

# This Week's Citation Classic®

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Triandis H C. *Attitude and attitude change*. New York: Wiley, 1971. 232 p.  
[Department of Psychology, University of Illinois, Champaign, IL]

The book covers definitions of attitudes, functions, basic processes, attitudes and behavior, measurement, attitude theories, attitude formation, social and personality determinants, and attitude change. The roles of the source, message, channel, and audience in attitude change are discussed. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI)® indicates that this book has been cited in over 195 publications.]

Harry C. Triandis  
Department of Psychology  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
University of Illinois  
Champaign, IL 61820

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In the late 1960s Dan Katz asked several social psychologists to write short books that, in different combinations, could be used for a flexible course introducing social psychology. Only a couple of those asked wrote their books (myself included), so the series never materialized. However, this book sold 15,000 copies and was translated into German and Spanish.

This probably happened because it was the first book on attitudes written for undergraduates. Earlier books were written for graduate students and professionals, yet many professionals outside the field (e.g., advertisers, political scientists) are interested in the topic. Perhaps it has been widely quoted because it is accessible to a wide readership who do not want to deal with jargon or details.

My aim was to communicate as clearly as possible and to summarize the widest possible literature. I also tried to challenge the students with extra readings and difficult questions that required hard thinking.

This was my first book. Achieving clear communication was important to me, for I have always liked writing. Since I was raised in Greece and English was my fourth foreign language, it was a special challenge for me to "master" it to the point of writing it without help from others.

After finishing my undergraduate work in engineering at McGill University, I worked as an engineer. During that time, writing in English was painful, but a very kind supervisor worked closely with me to improve this skill. He was a frustrated professor, an MA in history, who could not find work in his field. Later, as I wrote my PhD dissertation in social psychology at Cornell University, W.W. Lambert, who directed it, was also helpful. Finally, my wife helped me a great deal, particularly in suppressing the social science jargon.

The review of the book in *Contemporary Psychology* was enthusiastic. John Bringham praised it but commented that I had given very little room to dissonance theory. I, however, had a feeling in the mid-1960s that dissonance had already had its day. I felt that too much effort was spent on dissonance and not enough on the attitude-behavior relationship, so I covered many points that Ajzen, who took my course on attitudes at Illinois, and Fishbein, who has been my colleague here for 25 years, later incorporated in their excellent 1975 book.<sup>1</sup> I followed this line on my own, also, and published a model of the attitude-behavior relationship in 1980.<sup>2</sup> My book on interpersonal behavior<sup>3</sup> used that model to summarize a broad literature.

I doubt that any of the honors I have received were directly linked to the book on attitudes, but certainly it did not do any harm when running for office, for example, for president of the Division of Social and Personality Psychology of the American Psychological Association, to have the name recognition that comes from a widely used book.

Perhaps the key to why the book has been so widely quoted is that I enjoyed writing it.

1. Fishbein M & Ajzen I. *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: an introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975. 578 p.
2. Triandis H C. Values, attitudes, and interpersonal-behavior. *Nebr. Symp. Moniv.* 27:195-260, 1980.
3. ————. *Interpersonal behavior*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1977. 329 p.