

Attitude theories



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Comparison of the attitude theories This paper aims at evaluating the attitude theories as proposed by the two social psychologists by Daniel Katz and H. C. Kelman. Although both of them are psychologists and can not be expected to have given a very directed theory on attitude, yet an in depth analysis of their proposed theories reveals that both theorists have substantially covered all sensitive elements of the different behavioral constructs.

According to Katz, attitude is “ the predisposition of an individual to evaluate some symbol or object or aspect of his world in a favourable or unfavourable manner.” (Fones, p. 22). Katz emphasizes that when attitude is spoken out in the form of words, it becomes an opinion, which may not always be interpreted in the true spirit because the second person can not see the fundamental attitude that caused the opinion. For example, if someone says, “ You look healthier than before”. We might not understand if he means to appreciate the other person’s health or just make him conscious by calling him fat.

Kelman, on the other hand, speaks about opinion change which indirectly causes a modification of the original attitude. Kelman explains the phenomenon of opinion change with respect to three qualitative variables which are compliance, internalization and identification which are essentially a means of social influence on the attitude of the individual.

Katz has adopted a functional approach towards the definition of attitude in contrast to Kelman, who has explained how social influence can induce changes in the behavioral constructs of people. Katz has identified two ways in which attitude functions to cause human reaction to the surroundings – a rational attitude that induces optimism in human approach towards the

analysis of and reaction to the matters and an irrational attitude that misleads people and causes them to respond irrationally landing them in trouble. “ The functions are those of adjustment, egodefense, value expression and knowledge.” (Fones, p. 23). On the other hand, the “ compliance” referred to by Kelman is essentially an acceptance of the propositions of others in a hope to achieve a certain expected outcome. “ Identification” means the modification of attitude in an attempt to make it compatible with that of the group to gain a sense of identity and affiliation with that group. “ Internalization causes people to accept other’s opinion because they feel that the proposed opinions reaffirm their basic thoughts and values.

Conclusion:

Both Katz and Kelman have been quite realistic in their definition of the various dimensions of attitude. The fundamental difference that exists between the theories proposed by the two psychologists is that the former explains how attitude influences actions and the latter elaborates how external actions influence attitude. Both theories jointly function to develop a holistic approach towards the rational description of human attitude, the way it functions and how it can be altered. Such a definition of attitude and its constructs is very essential for understanding the ways to induce positive changes in the society. “ Social psychologists attitude-behavior theories can contribute to understanding science teachers behaviors. Such understanding can, in turn, be used to improve professional development.” (Michaela and Zint, 2002).

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