of my skin" (King, 1987, p. 27). President Obama, in his acceptance speech

for the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo said, "The promotion of human rights cannot be about exhortation alone" (Obama, 2009, para. 5).

If this lesson could be learned, perhaps social science and welfare academics and professional organizations could take their blinders off and deal with the anomaly that while there are laws against discrimination, there are major problems in education, housing, health, employment and other important areas of social life. Many of the gains from the civil rights movement are being lost. There is no broad-based movement which appeals across racial and class lines to redress this. How can there be, if so much attention is focused on attitude and not behavior. Implementation of existing laws, not more attention to attitudes, is the way to achieve progress in human rights.

Conclusion

The answer to the questions which initiated this paper is that while attitudes are important, most attention must be paid to behavior if prejudice and discrimination are to be reduced, that is, to fair and enforceable rules and laws. For the most part these exist. What is lacking is the enforcement.

What stands out in this review on the state of knowledge about the ability of attitudes to predict behavior is that it is murky and not a great deal of progress has been made in clarifying the matter. The one thing that methodological advances have clarified is that attitudes have some utility in predicting behavior when it is not a problem to the person and there is social acceptance of its expression in action.

It is not necessary to change attitudes to change behavior. Those who insist on the reverse reflect the current infatuation with postmodernism that many social scientists and social workers have. One of its outstanding characteristics is to question whether truth can be established. This leaves a world filled with relative truths. They take the tendency for social science research to be cast in ways that support the current social order and build it into a conspiracy. Under the new rules, knowledge must now pass a political test.

Eighty years of research has done little to improve the ability to predict behavior from attitude. This has not prevented numerous universities, governmental agencies, and

businesses from developing programs whose aim is to create more positive attitudes. Unfortunately, those who focus on attitudes often create the attitudes they claim to be changing. In human relations training, the chief result is that people reinforce the attitudes they have when they went into training.

Too great an emphasis on trying to control or change attitudes threatens freedom. In our society, those who would sacrifice the first amendment in an attempt to coerce people into the proper attitudinal expression are also those who would take away our democracy. One of the things social workers should expect from sociologists is that they help them stay focused on the nature of these threats (Chaiklin, 1997). Some people may be so hurt by words that their lives are disrupted. That is to be regretted and they should have access to all the help they need to cope with the pressures. This includes legal redress. The same rights should also be available to the victims of coerced counseling and mandated sensitivity groups. We need to know when people will act on their words. While attitudes are important, there can be no real movement toward social justice unless major attention is given to behavior. This paper began with an epigram. It ends with another one. "Actions speak louder than words."

Revision of paper originally presented as "Attitudes and Behavior in the History of Sociology" at Eastern Sociology Meetings Philadelphia, PA, March 20, 1998.

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