

themselves and about their social and nonsocial environment, be that information accurate or inaccurate. A belief associates an object with a certain attribute. In the belief statement, "nuclear power stations generate radioactive waste," the object *nuclear power stations* is linked to the attribute *radioactive waste*. The strength of this association is given by the subjective probability or certainty that the object has the attribute in question. Beliefs are formed as a result of direct experience, on the basis of second-hand information received from various sources, and by means of logical or quasi-logical inference from other information about the object (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Although people can form a large number of beliefs about any object, they can attend to only relatively few at any given moment. These *salient* beliefs are thought to be the immediate determinants of a person's attitude toward the object. When most beliefs associate the object with favorable attributes, a positive attitude is formed, but when unfavorable beliefs predominate, the attitude is negative.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

ICEK AJZEN

**bereavement** The situation of a person who has recently lost a loved one through death. Bereavement is the cause of GRIEF, the emotional (affective) reaction to the death of a significant person. It is associated with *mourning*, the practices of societies (e.g., funeral rites) serving as guidelines for how bereaved people are expected to behave. *See also:* GRIEF.

MARGARET STROEBE  
HENK SCHUT

**bias** The term bias has a wide currency throughout SOCIAL COGNITION and ATTRIBUTION THEORIES and refers to the social per-

ceiver systematically distorting (e.g., over- or under-using) some otherwise correct procedure, or to the distorted outcomes of such a procedure. The study of ATTRIBUTIONAL BIAS, in particular, has generated a large literature including the underutilization of CONSENSUS information, the FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR, ACTOR-OBSERVER DIFFERENCES, and SELF-SERVING BIAS. These biases seem to provide a better descriptive analysis of causal attribution than do complex normative models. Attempts to distinguish between cognitive and motivational explanations of various bias have stimulated much research, but have ultimately been frustrating. It appears impossible to choose between the cognitive and motivational perspectives, not least because motivational factors can have an effect on, and possibly via, information processing.

It is generally more accurate to speak of biases than errors, because the latter imply deviations from a normative model or departures from some accepted criterion of validity (*see* Kruglanski & Ajzen, 1983). Such models or criteria are not usually available for social-psychological research (an exception being research on the use of BASE RATES, in cases where the correct probability can be calculated according to BAYES' THEOREM). Current research is challenging some well-established biases, by showing that they can be overturned by subtle reframing of instructions or changes to stimulus materials (Gigerenzer, 1992). Thus it may have been the scientists, not the laypersons, who have made the mistakes. *See also:* ATTRIBUTION THEORIES; ATTRIBUTIONAL BIAS; SOCIAL COGNITION.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Gigerenzer, G. (1992). How to make cognitive illusions disappear: Beyond "heuristics and biases". In W. Stroebe & M. Hewstone (Eds.), *European review of social psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 83-115). Chichester: J. Wiley.
- Kruglanski, A. W., & Ajzen, I. (1983). Bias and error in human judgment. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 13, 1-44.

MILES HEWSTONE

**bogus pipeline** The bogus pipeline is a procedure intended to reduce distortions in