Lecture: Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviour

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Learning Outcomes

After the session and appropriate reading, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of how the belief/attitude-behaviour relationship has been conceptualised by social psychologists.
- Have an understanding of how attitudes develop.

Lecture Outline

- Definitions and conceptual distinctions
  - components of attitudes
- Development of attitudes
- Functions / purpose of attitudes
  - motivation, information processing, consistency models
- Attitude-behaviour relationship – expectancy value approaches

Attitudes

- "……the most distinctive and indepensible concept in…….psychology" (Allport, 1954, p43).

- True for contemporary psychology (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Olson & Zanna, 1993).

Importance of Attitudes

- Psychologists aim to explain/predict behaviour.
- Attitudes influence behaviour.
- Behaviour influences attitudes.
- Attitudes may serve as markers / indicators / predictors of behaviour.
- Changing behaviour may be dependent upon changing attitudes.

Attitudes: Approaches

- Main approaches to the definition of attitudes.
  - Multidimensional definition (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).
  - Unidimensional definition (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981)

Definitions

- "Attitudes are enduring mental representations of various features of the social or physical world. They are acquired through experience and exert a direct influence on subsequent behaviour" (Baron & Byrne, 1991)
- "Attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1)

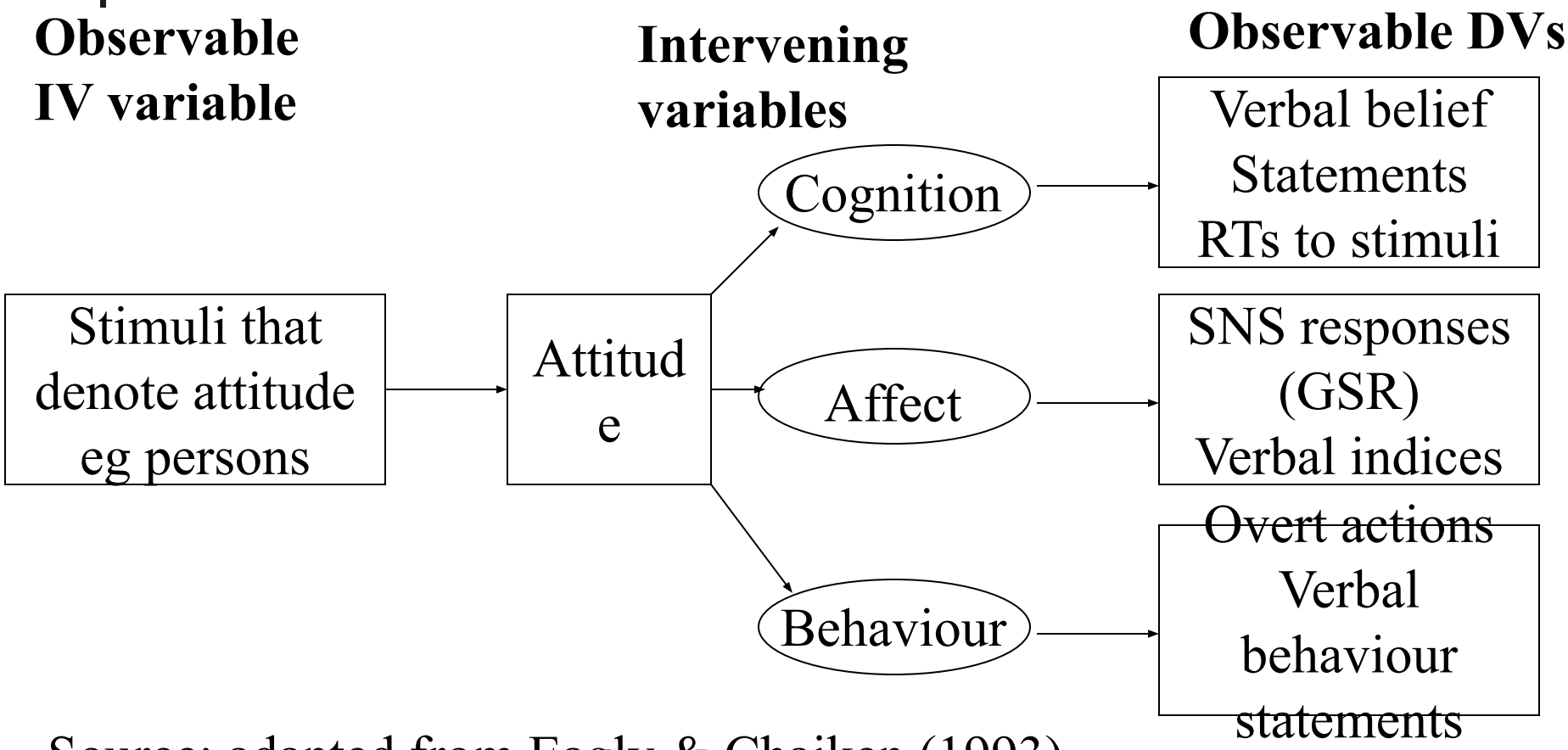
Multidimensional Definition

- "…..a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour....Evaluating refers to all classes of evaluative responding, whether overt or covert, cognitive, affective or behavioural" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1).

Multidimensional Approach

- Three-component model.
  - Cognitive component - thoughts, beliefs, opinions about attitude object.
  - Affective component - feelings or emotions about the attitude object.
  - Conative / behavioural component - actions, behaviours with regards the attitude object.

Multidimensional Approach



Source: adapted from Eagly & Chaiken (1993), p. 10

Unidimensional Approach

- Lack of consistency between cognition and behaviour with affect.
- Affect only reliable indicator of attitude as an evaluation.
- Distinction between:
  - beliefs about an object
  - feelings (i.e. Attitude) about the object
  - behavioural-intention - attitude-relevant action

Unidimensional Definition

- "…..the term attitude should be used to refer to a general , enduring positive or negative feeling about some person, object or issue" (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, p. 7).

Attitude as an Evaluative Response to Social Object

Response mode	Response Category		
	Affect	Cognition	Behaviour
Verbal	Expressions of feeling towards att. object	Expression of beliefs about att. object	Expressions of behavioural intentions towards att. object
Nonverbal	Physiological responses to att. object	Perceptual responses (e.g. RT) to att. object	Overt behavioural responses to att. object

Adpated from: Ajzen (1988)

Attitude Formation

- Attitudes are learned by same principles as other learned responses (Allport, 1935)
  - classical conditioning (Staats & Staats, 1958; Berkowitz & Knurek, 1969)
  - operant / instrumental conditioning (Verplanck, 1955; Hildum & Brown, 1965)
  - social learning (Bandura, 1986)

Conditioning and Attitudes

- Staats & Staats (1958)

Positive/negative words (UCS)	+	(CS)	Nationality

= Ratings of pleasantness (CR)

Functions of Attitudes

- Guiding information processing
- Cognitive consistency theories (Heider, 1946; Frey & Gaska, 1993)
  - Dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959)
- A pessimistic account…….
  - *'The only completely consistent people are dead'* (Aldous Huxley, novelist, 1894-1963).

Attitudes and Behaviour

- Guiding behavioural decisions.
- Multidimensional definition:
  - Relationship between cognitive and affective part and behavioural part.
- Low correlation between attitude and behaviour (Sutton, 1998)
- Wicker (1969) – .00 to .30 range in att-behaviour correlation
- e.g. LaPiere (1934) - Chinese travelling study (first of it's kind!)

Attitudes and Behaviour

- Explanation for low correspondence.
  - Do attitudes predict behaviour?
  - Question too global / undifferentiated (Stahlberg & Frey, 1996)
  - When are attitudes and behaviour correlated?
  - Which processes influence the association?
  - Correspondence hypothesis (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977)
    - Action, target, context, time
    - Best correlation when attitude and behaviour are compatible in action, target, context & time

Correspondence H_1: Example

Attitudinal Measure	**Correlation**
Att. to contraception	.08
Att. to oral contraception (object)	.32
Att. to using oral contraception (action + object)	.53
Att. to using oral contraception during next 2 years (action + object + time)	.57

Davidson & Jaccard (1979)

Expectancy-Value Approaches

- Expectancies about outcomes related to a behaviour *plus* value (valence) attributed to the behaviour guides enactment or non-enactment.
- Decision making models
  - Subjective-expectancy-utility Theory (Edwards, 1977)
  - Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977)
  - Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1988, 1991)

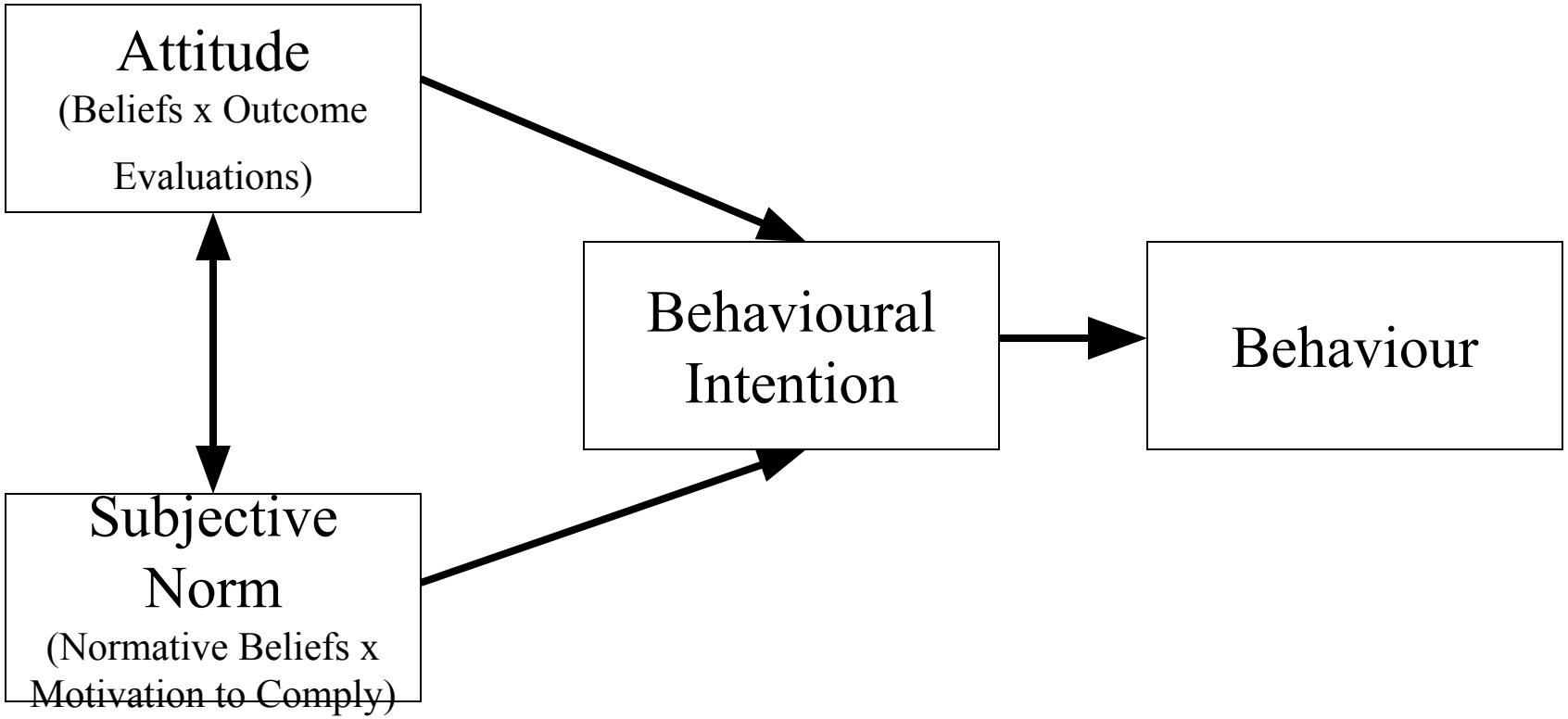
TRA (Fisbein & Ajzen, 1977)

- How beliefs/attitudes have their effects on behaviour.
- Behaviour is *volitional* (conscious control over how we behave)
- Immediate antecedent of behaviour is *intention* to behave
- Form an intention (via past experience of behaving in similar way) from previously developed behavioural beliefs (attitude) and normative belief-based factors

TRA

- Expectancy-value components for outcomes specific beliefs and normative beliefs
- Multiplicative analysis undertaken between expectancies and valence
- Positive beliefs about behaviour and increased perceived normative beliefs predict increased intention to behave in that way which in turn predict actual observed behaviour

TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977)



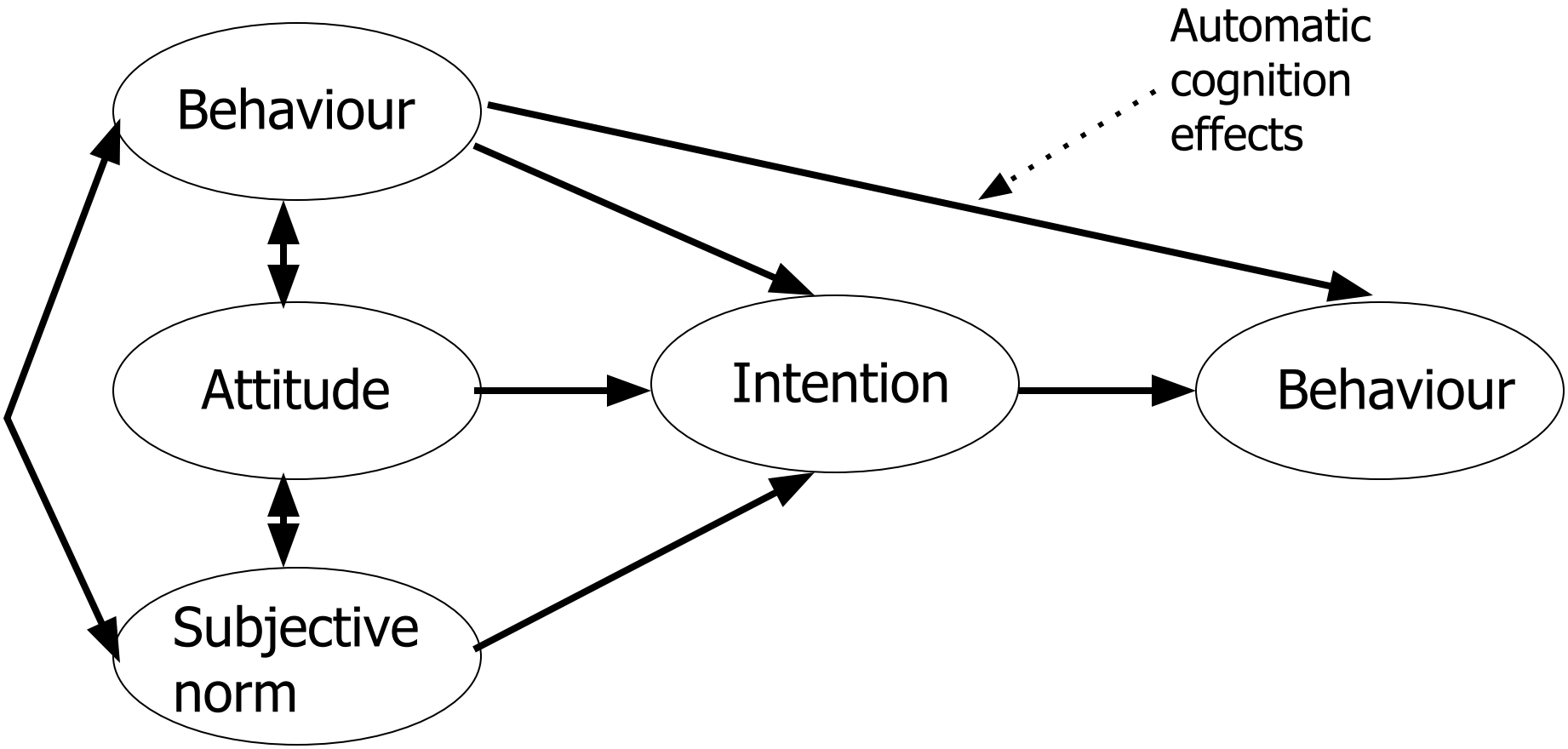
TRA: Evaluation (1)

- Intention predict by more factors than TRA assumes
  - Perceived moral obligation (Schwartz & Tessler, 1972) – beliefs about right or wrong (internalised structures)
  - Anticipated regret (Richard et al, 1995)
  - Self-identity (Biddle et al, 1987)
    - Behaviour has become part of self-identities
    - Becomes stronger as behaviour is repeated

TRA: Evaluation (2)

- Influence of past behaviour on present behaviour
  - Direct effect – not via intention
  - Indirect effect – via intention
  - Direct & indirect effects
- Habit formation & development:
  - Bentler & Speckart (1979, 1981)
  - Triandis (1980)

Bentler & Speckart (1979)



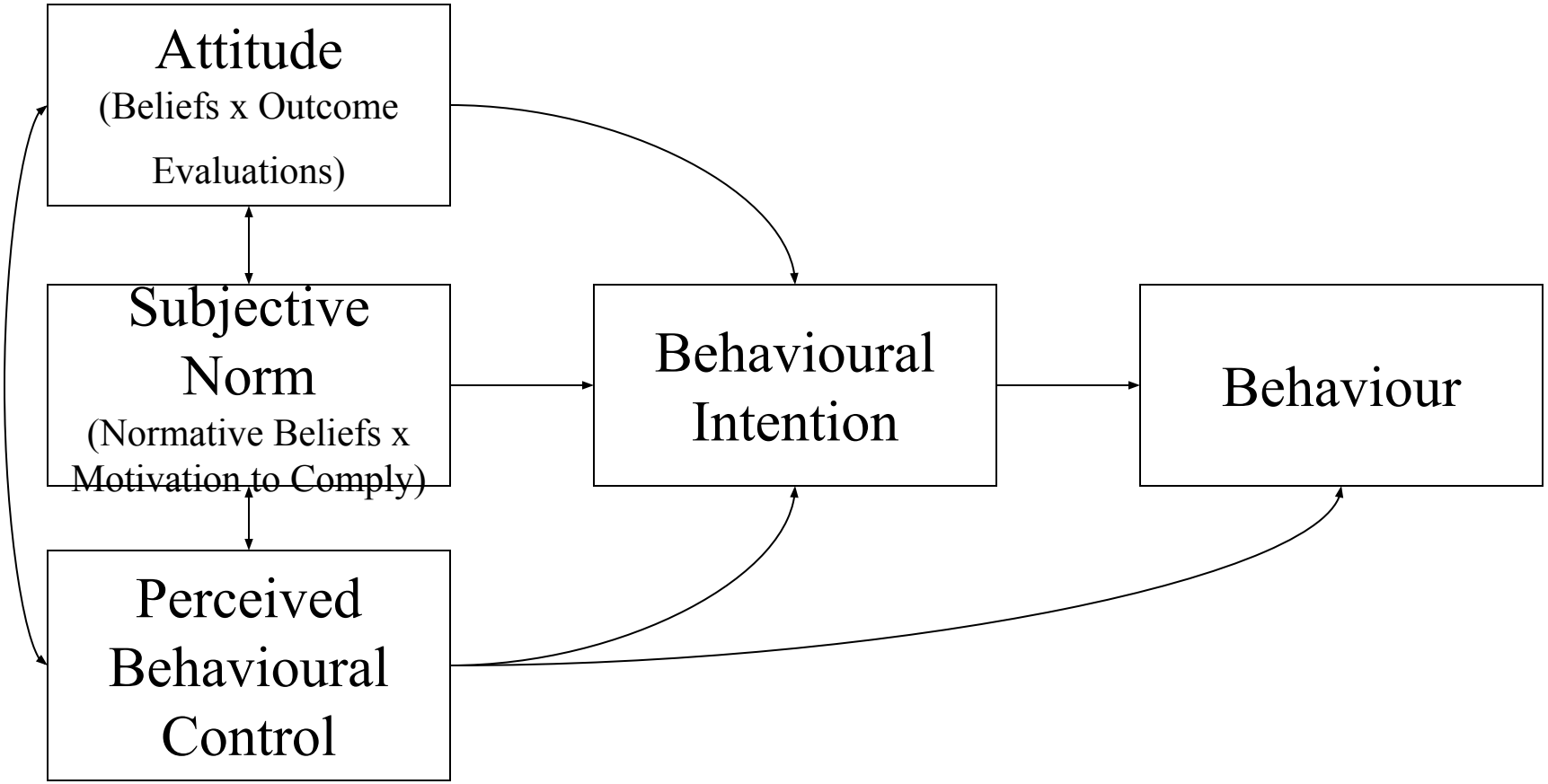
Triandis' (1977, 1980)

- Specified *habit* as part of the intention-behaviour relationship
- "[S]ituation specific sequences that are or have become automatic" (Triandis, 1980, p. 204)
- Number of times act performed in past
- Routine through repetition (learning)
- No conscious decision to act required
- Behaviour joint outcome of behavioural intention and habit

Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1988)

- Focuses on behaviour that is *non-volitional* (e.g. addiction)
- Introduces perceived behavioural control (PBC)
  - Beliefs about control over doing the behaviour
  - Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1991)
  - Ease / difficulty of behaving
- PBC predicts intention to behave
- PBC also predicts actual behaviour independently of intention
  - Actual control vs. perceived control

TPB (Ajzen, 1988, 1991)



When Attitudes Predict Behaviour?

- Attitudes based on direct experience show a stronger link
- If the time period between measurement of the attitude and the behaviour is short the link should be stronger (for LaPiere the gap was 6 months)
- Stable attitudes e.g. often general ones such as our attitude to ourself (self-esteem) show a stronger link
- When attitude is relevant to the behaviour

Applied Implications

- "Behavioural change can not occur without attitude change having taken place" (Schwerin & Newell, 1981, p.7)
- TRA & TPB have both been used to change behaviour
  - eg 1: Quine et al (2002) – child helmet wearing
  - eg 2: Parker (2002) – speeding behaviour

The MODE model (Fazio, 1990)

- Conditions when attitudes predict behaviour automatically
- **M**otivation and **O**pportunities as **De**terminants
- If motivation & opportunity to think deliberatively is ***low*** attitudes will be activated immediately (automatically)
- If motivation & opportunity for deliberation is ***high*** automatic relationship overridden

Implicit activation of attitudes

- *Representational set* for specific attitudinal objects developed through learning.
- On mere presentation of attitude object such set becomes active in long term memory and is easily accessible.
- Guides behavioural response to object (i.e. implicit preference)
- See https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit

Summary

- What are attitudes?
  - Mental representations / associations used for object evaluation and behavioural guidance
- How do attitudes develop?
  - Through learning and experience – classically, operantly or vicariously
- Which approaches explain the belief-behaviour relationship?
  - TRA, TPB, Correspondence hypothesis
- Are attitudes 'used' consciously?
  - Yes and No
    - MODE dual process model
    - Default is that attitudes are processed automatically.