



SEMINARIO

“A Review of the Theory of Vested Interest and its Application to Issues of Social Importance”



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From Allport's time to the present day, the study of attitudes remains a central preoccupation of social psychology. This focus grows from the assumption that attitudes anticipate behavior. This assumption has met with many reversals over the years, and in response the field has expended great efforts to determine the factors that augment or retard the attitude-behavior association. The construct of vested interest is one of the most successful of factors that augment attitude-behavior consistency. Considerable research has been devoted to the study of vested interest. Across a range of issues, this research has shown that attitudes toward an outcome an individual perceives as important and hedonically relevant strongly and positively affect the influence of attitudes on actions. This presentation outlines the major foundational research and recent developments in the theory, including recent findings that the perceived vested interest of close others can strongly affect a non-vested individual's own actions. The applied implications of the vested interest construct will be discussed in a review of research on many applied topics, including reactions to impending environmental catastrophes (floods, hurricanes, etc.), voting behavior, and the use of dangerous substances, in which the theory gives rise to novel techniques of behavior change that operate without any overt attempt to affect attitudes. The presentation argues for a more pervasive application of the theory to important and socially relevant issues, including environmental risk behavior, drug prevention, political activism, and the development of widespread social movements.

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