

# Effects of Systematic Information Processing on the Ambivalence of Well-Established and Newly Formed Attitudes

Chuan-Feng Kao and Shih-Hsien Lin

Department of Psychology, National Chung Cheng University

Attitudinal ambivalence refers to the extent to which individuals' attitudes toward an attitude object include both positive and negative evaluations. Some research suggests that higher need for cognition and greater involvement with social issue, are associated respectively with less attitudinal ambivalence. Other research suggests that individuals with ambivalent attitudes are more likely to engage in systematic processing of relevant information. To explore the relation between systematic information processing and ambivalent attitudes, Study 1 used a correlational strategy to assess participants' need for cognition, attitudinal ambivalence toward five social issues, and the degree of involvement in the issues. Results replicated prior findings of a negative relation not only between attitudinal ambivalence and need for cognition, but also between attitudinal ambivalence and issue involvement. In Study 2, participants were provided with positive and negative mixed-valence information about a social target. The entitativity of attitude objects (individual vs. group) and the levels of cognitive load were manipulated, and participants' need for cognition was assessed. Results showed higher attitudinal ambivalence for the individual than the group target. Participants high in need for cognition had high attitudinal ambivalence regardless of the attitude objects and the levels of cognitive load, those low in need for cognition had lower attitudinal ambivalence toward the group than the individual target when they were under high cognitive load. The results of Study 2 suggested an influence of systematic processing on the formation of ambivalent attitudes. These results suggest that, for well-established attitudes, attitudinal ambivalence relates negatively to personality-based and motivational antecedents of systematic processing, whereas systematic processing of positive and negative mixed-valence information about a new attitude object can result in high attitudinal ambivalence.

**Keywords:** *attitudinal ambivalence, issue involvement, need for cognition, systematic information processing, target entitativity*

