CHAPTER 4

ATTITUDES, STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES:
THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices are examined more closely, because it is important to understand how they function in general before attempting to apply the theoretical concepts regarding attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices to the aviation environment, and attitudes toward, stereotypes about and prejudices toward female aviators in particular.

An attitude is the result of the beliefs and feelings people have about themselves, about other people and about the tasks they are faced with (Lamberton & Minor, 1995:3). To say that you have a certain attitude towards something or someone is a means of expressing the notion that you have feelings or thoughts of like or dislike, approval or disapproval, attraction or repulsion, trust or distrust and so on (Eiser, 1996:11).

The strength of an attitude depends mainly on the type of experience the individual who holds that attitude has had with the person, object or situation that he/she holds an attitude about: the more direct the experience, the stronger the attitude. An attitude's strength also increases in relation to the number of times it has been expressed: for example, the more often a worker expresses dissatisfaction with his/her job, the stronger the worker's attitude becomes (Gordon, 1991:54).

Lamberton and Minor (1995:63) also claim that attitudes are usually connected to an individual's self-esteem. They state that people with low self-esteem often tend to display attitudes that are not based on the way things really are, but rather on their own feelings of inadequacy.

A person's opinion can therefore be described as the person's attitude put into words. Furthermore, an attitude is a way of responding to someone or something to which one has previously been exposed. Attitudes are usually quite permanent in nature and are relatively resistant to change.

From a historical point of view, the study of attitudes has undergone three distinct phases (Jones, 1997:2):

- *The 1920's and 1930's:* Research concentrated on the fairly static issues of attitude measurement and how this related to behaviour.
- *The 1950's and 1960's:* Research focused on the dynamics of change in individuals' attitudes.
- *The 1980's and 1990's*: Research turned to unravelling the structure and function of systems of attitudes.

4.2   DEFINING ATTITUDES

Various definitions for the concept of attitudes exist. According to Thurstone (Edwards, 1957:2), attitude is defined as 'the degree of positive or negative affect associated with some psychological object'. An attitude is therefore seen as a mental state of readiness, organised through experience and exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual's response to a psychological object or situation. The term 'psychological object' refers to any symbol, phrase, slogan, person, institution, ideal or idea toward which people can differ in respect of positive or negative affect.

Doob, as quoted by Freedman, Sears and Carlsmith (1978:283) defines attitude as 'an implicit, drive producing response considered socially significant in the individual's society'. This statement tends to emphasise what an attitude is, rather than its implications. This statement by Doob (1947, in Freedman *et al.*, 1978) did not include overt behaviour, although it contains the assumption that an attitude will affect the behaviour of an individual.

Gordon (1991:54) is of the opinion that 'an attitude is a consistent predisposition to respond to various aspects of people, situations or objects. Since attitude is a hypothetical construct and cannot be observed, one can only infer it from a person's behaviour or verbal expression'.

Allport in Jones (1997:2) describes an attitude as 'a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related'. Jones (1997:2) expands on this definition by defining an attitude as 'a relatively enduring organisation of

beliefs, feelings and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols, or; a general feeling or evaluation – positive or negative – about some person, object or issue'.

Eiser (1996:11) summarises the main assumptions implicit in the use of the term 'attitude':

- *Attitudes are subjective experiences.* People's statements about their attitudes are inferences from observations of their own behaviour.

- *Attitudes are experiences of some issue or object.* Not all experiences qualify as attitudes. Attitudes are not simply moods or affective reactions presumed to be somehow caused by external stimuli. Reference to some issue or object is part of the experience.

- *Attitudes are experiences of some issue or object in terms of an evaluative dimension.* If an attitude is experienced towards an object, one does not simply 'experience' it, one experiences it as more or less desirable, or better or worse to some degree.

- *Attitudes involve evaluative judgements.* This statement implies that it is an empirical question of how much an individual's attitude to (or evaluative judgement of) some object in some situation involves deliberate, conscious appraisal of that object, as opposed to, for example, an over-learned conditioned response.

- *Attitudes may be expressed through language.* Attitudes can be expressed non-verbally to some extent; however, ordinary language is replete with words containing an element of evaluation.

- *Expressions of attitude are in principle intelligible.* This statement refers to the idea that when an individual expresses his/her attitudes, one may understand them, in other words, one may not know *why* an individual feels as he/she does, but within limits, one knows *what* he/she feels.

- *Attitudes are communicated.* Expressions of attitudes are not intelligible, they are typically made so as to be perceived and understood by others. The expression of attitude is a social act that presupposes an audience by whom that expression may be understood.

- *Different individuals can agree and disagree in their attitudes.* This statement is dependent both on the idea that attitudes can be expressed in language (since languages allows for negotiation) and on the idea that attitudes have a public reference.

- *People who hold different attitudes towards an object will differ in what they believe are true or false about an object.* The possibility of attitudinal agreement and disagreement implies that people will interpret attitude statements as having truth-values that are in principle determinable through interaction with the attitude object. Eiser (1996:12) states, however, that it is not necessarily the case that attitudes are formed on the basis of prior investigation or relevant facts. The relationship between factual beliefs and evaluation is an empirical determination.

- *Attitudes are predictably related to social behaviour.* This statement implies that
  (a) if people generally showed no consistency between their verbally expressed attitudes and other social behaviour, it would be difficult to know what such verbal expression meant;
  (b) though people may be motivated to obtain, approach, support, etc., objects they evaluate positively, this is unlikely to be the only motive relevant to social behaviour, and its relative importance in any context is an empirical determination;
  (c) to state that attitudes cause behaviour (or vice versa) can raise questions concerning the nature of the intervening process.

4.3   COMPONENTS OF ATTITUDES

Research has suggested that attitudes consist of three components (Triandis, 1971:2). They are identified as follows:

4.3.1   The cognitive component

The cognitive component of an attitude can best be described as the opinions or beliefs an individual holds about a certain person, object, or situation. These beliefs serve as an antecedent to specific attitudes. Beliefs are learnt through modelling, the association of cognitive cues, or reinforcement. It must be remembered, however, that even though an

individual may have numerous beliefs, not all of them may be deemed important enough to lead to significant attitudes.

4.3.2   The affective component

The affective component refers to an individual's feelings that result from the view which he/she holds about a certain person, object or situation. This is the emotional or *feeling* segment of an attitude. Gordon (1991:55) cites the following example: 'An individual might have a negative feeling about his or her job because of the beliefs held about promotion. A person may feel anger or frustration because he or she believes hard work deserves promotion, and the person has worked hard and not been promoted.'
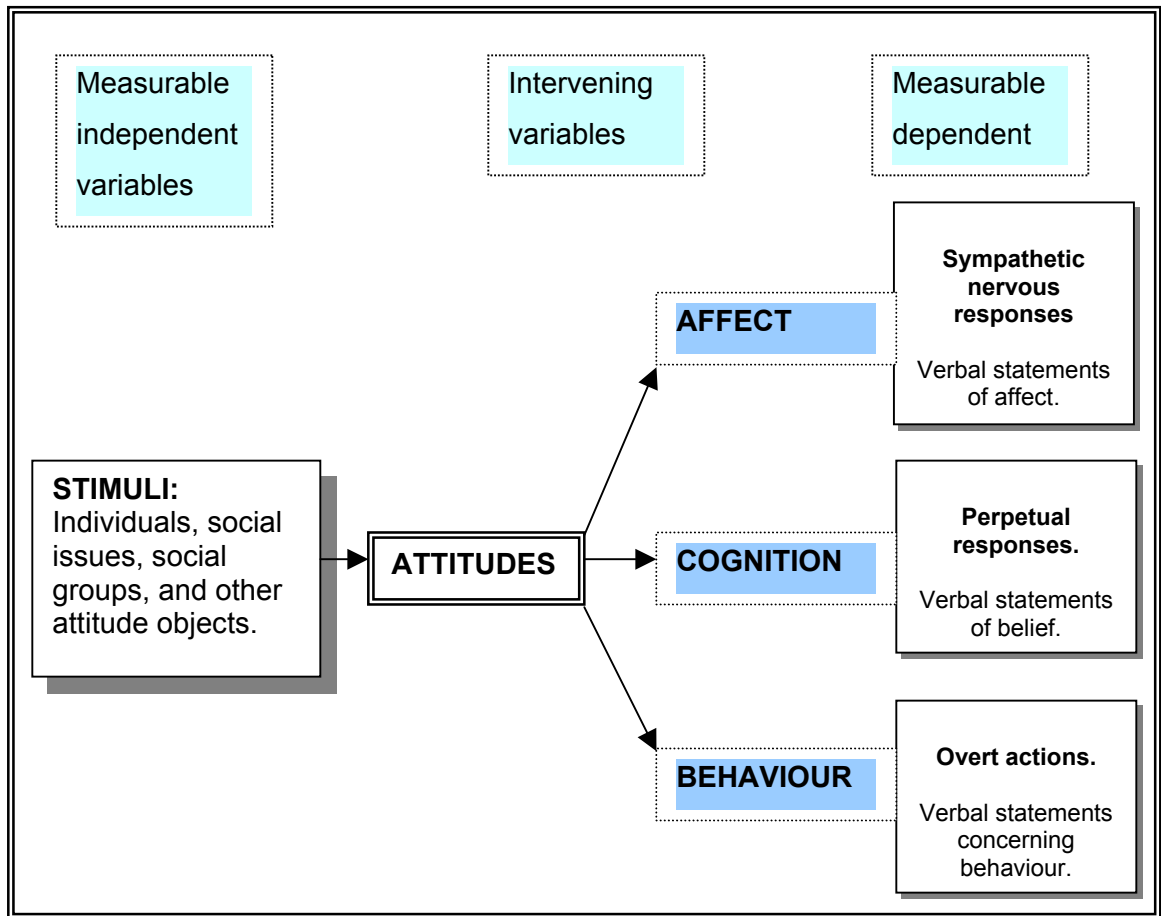
4.3.3   The behavioural component

The behavioural component refers to an aspect of an individual's behaviour that occurs as a result of his/her own feelings about the focal person, object or situation. The relationship between attitudes and behaviour is stronger the more active the person's attitude is when he/she is behaving. It is the *predisposition* to an action. Thus, for example, the more often people express dissatisfaction with their job, the more likely those people are to demonstrate activities resulting in such negative consequences as lowered productivity, requests for transfer, or dysfunctional behaviour (Gordon, 1991:55).

The above components develop under the influence of different variables. Direct experience is the most relevant aspect in the development of the cognitive and the affective components, but some people are more predisposed to the behavioural component. However, direct experience can have some implications for the behavioural component, as the three components interact and there is a tendency for them to become as consistent with each other as possible. On the one hand, people do not only tell others how to behave in a certain situation, they also tell them how they should think and feel about various attitude objects. On the other hand, they cannot impose their views on others, as most people develop their own ways of thinking and feeling (Triandis, 1971:3).

Figure 4.1 (overleaf) provides a schematic representation of the three components of attitudes.

Figure 4.1:   Schematic conception of attitudes in terms of the three components

| Measurable independent variables | | Intervening variables | | Measurable dependent | |

STIMULI: Individuals, social issues, social groups, and other attitude objects.

ATTITUDES

AFFECT

COGNITION

BEHAVIOUR

Sympathetic nervous responses

Verbal statements of affect.

Perpetual responses.

Verbal statements of belief.

Overt actions.

Verbal statements concerning behaviour.

Source: Eiser (1996:54)

4.4   SOURCES OF ATTITUDES

In trying to understand the basis of beliefs, people must begin by looking at their own experiences and development. Attitudes are established in the early years of an individual's development by teachers, parents and peer group members; in other words, attitudes are modelled after those of the persons whom people admire, respect or even fear (Robbins, 1996:180).

The following also offer explanations as to the formation of personal belief systems.

4.4.1   Observation

An important source of information that influences attitudes is what people are actually observed to be doing. One may choose to follow the example of a peer who is doing

exceptionally well in his/her work by copying his/her behaviour. Expectations may be reinforced by the positive outcome of people's own behaviours. Thus, attitudes may be strengthened. Similarly, when behaviour is recreated that brings about a negative consequence; a negative attitude may develop about the focal person, object or situation.

4.4.2   Socialisation

Another guide for basic beliefs is the set of moral values and standards that are in-calculated in people by their families and by society's institutions. Each individual has a code of what is seen to be as 'right' or 'wrong', as well as what is seen to be of most value in his/her life. These personal standards influence many thoughts, beliefs and actions.

4.4.3   Feedback

An individual's observations of the self can often be quite biased and distorted, and thus feedback can be a very important source of information of the individual's personal beliefs. For instance, if people constantly receive negative feedback regarding things that they consider to be true and factual, they may decide to review their opinions and beliefs so that the feedback which is received may be more positive.

4.5   THEORIES OF ATTITUDE FORMATION AND CHANGE

Section 4.4 offers a brief explanation of the sources of attitudes. This section proposes a more comprehensive discussion of the theories attributed to attitude formation and change.

4.5.1   The Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Arguably, the most studied topic in social psychology is the concept of Cognitive Dissonance developed in 1957 by Leon Festinger. This theory is concerned with the relationships between cognitions. Rudolph (2001:1) describes cognitions as a 'piece of knowledge'. The knowledge may be about an attitude, an emotion, a behaviour, a value, et cetera. So, for example, the knowledge that a person favours a certain colour is a cognition, or the knowledge that they scored in a recent sporting event is also a cognition.

People hold numerous cognitions simultaneously, and these cognitions form irrelevant, consonant, or dissonant relationships with one another.

4.5.1.1   Cognitive irrelevance

The majority of relationships among an individual's cognitions are described as cognitive irrelevance. According to Rudolph (2001:2), irrelevance denotes that two cognitions have nothing to do with each other. For example, a person knows that the weather is warm on a particular day and also knows that New York and Paris are more than 3 000 miles (4 828 kilometres) apart. These two cognitions may exist simultaneously within an individual, but neither has any implication for the other. A person can therefore state that two cognitions are irrelevant if holding one cognition has no psychological bearing on the other cognition.

4.5.1.2   Consonance

Two cognitions are consonant if one cognition follows from, or fits with, the other. For example, the cognition that New York is 3 000 miles (4 828 kilometres) to Paris fits in with the cognition that a person chooses to take an airplane to get there.

Rudolph (2001:2) states that individuals like consonance. Researchers do not know whether this phenomenon stems from the nature of the human organism or whether it is learned during the process of socialisation, but individuals appear to prefer cognitions that fit together to those that do not.

4.5.1.3   Dissonance

Two cognitions are said to be dissonant if one cognition follows from the opposite of the other, for example, when a child who dislikes chocolate ice cream purchases a chocolate ice cream cone. In cognitive dissonance situations, the cognitions about behaviour follow, not from the individual's cognitions about their beliefs, but rather from their opposites.

An individual who has dissonant or discrepant cognitions is said to be in a psychological state of dissonance, which is experienced as unpleasant psychological tension. Rudolph (2001) suggests that this tension state has compelling properties that are much like those of hunger and/or thirst. When an individual has been deprived of food for several hours, he/she may experience unpleasant tension and be driven to reduce that tension (the

person eats). Similarly, when an individual discovers dissonant cognitions, he/she is driven to reduce the unpleasant state of tension that results. This is, however, not always a simple process.

4.5.1.4   *The magnitude of dissonance*

In order to comprehend the alternatives available to an individual in a state of dissonance, an individual must understand the factors that affect the magnitude of dissonance arousal.

- *Dissonance increases as the degree of discrepancy among cognitions increases.*
  For example, an individual who delivers an argument that is critical of school safety will experience a greater discrepancy between his/her cognitions if he/she holds an attitude that is extremely favourable to safety than one that is only marginally favourable.

- *Dissonance increases as the number of discrepant cognitions increases.*
  So, for example, a child who purchases a chocolate ice cream cone experiences some dissonance if he/she knows that the child does not care for chocolate as a flavour. But the child experiences greater dissonance if he/she also has these cognitions: (a) the child is allergic to chocolate and (b) the child does not like cones. Other discrepancies in the situation may further increase the state of psychological tension due to the dissonance. The child may have homework to do, but instead is wasting his/her time purchasing ice cream. Thus dissonance is directly proportional to the number of discrepant cognitions and to the degree of discrepancy between them. As the degree and number increase, so does dissonance.

- *Dissonance is inversely proportional to the number of consonant cognitions held by an individual.*
  Rudolph (2001:3) suggests that in most life situations, cognitions exist which support certain aspects of an otherwise discrepant situation. So, for example, segregationist parents who send their child to an integrated school may also feel that compliance with the law is an important value. In addition, they may be of the opinion that racial turmoil is over and that their child may be in an advantageous position with regard to the teachers at that school. Each of these cognitions serves to support otherwise discrepant behaviour. The greater the number of consonant cognitions, the less the dissonance.

- *In order to estimate the magnitude of dissonance from the factors listed above, the importance of various cognitions must be taken into consideration.*

  Conspicuous discrepancies between trivial cognitions would not create much dissonance within the individual. So, for example, on a particular Sunday, a library is giving away hundreds of free books to people who arrive before 08h00. Many people who do not normally like to get up early on Sunday may, however, do so in order to receive the books that they want. Therefore waking up early is discrepant with the cognition that a person likes to sleep late; however, the cognition that the person will receive free books is consonant with his/her cognition that he/she wants the books. The former cognition is trivial compared to the latter.

In summary, the magnitude of dissonance can be given by the following formula (Rudolph 2001:4):

Number of discrepant cognitions = (Magnitude of x Importance dissonance) / (Number of consonant cognitions x importance)

4.5.1.5   Reducing the tension

If dissonance is experienced as an unpleasant drive state, people are motivated to reduce it. Once the factors that affect the magnitude of the unpleasantness have been identified, it should be possible to predict what one can do to reduce it (California Polytechnic State University, 1997:3).

- Changing cognitions

  If two cognitions are discrepant, one can simply change one of the cognitions to make it consistent with the other. Or one can change each of the cognitions in the direction of the other.

- Adding cognitions

  If two discrepant cognitions cause a certain magnitude of dissonance, adding one or more consonant cognitions can reduce that magnitude.

- Altering importance

  Since the discrepant and consonant cognitions must be weighted by importance, it may be advantageous to alter the importance of various cognitions.

4.5.1.6   Overview

According to cognitive dissonance theory, there is a tendency for individuals to seek consistency between their cognitions (in other words, their beliefs and opinions). When there is an inconsistency between attitudes or behaviours (dissonance), something must change to eliminate the dissonance. In the case of a discrepancy between attitudes and behaviour, it is most likely that the attitude will change to accommodate the behaviour.

Dissonance occurs most often in situations where an individual must choose between two incompatible beliefs or actions. The greatest dissonance is created when the two alternatives are equally attractive. Furthermore, attitude change is more likely in the direction of less incentive, since this results in lower dissonance. In this respect, dissonance theory is contradictory to most behavioural theories, which would predict greater attitude change with increased incentive (Kearsly, 2001).

4.5.2   The Self-Perception Theory

Bem (Epsychlopedia, 1995:1) developed a slightly different theory from Festinger's in order to explain attitude shifts caused by behaviour. According to Bem's Self-Perception Theory, individuals infer their internal states (their attitudes, motives and feelings) through observation of their own behaviour. Bem believed that this is similar to observing someone else's behaviour and inferring their attitude in an attribution process.

Both Cognitive Dissonance Theory and Self-Perception Theory suggested similar results in various experiments; however, Cognitive Dissonance Theory suggests that an internal state of tension or dissonance motivates change, whereas Self-Perception Theory suggests that change is a result of a passive inference (Epsychlopedia, 1995:1).

An example of this is when an individual chooses between two equally rated items. After the selection the individual's positive attitude towards the item that was not chosen decreases and it increases towards the item that was chosen. Festinger's theory of Cognitive Dissonance suggests that an attitude shift is caused by cognitive inconsistency ('these items are equal' and 'I chose this one over the other') but Bem suggests that the individual simply observes the choice made and then infers that he/she did not like the item that was not chosen, and liked the item that was (Epsychlopedia, 1995:1).

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Epsychlopedia (1995) suggests that there are few examples of attitude shifts that cannot be explained by Cognitive Dissonance Theory, but that can be explained by Self-Perception Theory. Epsychlopedia lists the following example: 'Consider a person asked to make a speech in support of an attitude she already holds. After she makes the speech, there should be no dissonance, yet the attitude changes to become more intense'. Self-perception theory explains that upon observing her speech, the person infers that she must really support the stance.

There is still some debate over which theory best explains attitude formation and change. Many psychologists feel they both have validity (Epsychlopedia, 1995).

4.5.3   The Balance Theory

The Balance Theory was developed in an attempt to describe the terms referring to the 'subjective environment' of an individual 'perceiver'. The 'subject environment' (or 'life space') of a person consists of certain entities, and certain relations between these entities as perceived by the individual.

Eiser (1996:14) lists the example of three entities, *p, o* and *x*, where *p* is the individual perceiver, *o* is another person and *x* is an impersonal object or issue (if the third party is another person, the symbol of *q* is used rather than *x*). Each of the three relations between each pair of entities can consist of positive or negative sentiment (for example, approval/disapproval). One can also distinguish between positive and negative unit relations (for example, some sort of bond/no bond). With two possible relations between each pair of entities, there are eight possible triads that can be constructed (see Figure 4.2, overleaf).

Balanced triads contain either three positive relations, or one positive and two negative relations. The four balanced triads represent those situations in which either *p* perceives agreement with someone the individual likes, or disagreement with someone the individual dislikes.

The remaining four unbalanced triads contain either three negative relations, or one negative and two positive relations. Initially, a triad with three negative relations was considered to be ambiguous (Eiser 1996:14). Unbalanced triads represent situations in

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which *p* perceives agreement with someone he/she dislikes, or disagreement with someone he/she likes.

Figure 4.2:   Balanced and unbalanced triads
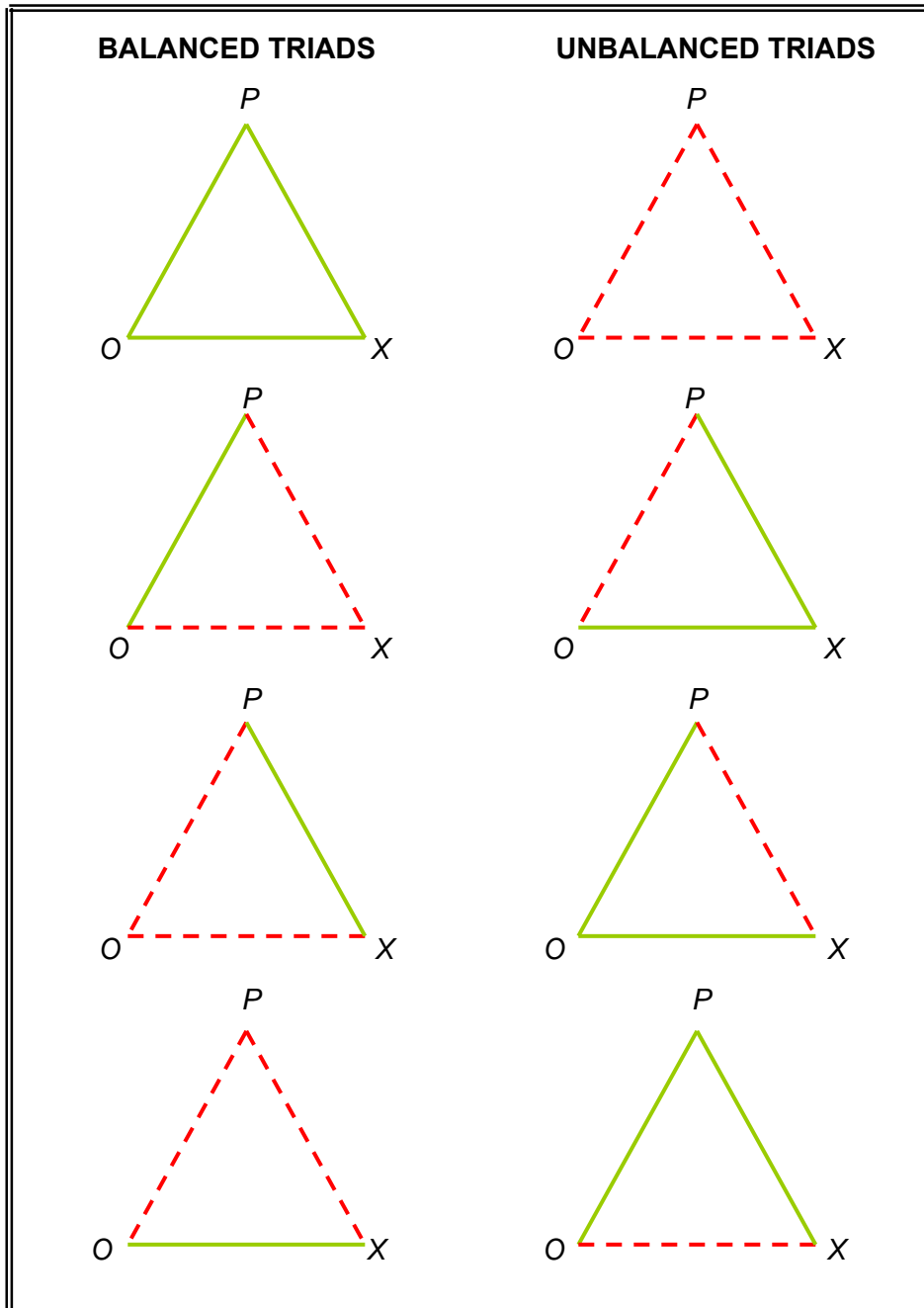
Source: Eiser (1996:15)

Note: Positive relations are represented by solid lines, negative relations are represented by broken lines.

Balance is defined by Eiser (1996:15) as a harmonious state, one in which the entity comprising the situations and the feelings about them fit together without stress. This definition implies a number of predictions:

- Balanced structures are more stable in the sense that an individual will be motivated to change an imbalanced structure to a balanced one, but not *vice versa*.
- If an imbalanced structure cannot be changed into a balanced one, it will produce tension and thus balanced states are preferred to imbalanced ones.
- If individuals are required to predict the third relation in a triad from a knowledge of the other two, they are more likely to predict a state of balance than imbalance.
- Since balanced states are more predictable than imbalanced ones, they are simpler to recognise.

An individual can conceptualise judgements of preference and evaluation depending on the perceived positions of the judged items in terms of one or more underlying attributes or dimensions, and the perceived distances of these items from the individual's own ideal point on the dimensions. Positively evaluated items should be close to this ideal point, and negatively evaluated items should be further away.

The basic formulation of balance theory assumes a positive self-concept, and the hypothesised preference for balance may be viewed as a preference for situations in which this positive self-concept is unchallenged. Eiser (1996:15) states that balance theory has little to do with any preference people hold for strict logical consistency. Instead, it implies that people are biased towards perceiving their social environment in a manner that allows them to make simple evaluative judgements in terms that enable them to maintain a positive view of themselves. Consistency is primarily a form of cognitive bias, rather than the achievement of perfect rationality. Eiser (1996:15) further argues that the main question concerns the relative strength of the bias compared with other biases which may also influence a person's perceptions of the social environment, and the extent to which this bias may depend on the stimulus context and the particular mode of response employed.

The idea of cognitive balance is an important principle of attitude organisation. However, it does not operate precisely in the same way for all people or in all situations.

4.5.4   The Theory of Reasoned Action

The Theory of Reasoned Action was developed in attempt to explain how and why attitude affects people's behaviour. According to Taylor (2001:1), the study of attitude's influence on behaviour began in 1872, with Charles Darwin, who defined attitude as the physical expression of an emotion.

In the 1930's, psychologists defined attitude as emotions or thoughts with a behavioural component. This behaviour could be non-verbally or verbally expressed. Psychologists of this time argued about what should make up the definition of attitude and theorised that attitude included behaviour about cognition and that attitude and behaviour were positively correlated (Taylor, 2001). In 1935, Gordon Allport proposed that the attitude-behaviour concept was multi-dimensional rather than uni-dimensional and that multi-dimensional systems consisted of beliefs about the object, feelings about the object and action tendencies toward the object (Gurule, 2002:1).

By the late 1960's, psychologists no longer believed that they had a theory to explain the relationship between attitude and behaviour. It was in this environment that Ajzen and Fishbein created the Theory of Reasoned Action in 1967 (Regis, 1996:1).

The Theory of Reasoned Action states that an individual's behaviour is determined by his/her attitude towards the outcome of that behaviour and by the opinions of the individual's social environment. Ajzen and Fishbein proposed that an individual's behaviour is determined by the person's intention to perform a particular type of behaviour and that this intention is, in turn, a function of the person's attitude toward the behaviour and the individual's subjective norm (Regis, 1996:1).

4.5.4.1   Attitudes

This theory further postulates that attitudes are made up of the beliefs that individuals accumulate over their lifetimes – some beliefs are formed from direct experience, some from outside information and others are inferred and self-generated. However, only few of the beliefs actually work to influence attitude. These beliefs are referred to as *salient beliefs* and are believed to be the immediate determinants of an individual's attitude (Taylor, 2001:1). An attitude, then, is an individual's salient belief about whether the outcome of the person's action will be positive or negative. If the individual has positive

salient beliefs about the outcome of a particular form of behaviour, the person is said to have a positive attitude about the behaviour. The same holds true for negative salient beliefs and negative attitudes. The beliefs are rated for the probability that engaging in the behaviour will produce the believed outcome. This is referred to as *belief strength.* It follows that the perception of whether this outcome is positive or negative can be evaluated using a scale (such as a Likert scale). These two factors, belief strength and evaluation, are then multiplied to give the attitude.

4.5.4.2   Subjective norms

Subjective norms are beliefs about what others will think about behaviour. They are perceptions about how family and friends will perceive the outcome of behaviour (normative belief) and the degree to which this influences whether the behaviour is executed (motivation to comply). These two factors are multiplied to give the subjective norm. It is important to note that subjective norms are formed only in relation to the opinions of persons considered to be significant or important (Taylor, 2001:2).

4.5.4.3   Intentions

Intentions are defined as the probability, as rated by the subject, that he/she will perform the behaviour. This intention is made up of the attitudes and subjective norms of a person, as previously discussed in Sections 4.5.4.1 and 4.5.4.2.

Variables not included in the model can affect intention and, consequently, behaviour. These variables must, however, be significant in order to affect an attitude or normative belief components and their weights (Taylor, 2001:3). These factors include demographic variables and personality traits.

4.5.4.4   Behaviour

Behaviour is the transfer from intention to action.

The Theory of Reasoned Action is thus represented by the following formula:

$B \sim I = (Aact)w1 + (SN)w2$

Where:

B is Behaviour

I is Intention

$Aact$ is the individual's Attitude towards the behaviour

SN is the influence of the individual's Subjective Norms

(Taylor, 2001:3)

4.5.4.5   Limitations of the Theory of Reasoned Action

Taylor (2001:4) believes that one of the limitations of this theory stems from the nature of the self-reporting used to determine a subject's attitude. No direct observation is used in the application of this theory, as only self-reported information is used. Self-reported data is subjective and not always accurate.

Furthermore, Ajzen and Fishbein noted that the theory was limited by what they referred to as correspondence. In order for the theory to predict specific behaviour, attitude and intention must agree on action, target, context and time.

Another limitation was identified from the assumption that behaviour is under volitional control; in other words, the theory only applies to behaviour that is consciously considered beforehand. Irrational decisions, habitual actions or any behaviour that is not consciously considered cannot be explained by this theory. To overcome these issues, Ajzen proposed the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which sought to address the issue of behaviours that occur without a person's volitional control. This theory is the same as the Theory of Reasoned Action except for the addition of the Perceived Behavioural Control component. The Perceived Behavioural Control component consists in Control Beliefs and Perceived Power. These factors state that motivation or intention is influenced by how difficult the task is perceived to be and whether the person expects to complete the behaviour successfully (Taylor, 2001).

4.5.4.6   Overview

Despite its limitations, the Ajzen-Fishbein Theory of Reasoned Action remains one of the most widely used theories of motivation. According to Regis (1996:4), it measures the most cognitive elements that might be supposed to be relevant and it may provide a convenient non-experimental vehicle for the examination of the relative importance of

attitudinal and normative considerations, for example, determining the behaviour of an individual with a poor self-concept.

The Theory of Reasoned Action is set out in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3:   The Theory of Reasoned Action
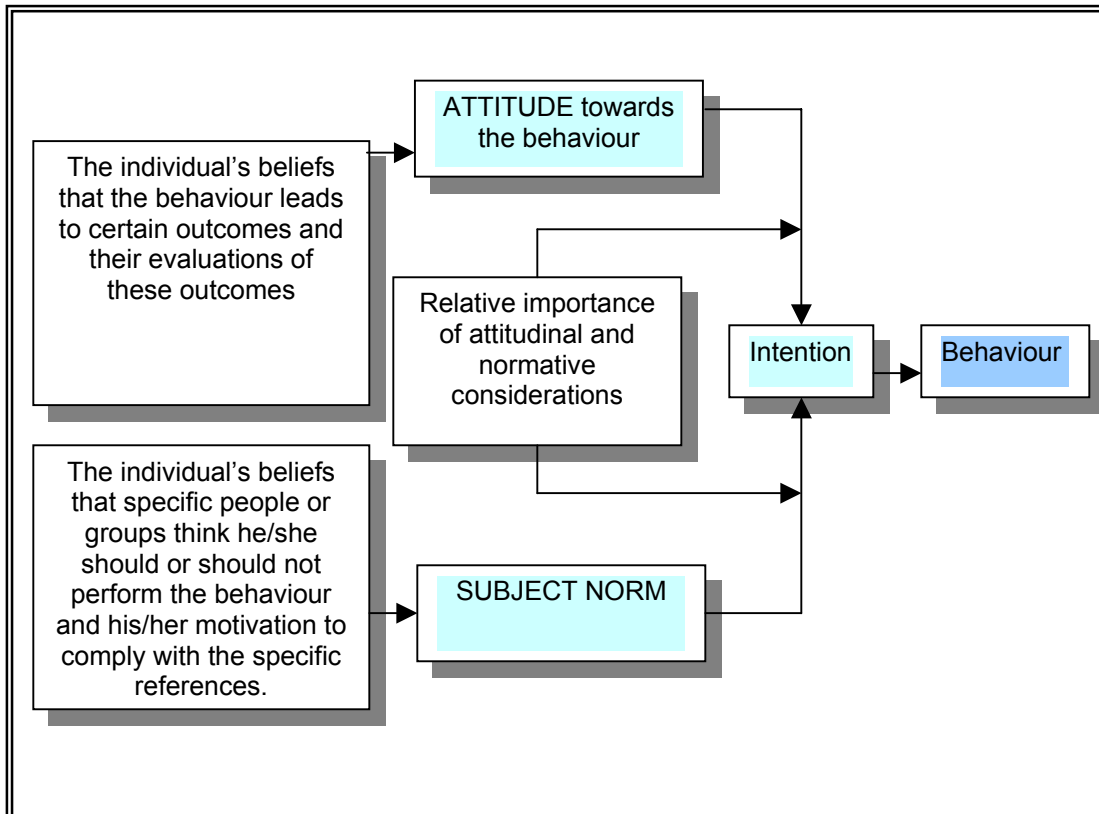
Source: Taylor (2001:3)

4.5.5   The Theory of Social Learning

In 1952, Albert Bandura began to develop his theory of Social Learning because he had come to believe that the theory that an individual's environment causes their behaviour was too simplistic. Although he felt that this theory held merit, he added that, in addition to the environment's affecting behaviour, behaviour also affects the environment. He labelled this concept *reciprocal determinism*, in other words, the world and the individual's behaviour 'cause' each other (Boeree 1998:2). Later, he began to look at personality to examine interaction among three items, namely, the environment, behaviour, and the individual's psychological processes. These psychological processes consist of an individual's ability to entertain images in the mind and in language. Boeree (1998) believes

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that once Bandura introduced imagery, he ceased to be a strict behaviourist and joined the ranks of other cognitivists. Adding imagery and language allowed Bandura to theorise more effectively about observational learning (modelling) and self-regulation.

4.5.5.1   *Observational learning or modelling*

Bandura   (cited in McGraw-Hill Companies, 2001:2) conducted a great number of experiments, which allowed him to establish that there were certain steps involved in the modelling process.

- *Attention.* Bandura believed that if a person is to learn anything, he/she has to pay attention. Also, if something puts a damper on attention, such as that a person is distracted by competing stimuli, it will decrease learning, including observational learning. Bandura also argued that some of the issues that influence attention involve the characteristics of the model; for example, if the model is colourful and dramatic, the individual will pay more attention. The same holds true if the model is attractive or prestigious, or appears to be particularly competent.

- *Retention.* Secondly, Bandura argued that a person needs to retain (remember) what he/she paid attention to. Imagery and language plays an important part in this process. We store what we have seen the model doing in the form of mental images or verbal descriptions. When what we have seen is stored in this way, we can later raise the image or description, so that it can be reproduced in our own behaviour (Boeree, 1998:3).

- *Reproduction.* This involves translating the images or descriptions into actual behaviour. Bandura adds to this by stating that a person's ability to imitate improves with practice at the behaviours involved. Furthermore, a person's abilities improve even when he/she just imagines him/herself performing.

- *Motivation.* In order to reproduce certain behaviour, an individual requires adequate motivation. Bandura mentions a number of motives:
  - past reinforcement (traditional behaviourism);
  - promised reinforcements (incentives); and
  - vicarious reinforcement (seeing and recalling that the model is reinforced).

These motivators are traditionally considered to be the issues that 'create' learning. This model suggest that motivators do not so much cause learning as cause individuals to demonstrate what they have learned.

Naturally, negative motivations also exist which provide reasons not to imitate behaviour:

- past punishment;
- promised punishment (threats); and
- vicarious punishment.

- *Self-regulation.* Self-regulation is the process whereby a person controls his/her own behaviour. Here Bandura suggests three steps:
  - *Self-observation.* A person looks at him/herself and his/her behaviour, and keeps tabs on it.
  - *Judgement.* A person compares what he/she sees with a standard. For example, people can compare their performance with traditional standards, such as social etiquette, or they can create arbitrary ones, such as reading a book once a week, or they can compete with others or with themselves.
  - *Self-response.* If a person does well in comparison with his/her standards, he/she gives him/herself self-rewarding self-responses. If people perform poorly, they give themselves self-punishing self-responses. These self-responses can range from the obvious to more covert actions (Boeree, 1998:3).

An important aspect of self-regulation is understanding the self-concept. If an individual continually finds him/herself meeting his/her own standards and lives a life filled with self-praise and self-reward, he/she will have a pleasant self-concept (high self-esteem). However, if a person continually fails to meet standards and punishes him/herself, the person will suffer from a poor self-concept (low self-esteem) (Boeree, 1998:4).

Behaviourists generally view reinforcement as effective, and punishment as fraught with problems. The same holds true for self-punishment. Bandura postulated three likely results of excessive self-punishment:

- compensation – a superiority complex, for example, delusions of grandeur;
- inactivity – apathy, boredom, depression; and
- escape – drugs, alcohol, television fantasies, and even suicide.

4.5.5.2   Overview

Boeree (1998) believes that Albert Bandura has had an enormous impact on personality theory and therapy. His behaviourist-like style makes sense to most people and his action-oriented, problem-solving approach likewise appeals to people who want to get things done, rather than philosophise about the *id*, archetypes, actualisation, and so on.

## 4.5.6   The Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model suggests that there are two basic routes to persuasion. The first is the so-called Central Route, and the second is the Peripheral Route.

The Central Route is most appropriate when the receiver is motivated to think about the message and has the ability to think about the message. If the person cares about the issue and has access to the message with minimum distractions, then that person will elaborate on the message; in other words, the central route is thought out and the person considers all sides of an argument (Cenna, 2000). Lasting persuasion is likely if the receiver thinks or rehearses favourable thoughts about the message. According to Chadwick (2002:1), a boomerang effect (moving away from the advocated position) is likely to occur if the subject rehearses unfavourable thoughts about the message. If the message is ambiguous but pro-attitudinal (in line with the receiver's attitudes) then persuasion is likely. If the message is ambiguous but counter-attitudinal, then a boomerang effect is likely.

In the second path, the Peripheral Route, if a message is ambiguous but attitudinally neutral (with respect to the receiver) or if the receiver is unable or not motivated to listen to the message, then the receiver will look for a peripheral cue (Chadwick, 2002). Peripheral cues include such communication strategies such as trying to associate the advocated position with things the receiver already thinks of in a positive way, using an expert appeal. Alternatively, one can attempt a contrast effect where one presents the advocated position after presenting several other positions, which the receiver despises. If the peripheral cue association is accepted, there may be a temporary attitude change and possibly future elaboration. If the peripheral cue is not accepted or such a cue is not present, then the individual retains the attitude he/she initially held (Chadwick, 2002).

According to Chadwick (2002), if the receiver is motivated and able to elaborate on the message and if there are compelling arguments to use, then the central route to persuasion should be used. If the receiver is unlikely to elaborate the message, or if the available arguments are weak, then the peripheral route to persuasion should be used (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4:   The Elaboration Likelihood Model
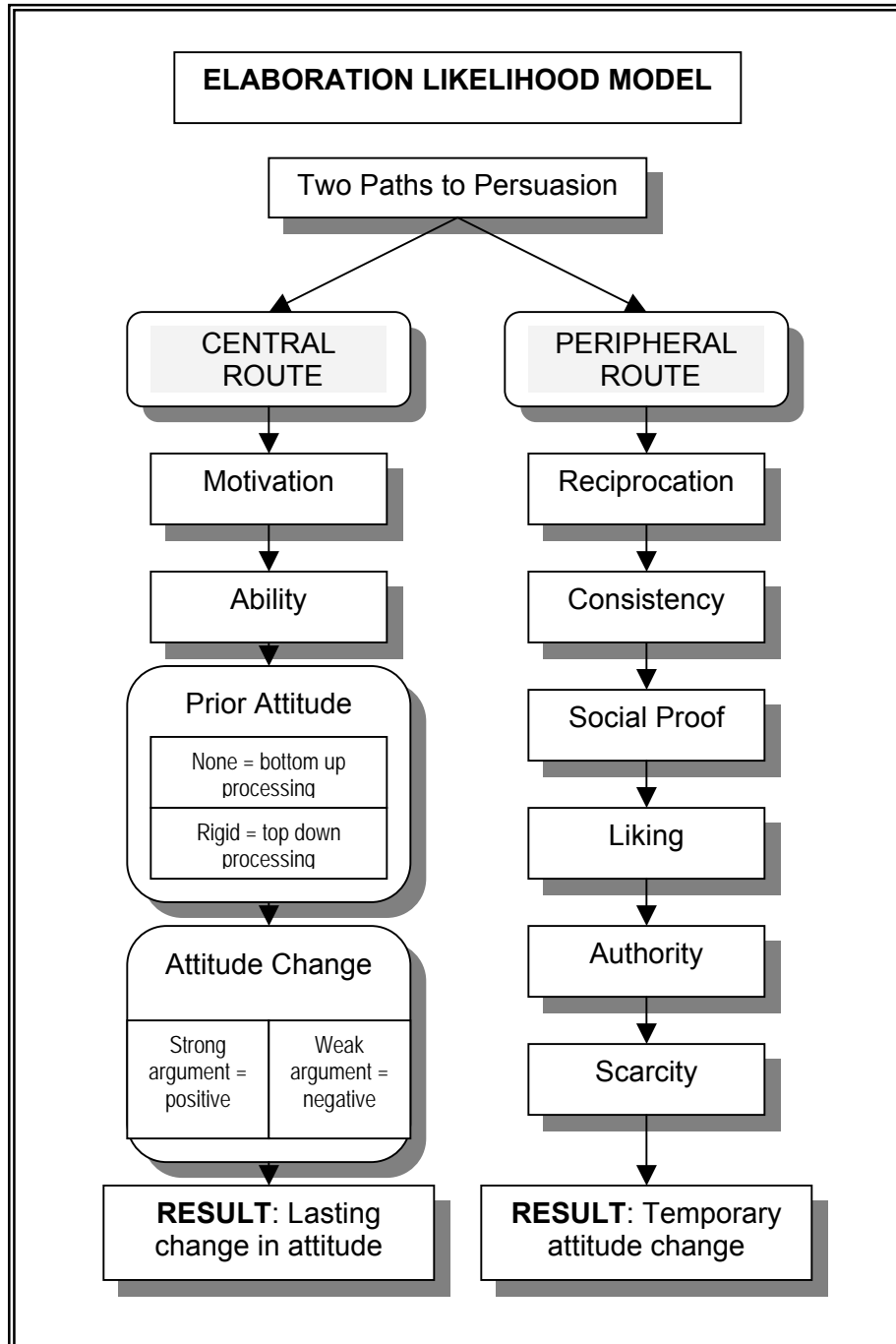
Source: Kenny (1999:1)

4.5.7   The Group Dynamics Approach Theory

In the Group Dynamics Approach, a major factor that causes people to change their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions is a discrepancy between an individual's attitude or behaviour and the group's behaviours and beliefs. 'Other people do not have to persuade you by argument; they need merely hold a position that is different from yours – and you have to be aware of that discrepancy and to need their acceptance, approval, and recognition' (Zimbardo, Ebbesen & Maslach, 1977:62). When there is an inconsistency between one person's position and that of others, the individual moves towards the normative position. The main idea of this theory is that people need to compare themselves to their relative reference groups in order to evaluate their own abilities and opinions.

Various pressures exist within groups that cause people to behave, think and even feel alike. One of these pressures is the tendency of a group of individuals to reject and dislike those who are different from other group members. The possibility of rejection from a valued group generally causes employees and others to become more like the remaining members of the group. This is referred to as *pressure toward uniformity.*

4.5.8   The Attribution Theory

When people try to understand why an individual has done a particular thing, they may attribute the cause either to something about the person's disposition or to something about the person's situation (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991:89).

Dispositional (or internal) attributions identify the causes of observed behaviour as lying within the individual. To make a dispositional attribution is to assume that the behaviour of an individual reflects some unique property of that person – the cause is assumed to be inside the individual.

Situational (or external) attributions identify factors in the social and physical environment that cause the individual to behave in a particular way. The cause is seen to be outside the individual. However, this explanation assumes that most individuals would act in the same way, and get the same results in the same situation. Also, if a situational attribution is

made, it is assumed that, without the situational factors, the individual would not engage in the observed behaviour.

In deciding whether to make a dispositional or situational attribution about observed behaviour, three factors need to be considered. Firstly, it is common to make dispositional attributions when behaviour is non-normative, that is, when the behaviour differs from what people think that most individuals would do. Secondly, a dispositional attribution is more likely when the individual whose behaviour is observed is known frequently to engage in the observed behaviour. Consistency of behaviour suggests that the behaviour can be attributed to something about the individual, and not the situation. The observed behaviour is seen as reflecting a character trait, rather than occurring in response to situational factors. Thirdly, dispositional attribution occurs when behaviour is consistent in different situations involving different stimuli (that is, when the behaviour is non-distinctive to a specific situation).

An interesting finding in terms of the Attribution Theory pertains to the fact that there are errors or biases that can distort attributions. The first is known as the *fundamental attribution error.* This is the tendency to underestimate the influence of external factors and overestimate the influence of internal factors when making judgements about the behaviour of other individuals. Western culture is all too ready to read personality and character traits into behavioural drama, and all too resistant to see stage settings as the basis for the action (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991:93). The second error is known as *self-serving bias.* This refers to the tendency for an individual to attribute his/her own success to internal factors, while placing the blame for failures on external factors (Robbins, 1996:136).

People's perceptions of individuals differ from their perceptions of inanimate objects, because non-living objects are subject to the laws of nature but have no beliefs, motives and intentions, whereas people do. The result is that when people observe an individual, they attempt to develop explanations of why that individual behaves in certain ways. Their perception and judgement of an individual's actions are influenced by the assumptions that they make about the person's internal state. This is the basis of the Attribution Theory.

4.5.9   Influencing attitudes through behaviour

The following concepts are important as they emphasise how attitudes can be influences through certain forms of behaviour.

4.5.9.1 Role-playing

Experts on interpersonal relationships advise that it is often helpful for an individual to try to take on the point of view of someone with whom they disagree. When people are facing change, it may be helpful for them to put themselves in the position of the change agent.

Role-playing requires participants to actively adopt the role of another individual. The goal is to produce changes in the participant's perceptions and evaluations of a particular situation or individual.

Sometimes just watching another member of the group enact a role may vicariously produce changes in perceptions and attitudes. However, when the individual personally enacts the role and experiences what it feels like to be on the other side of the fence, that individual may become enmeshed in a powerful situation of attitude change. Role-playing that requires the individual to actively construct and improvise the role can be more effective in changing attitudes than passive exposure to persuasive communication (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991:102).

During the 1950's, Irving Janis conducted important studies on how attitudes can be changed by role-playing. His earliest studies determined the effects of improvising a speech, advocating an initially negative position, against the effects of listening to or reading the same already prepared speech. He found that people's attitudes changed more in the direction of the speech when they had to improvise its unpopular position, than in the direction of the same speech if they merely read or listened to it.

The question arises what factors give improvisational role-playing the power to influence attitudes and behaviour. Zimbardo and Leippe (1991:102) suggest that two features appear to be responsible: self-attribution and self-persuasion.

▪   Self-attribution can be described as the process whereby individuals seek to understand why people do things in order to be able to predict and control what

happens to them. When an individual does something, he/she is almost always aware of his/her action, and is therefore able to reflect on it – just as people may be able to reflect on someone else's action.

▪ The second factor in role-playing is self-persuasion. Role-players improvise: they create a character, as well as the character's thoughts and reactions to a situation. They create a convincing portrayal, and are convinced themselves of the ideas and emotions conjured up for the role. Self-persuasion often has considerably more impact than receiving information from someone else. 'Creating ideas and feelings for yourself makes them more salient, more personally relevant, and more memorable' (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991:104).

4.5.9.2 Role-taking

Role-taking is defined as the process of interpreting the behaviour of others (Manis & Meltzer, 1972:1). The definition emphasises the importance of two concepts. The first is that role-taking is an evaluating process; the second is that at least two individuals must be involved in the interpretative process. The interpretation of role behaviour is often synonymous with the concepts of empathy and understanding. However, this does not explain the whole concept of role-taking. Role-taking is an inter-subjective phenomenon in the sense that one individual assumes the role of the other in an attempt to anticipate his/her actions and to evaluate how the other will react or respond to them. The process of interpretation is a symbolic one, as it is impossible for one individual really to 'get inside' the mind of another, or to know how the other person is going to act in a given situation (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991:104).

Another condition for accurate role-taking is that of a 'good fit' between the symbols presented and the meanings attached thereto by the interacting process. Where the fit is good, the role-taking process proceeds smoothly; where it is not, the role-taking may be inaccurate.

4.6   THE FUNCTIONS OF ATTITUDES

Attitudes express some parts of an individual's personality; for example, a person may be described to have a history of high energy and high endurance levels. This person may display a sincere interest in the affairs of the world, which may be reflected in excitement

toward most attitude objects relevant to international affairs. Here the attitudes express the *psychological condition* of the individual.

Attitudes also help individuals to adapt to their environment by providing a certain amount of predictability. Humans have an established set of reactions to a given category of attitude objects. This saves them from having to decide again, and having to start from first principles, what their reactions toward a particular attitude object should be. If they have classified an attitude object correctly and it behaves in the same way as other similar objects, they can use their previous experience as a guide and they would usually be correct about the outcome. Their attitudes also help them to adapt to their environment by making it easier to get along with people who have similar attitudes to their own set of attitudes. 'The people who really count, in our social environment, tend to have attitudes similar to ours, and often we bring our attitudes in line with the ones held by these important people' (Triandis, 1971:5).

Attitudes also allow individuals to express their fundamental values. So, for example, *ego-defensive* functions are based on attitudes that allow an individual to protect him/herself from acknowledging uncomplimentary basic truths. *Value expressive* functions are involved when the expression of particular attitudes give pleasure to the person who expresses them, because the attitudes reveal some of the basic values he/she holds dear. In addition, *knowledge* functions are served by the individual's need to give structure to the person's universe, to understand it, and to predict events.

To summarise: attitudes help us understand the world around us, protect our self-esteem, help us adjust in a complex world, and allow us to express our fundamental values.

4.7   STEREOTYPES

4.7.1   Introduction

The term 'stereotype' initially referred to a printing stamp which was used to make multiple copies from a single model or mould, but the journalist Walter Lippmann adopted the term in his 1922 book entitled *Public opinion* as a means of describing the way society set about categorising people – 'stamping' human beings with a set of characteristics (Shea, 1996:1).

4.7.2   Defining stereotypes

Stereotyping can be described as the process whereby people judge a person on the basis of their perception of the group to which the person belongs (Robbins, 1996:140).

According to Shea (1996:1), a stereotype is a standardised conception or image of a specific group of people or objects. He describes stereotypes as mental cookie cutters; in other words, 'they force a simple pattern upon a complex mass and assign a limited number of characteristics to all members of a group'. The standardised conception is held in common by the members of a group. Shea (1996:1) believes that popular stereotypes are images that are shared by those who hold a common cultural mindset, in that they share the way a culture, or significant sub-group within that culture, defines and labels a specific group of people or objects.

Stereotypes are furthermore described as direct expressions of beliefs and values. Shea (1996:1) believes that stereotypes are a valuable tool in the analysis of popular culture because, once a stereotyped has been identified, it automatically provides society with an important and revealing expression of otherwise hidden beliefs.

Stereotyping consists of three steps:
- People identify the categories by which they will sort others. This may, for example, be race, religion, gender, and so on.
- People associate particular attributes with those categories, for instance, athletic ability, speech patterns, occupations, and so on.
- Finally, people infer that all the individuals in a particular category share the attributes that they had decided belonged to that category.

An important aspect to note is that stereotypes tend to be more rigid and less open to change based on experience than the beliefs that one develops on one's own (Triandis, 1971:104). For this reason, people may pay less attention to information that is inconsistent with a stereotype they hold. This means that the greater the degree of stereotyping of someone or something, the less likely it is that new information will change the stereotypes held by one group about that person, object or situation. One of the problems of stereotypes is that, despite the fact that they may not contain a shred of truth or may be irrelevant, they may be extremely widespread. This means that many people may hold the same inaccurate perceptions, based on the false premise of a group.

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4.7.3   **Characteristics of stereotypes**

Lippmann (as quoted by Shea, 1996:2), argued that stereotypes have the following four characteristics.

- *Stereotypes are simple.* In fact, Lippmann believes that stereotypes are in fact far simpler than reality.

- *Stereotypes are acquired second-hand.* Individuals acquire (and retain) stereotypes from cultural mediators rather than from their own direct experience. Culture distils reality and then expresses its beliefs and values in stereotypical images that convince audiences of the 'truth' of the stereotype by placing it in a carefully controlled context in which there is a measure of truth to the image.

- *Stereotypes are erroneous.* All stereotypes are false. Some are less false than others, and some are less harmful than others, but all are rendered false by their nature. Stereotypes are attempts to claim that each individual in a certain group shares a set of common qualities. Since each individual is different from all other individuals, stereotypes are a logical impossibility. Even countertypes are false when they are presented as a 'new' truth about a group and escape the stereotypical label only when they are presented as possibilities rather than actualities.

- *Stereotypes are resistant to change.* Stereotypes regarding racial and gender issues can survive for an exceptionally long time.

4.7.4   The functions of stereotypes

Shea (1996:3) believes that stereotyping is a natural function of the human/cultural mind and is therefore morally neutral in itself. However, a culture endorses moral or immoral actions based on the beliefs and assumptions implicit in the simplifying stereotype, and every culture seeks to simplify a complex reality so that it can better determine how best to act in any given circumstance.

Stereotyping is a natural human function and is so common that it occasionally functions in a useful way. It is sometimes valuable to create classifications for individuals. An example

of this would be to categorise first year university students (freshmen). Often professors will develop introductory courses for first year students who are not familiar with subject matter.

Another useful function of stereotypes lies in the use of what Shea (1996:3) terms 'countertypes'. Countertypes are positive stereotypes (in other words, they arouse 'good' emotions and associate a group of people with socially approved characteristics) that evolve in an attempt to replace or counter negative stereotypes that have previously been applied to a specific group of people. Countertypes are important reflections (and shapers) of popular beliefs and values, but at least two characteristics need to be emphasised in order for good intentions not to conceal the real meaning and nature:

- *Countertypes are still stereotypes.* They are still oversimplified views of the group of people being stereotyped and cannot be accepted at face value any more than the negative stereotype they seek to replace or meliorate.

- *Countertypes are often merely surface correctives.* If one scratches an intended countertype, one often discovers an old stereotype.

A third useful function of stereotypes lies in the conventional characters in popular stories. Stereotyped characters allow the storyteller the luxury of not having to slow down to explain the motivations of every minor character in a story. This allows the author to get to the plot and to concentrate on suspense, action, and so on. For example, in a Western, one does not need to know the inner psychology of the 'bad guy'; it is enough to know that he is a murderous rustler.

Even though literary stereotypes are useful conventions in popular storytelling, it does not mean that one can ignore them as examples of significant (and potentially harmful) actual cultural beliefs and values (Shea, 1996:4). Stereotyping in imagery is often a valuable indicator of attitudes and feelings which can be very real – beliefs and values held sincerely by the audience and not only by the author. If, for example, the murderous rustler happens to be a Mexican, it is quite possible that the cultural mindset holds negative views of Mexicans.

4.8 **PREJUDICES**

Papalia and Olds (1985:611) describe prejudice as a negative attitude that is held towards someone solely because of that person's membership of some group without taking the time to get to know the person as an individual.

Prejudices may exist against a person in virtually every racial and ethnic group – the elderly, females, the handicapped, or anyone who pursues an unpopular lifestyle. Prejudices dehumanise people who are identifiably different in some way from the people who belong to the group, but whose perceptions are limited.

In the past, prejudices have played an important role in South Africa, limiting social, economic and political development of women and some ethnic groups.

4.8.1   The dynamics of prejudice

In order to understand better how prejudices function, it is important to understand how individuals learn prejudices. Papalia and Olds (1985:612) identify three major sources that lead to the formation of prejudices.

- *Prejudice and learning.* According to the learning theory, people tend to move toward societal norms so as to be liked or accepted by others. Prejudices can be learnt from an early age; children may hear adults around them expressing prejudiced attitudes and see them performing prejudiced behaviour. They may then acquire some of these prejudices.

- *Prejudice and competition.* Here prejudices may be developed amongst people who are in competition for some or other resource.

- *Prejudice and personality.* This theory proposes that certain personality types may be more prone to prejudices than others. Papalia and Olds (1985:613) offer the following: 'The authoritarian personality emerged as one that tends to think in stereotypes, is emotionally cold, identifies with power, and is intolerant of weakness in himself as well as in others.'

Cole (1995:1) believes that individuals, as children, learn many stereotypes. Often they cannot and do not test these – they learn them as facts and behave as if they were the truth. Later in life, when certain situations arise, they behave automatically on the basis of earlier stereotyped learning. Cole believes that this type of learning is not easily accessible for discussion or awareness, but simply stays with one for later effortless, seemingly automatic application. Since this learning is not tested and not challenged, it is not evaluated and not likely to be changed. Later in life, individuals learn and acquire belief systems in more active ways. They discuss, evaluate and decide upon new things that they learn. These belief systems are believed to be systems of standards and codes of behaviour that are easily re-evaluated. While they are clearly knowable and readily accessible to evaluation, they are not automatic in application. In order to behave on the basis of these 'decided' beliefs, individuals must devote time and attention to the situation and then make and apply the decision.

Conflicts sometimes arise between the two systems of 'earlier learning' and 'later learning'. Situations arise where earlier learning seems to be an automatic response. Time, attention and awareness do not always provide an opportunity for the later 'decided' belief system to come into use. The behaviour thus seems automatic and prejudiced in spite of the decision to hold a non-prejudiced belief system. This type of conflict is what Cole (1995:2) refers to as an *unintentional prejudicial response.*
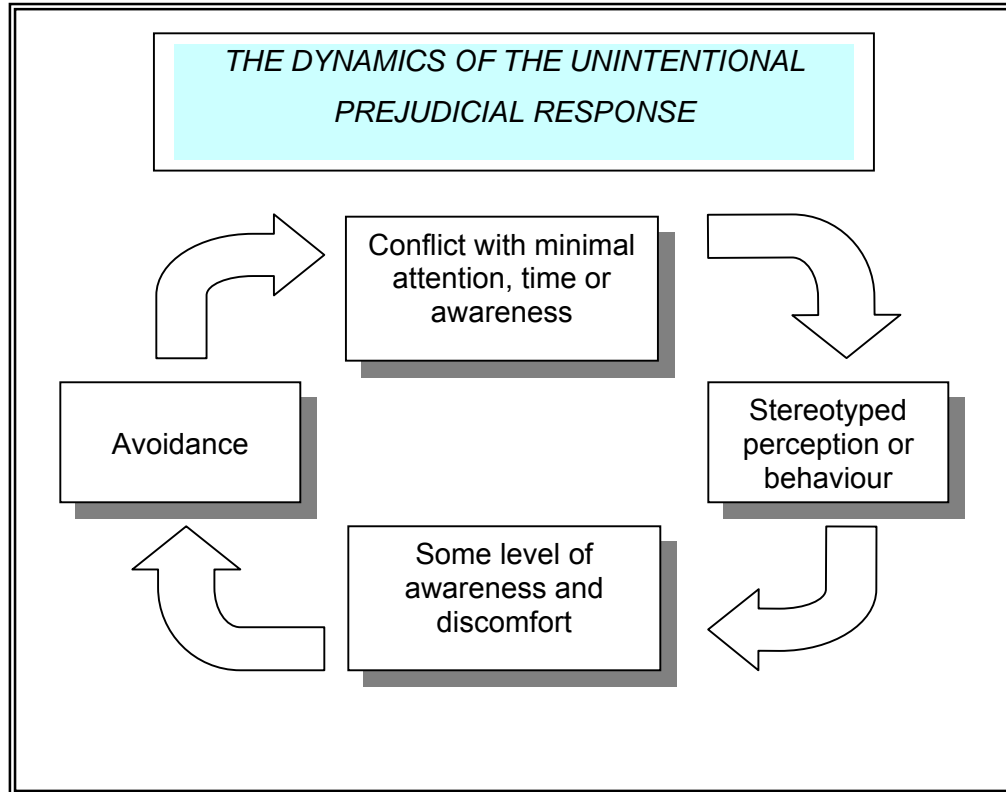
Cole believes that this type of internal conflict within people produces some personal discomfort when they behave in prejudicial ways. The greater the difference between the 'later learning' beliefs and the behaviours which come from the 'earlier learning', the greater the personal discomfort. Here Cole believes that the following dynamics occur:

- people try to avoid discomfort;
- denial is a common method of defending oneself from uncomfortable information; and
- used behavioural responses tend to stay intact.

The above factors, when considered with the other factors of 'earlier learning', result in a strong behavioural pattern that is resistant to change.

Figure 4.5:   The dynamics of the unintentional prejudicial response

THE DYNAMICS OF THE UNINTENTIONAL PREJUDICIAL RESPONSE

Conflict with minimal attention, time or awareness

Stereotyped perception or behaviour

Some level of awareness and discomfort

Avoidance

Source: Cole (1995:2)

While most people have grown up learning unintentional prejudices, others behave with intentional prejudices. Whereas an individual who behaves in a certain way due to unintentional prejudices might also behave with unintentional processes, most individuals do not behave in such a manner. However, those who behave with intentional prejudices almost always also behave with unintentional prejudices.

As these prejudices are different dynamics, knowing the difference is important if one is to confront problematic behaviour effectively.

4.8.1.1 Intentional prejudicial actions

Cole (1995:3) believes that individuals who participate in intentional prejudicial actions share some fundamental personality characteristics. He believes that they have generally had difficult childhoods; they seem to have had more physical punishment than most, and they tend to have less trust in other people and they tend to have very little ability to place themselves into others' frames of reference. They tend to see human relationships in

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terms of power and authority; they always remain on guard and have a difficult time forming close relationships.

Intentional prejudicial response is a more integrated form of behaviour and is a more integral part of the individual's identity. The integrated nature of response and deep historical patterns in the development of the personality are both factors in the strong resistance to change.

4.8.1.2   Unintentional prejudicial actions

Unintentional prejudicial actions do not allow the observer to know the intentions of an individual, as the actions are automatic and not consciously decided upon by the individual at the moment of action. They may be in agreement or disagreement with the individual's intentions.

Cole (1995:3) is of the opinion that in order to break a pattern of unintentional prejudicial behaviour, the following needs to occur:

- The individual needs to remove the guilt factor so the process can be acknowledged and discussed. This results in a reduction of the denial factor.
- The individual needs to develop an awareness of the dynamics that result in this behaviour.
- The individual needs to increase his/her association with people who might not trigger his/her own unintentional prejudicial response.
- The individual needs to practise thinking non-prejudicial thoughts and performing non-prejudicial behaviour in many settings and in many ways until the new behaviour becomes automatic.

While the above steps may appear simple, there are other intervening dynamics that complicate the process; for example, removing denial is often more complicated than it may appear.

4.8.2   Prejudicial relationships

Cole (1995:4) lists the following three physical metaphors and principles in order to make the relationships between prejudiced people and those who are the targets of prejudicial behaviour more clear and understandable.

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4.8.2.1   Principle I – Direct opposition is ineffective

Any force, which is directed toward a target, can be redirected much more easily than it can be confronted, resisted and stopped. Figure 4.6 illustrates that any individual or group who is the target of a force is not located in a position to provide an efficient or effective intervention for their own defence. An oncoming force cannot be effectively redirected from a position that is the target of that same force. From the target, a second force can only resist the oncoming force and thus absorb its full impact. In order then to protect the individual, it is necessary that the redirection of any force should come from a different vector.

The targets of prejudicial thinking or actions are already devalued in the eyes of prejudiced individuals. Hence, any action taken by these individuals is seen as less valid because of their devaluation. In addition to the individuals' being devalued, their action also brings an oppositional force into the situation. It often creates more unpleasantness than no resistance. Oppositional positions, while they may be completely 'correct', often trigger resistance within observers, as well as within the individual who perceives him/herself as the target of that force (Cole, 1995:4).
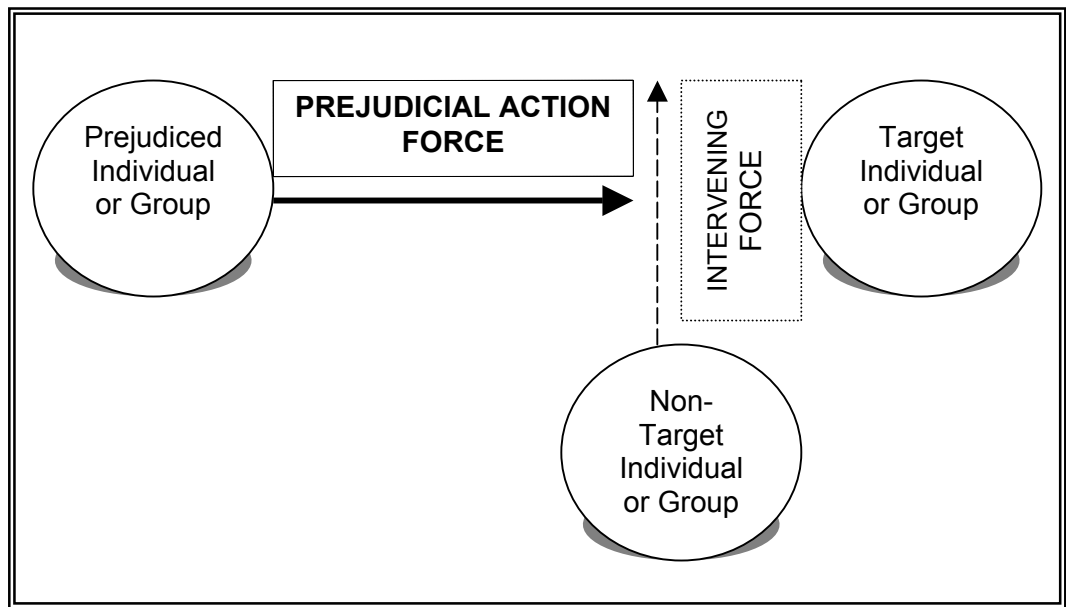
Figure 4.6:   Direct opposition is ineffective

PREJUDICIAL ACTION FORCE

Prejudiced Individual or Group

Target Individual or Group
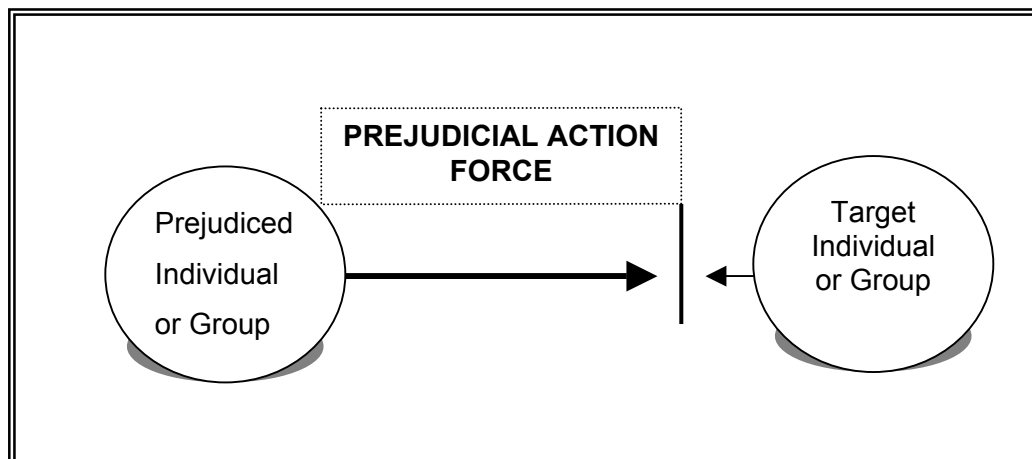
Source: Cole (1995:4)

Intervention is far more effective if it comes from an individual who is not targeted by the prejudice (see Figure 4.7).

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Figure 4.7:   The opportunity of the non-target person

Source: (Cole, 1995:4)

4.8.2.2 Principle II – Intervention near the origin

The second principle has to do with the location of, or point at which the force is redirected. The earlier the force is redirected, the less energy it requires for the same effect. Just as a force meeting its target requires the greatest change of direction, a force leaving its origin requires the least change in direction to protect the target.

Therefore, in order to redirect a force effectively, the target position is the weakest position to respond from, and a force from any other position can more effectively redirect prejudicial force than a force from the target position (see Figure 4.8).

4.8.2.3 Principle III – Inactive support for prejudicial activities

All actions have an equal and opposite reaction; therefore anyone who experts a force will create a force in the opposite direction. This implies that without support for an individual's position, it is not possible to direct a force toward others without being moved by the equal or opposite force.

Given this principle, it is clear that whose who are acting in prejudicial ways have support from people around them. Cole (1995:5) believes that the support may be defused and not
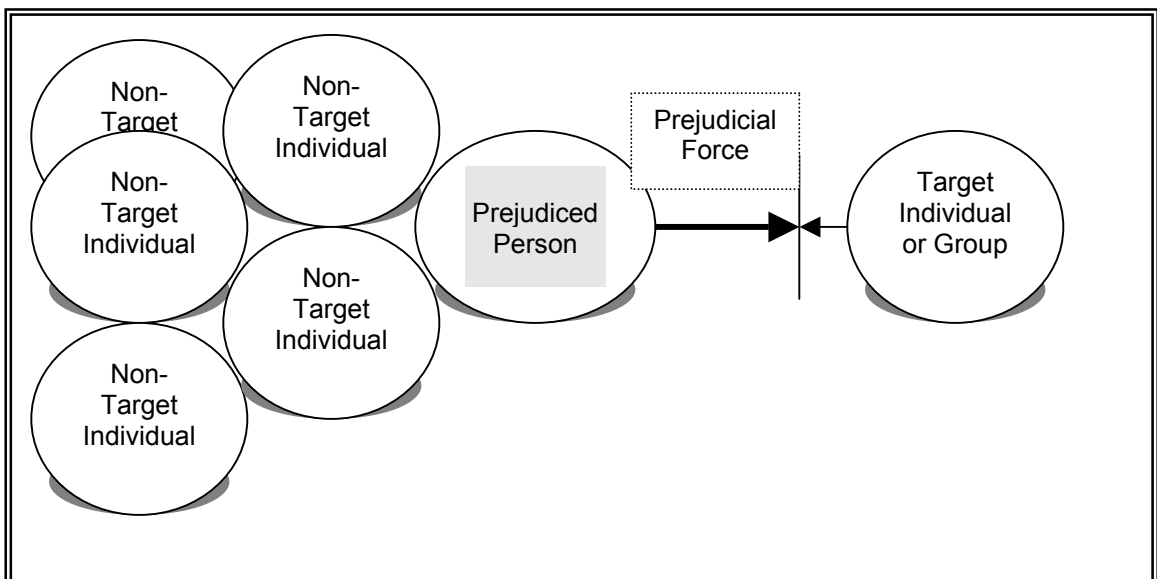
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active, but it supports the actions of the prejudicial behaviour. If the support is then removed, the prejudicial actions that it supports can no longer exist (see Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.8:   Intervention near the origin
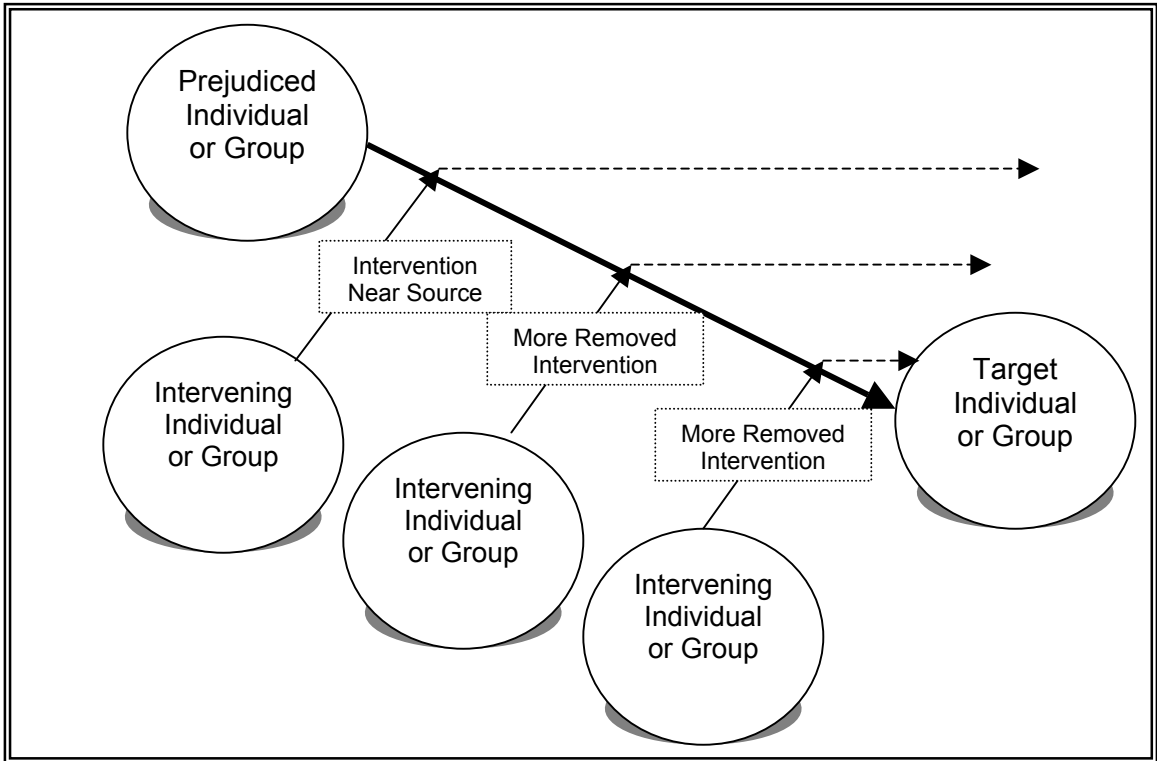
Source: Cole (1995:5)

Figure 4.9:   Inactive support for prejudicial activities

Source: Cole (1995:5)

4.8.3   Myths regarding prejudice reduction

According to Cole (1995:5), the following myths exist with regard to reducing prejudice:

- *A strong desire for the reduction of prejudicial behaviour will reduce prejudicial behaviour.*
  Desire in this regard, is not enough. A strong desire to be prejudice-free without some comfort and a level of skills to relate cross-culturally and may even produce anxiety that will appear abrupt and/or hostile.

- *Individuals should just stop thinking prejudiced thoughts.*
  The repression of stereotyped thoughts will not reduce prejudiced thinking but will simply repress it for a short time, whereupon the stereotyped thought or image will then return with greater strength. It is far more effective to replace the stereotyped thought or image with a more positive image or thought.

- *Individuals with the strongest prejudices need prejudice reduction the most.*
  There is little evidence that those with the strongest prejudices will be changed by prejudice reduction in any positive way. When strongly prejudiced individuals take part in prejudice reduction activities, their prejudices often grow stronger. There seems to be more support for managing their prejudicial behaviour through environmental discouragement. The most likely outcome from providing 'prejudice reduction' for the strongly prejudiced is a backlash because the process threatens the individual's way of being.

- *If individuals spend time together with people about whom they have learned negative stereotypes, the prejudicial thinking will fade.*
  The process of simply coming together is not enough to eliminate prejudices. Certain other conditions need to exist. Individuals with equal status and power need to come together, and they should not need to compete with each other so that they do not benefit from the other's misfortune. They need to come together and do something that is co-operative and successful. To bring individuals together in competitive relationships or with unequal power, or into a process that results in a negative outcome, is not conducive to reducing prejudices.

- *Whenever an individual does something that is to the disadvantage of others simply because of their skin colour or gender (or other factor), it is an intentional act of prejudicial behaviour.*

  Stereotypes in culture are widely known and influence behaviour greatly. Often sudden or quick decisions are made and people do not focus their attention upon the justification for the decision made on the basis of stereotyped information, even when this stereotyped information may be in conflict with the individual's beliefs.

- *Those individuals who behave in prejudicial ways are not bothered by their own behaviour.*

  Some individuals experience guilt or are self-critical after taking subtle stereotype-based actions that are in disagreement with their beliefs. This is, however, not true of the strongly prejudiced personalities who seem to experience very little remorse (Cole, 1995:5).

4.8.4   In conclusion

Prejudices exist. They are an undeniable force within society, so prevalent that they can be found within the most open-minded people and in the most enlightened organisations. Prejudices take their toll despite the best of intentions.

To recognise the pervasive power of prejudices is to take the first step toward defeating them. Assigning blame or guilt, however, often only yields avoidance behaviour, denial and defensiveness. Nevertheless, prejudicial thinking can be greatly diminished through education.

4.9   ATTITUDE MEASUREMENT

An attitude survey can be used to test a respondent's conviction or emotionals about an object or subject. It is therefore used to determine what a person's physical behaviour towards a psychological object might be.

4.9.1   The history of attitude measurement

In 1932, Likert developed the method of summated ratings. The Likert scale requires individuals to tick a box to report whether they 'strongly agree', 'agree', are 'undecided',

'disagree', or 'strongly disagree' with a large number of items concerning an attitude object or stimulus (Watkins, 2001:1).

In 1944, Guttman (Watkins, 2001:1) suggested multidimensional scales, as opposed to uni-dimensional scales such as those developed by Thurstone and Likert, that could measure attitude. Guttman noted that there should be a multidimensional view of the attitude construct; he developed the Scalogram Analysis, Cumulative Scaling, or, as it is often referred to, Guttman scaling. The major characteristic of this scale is that the response to one item helps predict the responses to other items.

Later, Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum developed the Semantic Differential Technique. Other methods have been developed since. Each development has resulted in an extension of the attitude construct; however, there appear to be a lot of commonalities among the different methods (Watkins, 2001:1).

4.9.2   Attitude rating scales

Individual's attitudes can be measured by means of a quantitative technique by utilising rating scales such as:

- *Likert scale.* Respondents are asked to rate how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement.

- *Semantic differential.* A concept (person, product, etc.) is presented on a seven-point bipolar rating scale. Bipolar adjectives are anchored at the ends of the seven-point scales.

- *Numerical scale.* This is a type of semantic differential scale where numerical response categories are provided instead of just spaces.

- *Staple scale.* This scale uses a single adjective (the semantic differential scale uses two adjectives) and places numerical values as response categories on either side.

- *Constant sum scale.* Respondents are asked to divide a constant sum of points between different stimuli. The greater the number of points assigned, the higher the rating.

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- *Graphic rating scales.* Respondents are provided with some form of graphic continuum and are asked to represent their views in the appropriate position on the continuum.

- *Paired comparison technique.* Respondents are given the task of sorting items on the basis of perceived similarity, or some other attribute (Swinder, 1999:1).

4.9.3   Methods of measurement

Attitude measuring techniques can be divided into two main groups: those that are based on questioning, and those that are based on observation (a third group directed at analysing data has also been identified). The following section offers a brief description, as well as the main advantages and disadvantages for each of these techniques.

4.9.3.1 Questionnaire

'A survey is a form of planned collection of data for the purpose of description as a guide to action or for the purpose of analysing the relationships between certain variables. Surveys are usually conducted on a fairly large scale, as contrasted with laboratory experiments. To gather data, social surveys use questionnaires and interviews, attitude scales, and projective techniques' (Oppenheim, 1973:1).

- Advantages of questionnaire techniques

    o According to Boyd, Westfakk and Stasch (1985:111), the greatest advantage of the questionnaire is its *versatility.* Questioning respondents about the problem can solve almost any problem. Knowledge, opinions, motivations and intentions can all be used to find solutions.

    o Another advantage of the questionnaire method is its *speed and cost.* Questioning people is usually much faster and more cost-effective than observing respondents. Both time and money are saved.

- The questionnaire technique also has certain advantages in terms of the level of objectivity of measurement, as it provides for a quantitative treatment of responses (Von Haller Glimer, 1971:254).

- The questionnaire technique promotes anonymity and may result in more honest responses.

- Questionnaires are more convenient for respondents to complete.

- Disadvantages of questionnaire techniques

  - There is a limited ability to discover measurement errors.

  - The questionnaire technique relies on the participants' ability to recall behaviour or events.

  - The questionnaire technique is not suited to answering questions related to 'How?' and 'Why?'

  - A fourth limitation is that there is limited opportunity for probing or providing for clarification.

  - Fifthly, the questionnaire is a difficult technique to use in low-literacy groups.

4.9.3.2 Interviewing

Talking with people in order to get information with regard to their attitudes is one of the most often used methods. In a 'closed' interview, there is an attempt to gain answers to predetermined questions. This is in contrast to the 'open' interview where the individual is encouraged to express his/her opinions on any topic he/she wishes. Counselling and exit interviews may also be used as sources to uncover information about people's attitudes.

- Advantages of interview techniques

  - Interviewing allows for greater depth of information to be gathered than in the case of the questionnaire technique.

- o The interviewer has the opportunity to clarify answers given by the respondent.

- o The interview technique is a good method to use with low literacy respondents.

- o It allows the interviewer to observe the respondent's non-verbal cues and gestures.

- Disadvantages of interview techniques

  - o The greatest disadvantage of this method is the unwillingness of respondents to provide information. This may be due to several reasons: the interviewers may be unknown to respondents, as may the subject matter and interviewing techniques. It is important for the interviewer to familiarise him/herself with general methods that can be used to reduce such unwillingness (Boyd et al., 1985:112).

  - o The second disadvantage may be described as the inability of respondents to provide information. Even if respondents are willing to give information, they may not be able to give accurate information. This may be because they do not possess the necessary information, or because a large number of physical behaviours are subconscious.

  - o A third limitation is the effect of the questioning process on the results obtained. As the interviewing process creates a hypothetical situation, it is easier for respondents to give answers that are removed from reality (Boyd *et al.*, 1985:112).

4.9.3.2   Observation

Observation is described as a process where behaviours, interactions and processes are measured by directly watching participants. With this technique, a participant may act as observer (in other words, the evaluator's role as observer is known to the group being studied and is secondary to the his/her role as participant), or an observer may act as a participant (in other words, the evaluator's observer role is known and his/her primary role is to assess an issue).

- Advantages of observation techniques

  The following advantages of observation techniques are recognised by Boyd *et al*. (1985:148):

  o The researcher does not have to rely on the willingness and the ability of respondents to receive information.

  o The subjective element of questioning is therefore eliminated. However, observation is not entirely objective as observers are still subject to error.

  o The observation technique is a good way of collecting data in a more natural setting.

- Disadvantages of observation techniques

  o It may be impractical to keep respondents from knowing that they are being observed. This may result in a biasing effect, which is similar to that which is found in questionnaire techniques.

  o The most important disadvantage is the cost involved in observation techniques. It is important that observers should be trained properly. Another cost increasing factor is that observers may have to wait aimlessly until certain phenomena occur.

  o The quantification and summary of data may be difficult.

  o Observation may be very time-consuming and requires highly trained observers.

4.9.3.4   Data collection and analysis techniques

This method analyses historical or archival data from records and personal accounts to ascertain what happened in the past. It is especially useful for establishing a baseline or background on participants prior to measuring outcomes.

- Advantages of data collection and analysis techniques

  o This technique is effective, as it does not rely on a subjective memory recalled by a respondent; it relies on documented facts.

  o It may provide a baseline that can assist with the interpretation of outcome findings.

- Disadvantages of data collection and analysis techniques

  o It can be difficult to obtain useful historical data.

  o This method relies on data that may be incomplete, missing or inaccurate.

  o It may be difficult to verify the accuracy of documents or data.

4.10   INTEGRATED CONCLUSION

Attitudes are the results of the feelings and beliefs that individuals have about themselves, as well as about other people and situations. Attitudes directly influence the treatment and behaviour towards these aspects. An individual's attitudes may be directed to many things, including ideas and people (Lamberton & Minor, 1995:63).

Attitude modelling enables individuals to understand better the process whereby attitudes are formed and changed. All attitudes consist of belief, feeling and behavioural components and largely determine how individuals will react (or not react) to a certain subject or object. The basic sources of attitudes can be related to observation, socialisation and feedback. In other words, if an individual has observed a female pilot making many pilotage or communication errors, he/she might adopt the attitude that she is a poor aviator. Socialisation may further enforce this belief, especially if the individual deems that his/her own pilotage skills to be superior. When feedback is received that confirms this observation, for example, if a female student pilot is reprimanded for poor pilotage practices, the attitude that the individual holds that females make poor pilots may be further enforced.

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With enough positive enforcement of an individual's attitude toward a certain subject or object, the person's belief(s) may be expanded to include all such subjects or objects. For example, he/she might believe that all females make poor pilots. As discussed in the literature, stereotypes are largely simpler than reality is. While it may be true that there are some women who are not suited to the field of aviation, this can be equally true of some males. Stereotypes are also erroneous and may in fact be harmful to the subject or object to which it is directed. Stereotypes are very resistant to change and tend to be long-lasting. To continue with the example of women making poor aviators, this stereotype has been around since pioneer aviation, even when female pilots performed in a manner that was superior to the performance of many male pilots. To this day, there are people who still hold the belief that women should not fly, even though women have a long history of exceptional performance in this capacity.

In the same vein, people may hold a prejudice towards a subject or object simply because of its membership within some group. So, for example, all women may be thought of as poor pilots, simply because they are women.

To have a better understanding of the preceding concepts is to have a better ability to address negative attitudes, stereotypes or prejudices. This holds true not only for the aviation industry, but may have greater implications in the political, economic and social spheres.

Ways and means of attitude measurement have also been discussed, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the techniques concerned. The various theories of how attitudes come about and operate (discussed above) have been applied in the construction of a questionnaire designed to determine whether attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices towards female aviators exist, and if so, the extent of these beliefs. This aspect of the study is discussed in the next chapter.