Opinion Science Podcast
Hosted by Andy Luttrell

Episode #11: Opinions Across Cultures with Sharon Shavitt
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Andy Luttrell:
Earlier this year, I went to India. It was amazing. An experience that opened my eyes to just how much of my life in America feels normal only because it's all I've ever experienced. With COVID-19 having, ah, let's just say demolished the travel industry, I don't know how long it'll be before you get to travel again, but an experience like that is useful for anyone who's gotten used to the culture they grew up in. It shows just how much culture, people, surroundings, food, practices, habits, shapes the way you think and relate to others.

Oh, by the way, I went to India with this person:

Shali Goyal:
Hi, I'm Shali Goyal.

Andy Luttrell:
She's my wife. Shali's mom is from the U.S., and her dad grew up in India. Even though Shali was born and raised in the U.S., her family's background presented a swirling mix of cultural influences as she grew up. A bunch of research in psychology has shown that cultures can differ in how collectivistic or individualistic they tend to be. In collectivistic cultures, people's identities are inextricably linked with the other people they're connected to. The emphasis is on one's responsibilities to others. In individualistic cultures, people's identities are focused on what makes them unique, and they're more focused on their own personal aspirations. Or in other words-

Shali Goyal:
Oh, the follow your bliss shit?

Andy Luttrell:
In the U.S., people tend to have a more individualistic orientation, but in India, things are more collectivistic.

Shali Goyal:
Yeah, okay, so here's what I will say, and I think maybe I have been a little indoctrinated when it comes to this. I do not believe in this follow your bliss shit, and I'll continue to call it that, because I think doing whatever you want because you have to do it, without regard to anybody else, I find

to be truly inconsiderate. But I also think it's hard for me sometimes, because it is a truly American value.

Andy Luttrell:
And one place where this aspect, or any aspect of culture comes out, is in weddings. We went to India for a family wedding and it was definitely eye opening for me. It really highlighted for me why Shali wanted us to have an Indian wedding ceremony in addition to our more American one.

Shali Goyal:
Yeah. Well, so it was really weird, because my dad I think just assumed since we grew up in the U.S. that neither of us would want an Indian wedding. Which is crazy, because I had only been really to Indian weddings until my friends started getting married, and it represents a part of the tradition and the symbolism that I grew up with, because I do think American ceremonies, it's very much like the choices of the bride and the groom or whatever, but you cannot have an Indian ceremony without your family being involved. Which is what you saw when you went to India, because even though Ashi is my really second cousin, she's considered like a sister of mine, and so because you're married and we're all part of the same family, which not technically in Indian tradition, since I married into your family, but you know, you also were expected to walk in with the bride as we were welcoming the groom's family, and part of the Baraat, and so there are just so many different steps where it really is like the joining of two families, not just the joining of two people.

Andy Luttrell:
You're listening to Opinion Science, the show about our opinions, where they come from, and how they change. I'm Andy Luttrell, and this week we're going to explore how the cultures we're embedded in can shape what it means to have an opinion and how professional persuaders have to change their approach from one culture to the next. I talked to Dr. Sharon Shavitt. She's a professor of marketing at the University of Illinois. She was trained at the same place I got my Ph.D. studying the fundamental psychology of opinions and persuasion. But over time, she started to realize how much culture shapes those things, so she's developed an important body of research that challenges some assumptions we might have had about how these things work, and we talked about it.

Andy Luttrell:
So, I thought we would start by just having you give a little bit of your background, both how you came to be interested in studying opinion in general, and then also what led you to think about culture in particular.

Sharon Shavitt:
Well, I came up through the Ohio State Attitudes program as a Ph.D. student, and I was always really fascinated by how people formed their opinions, and how they defended them, and what role did people's opinions play in their lives? What functions did they serve for them? And in fact, I did my dissertation research on attitude functions, on the idea that people have attitudes for a reason, and they use them to help make decisions, to convey important things about themselves to other people, to assuage their ego and so on. So, I was always really fascinated by these kinds of topics.

What got me interested in culture is actually a conversation with my first Ph.D. student, Sang-Pil Han, who was from South Korea, and I was at the time in the Department of Advertising at the University of Illinois, and we were talking about research ideas and Sang-Pil said, "You know, the things that they're teaching in advertising classes about how to persuade people, they wouldn't work in my country." And that observation just sort of landed with a thud with me. I thought we had a lot of very broad, generalizable insights. I thought we knew how to persuade people. Rosser Reeves, and Ogilvy, and others in advertising had told us unique selling proposition. Talk about what makes the product different from all other products. And persuasion research would say tell a person what's in it for them, talk about the benefits.

But what Sang-Pil was saying is well, no. In his culture, it's not about the personal benefits, and it's not about differentiating yourself. In fact, it's the opposite. It's about what makes an attitude connect to other people. It's about how a product helps you fit in, helps you be appropriate. These were insights that in thinking about it some more, kind of made me realize that there were some fundamental properties to these ideas, and that they might help us to expand how we think about attitudes.

Andy Luttrell:
At the time, was there any research tradition outside of a Western perspective about advertising that you could draw on? Or was it really just building from the ground up?

Sharon Shavitt:
There was almost nothing at that time, so this is the 1980s, and it's before the seminal work by Harry Triandis in 1989, and by Markus and Kitayama in 1991. People were not really, at least in the terms of the traditions that I was familiar with or the kinds of research I read, people weren't talking about this. There was work by a gentleman named Gordon Miracle, who was analyzing advertising in Japan, and he was doing it more from a descriptive practitioner kind of standpoint. He said, you know, we think about advertisements in the West as telling you in a hard sell kind of form why you should buy this brand, why this detergent will make you happier, and make your life easier, and make you look better, and so on.

And you know, advertisements in Japan really focus on making friends with the consumer. Giving them a sense that you know, we're going to tell a story, and through that story we're going to establish that we have shared values and we think about things similarly, and you can trust the company. That was about the only thing that I remember at the time as being very relevant input. And then later, after we did some of this research, the research that turned out to be Sang-Pil Han's dissertation, we started seeing more and more work and it gave us validation.

But at the time, it was the first thing that I think anyone was doing in our literature to suggest that in a non-Western society like the United States, advertising is better off talking about how to harmonize with other people, how a marketer might be your partner, your friend, someone you trust. How your choices might be geared toward making your family or your group happy, or to fitting in, or feeling appropriate and comfortable. And so, we did a large scale content analysis, multiple magazines in the U.S. and Korea, and we showed that in fact, ads had very content in South Korea at that time, in the 1980s, compared to the U.S., and they were much more about these kinds of themes of conformity, of harmony, of pleasing others, and we also did some experiments

that showed that what was more prevalent in their society compared to ours was also more persuasive in their society compared to ours.

Andy Luttrell:
So, could you talk a little bit about that content analysis? Like what did you… how did you actually accomplish that and what did you do once you looked at those advertisements?

Sharon Shavitt:
So, we chose multiple kinds of magazines in the two countries. We had, I'm trying to remember how many thousands of advertisements in each country. Worked very hard to try to make the ad format and the editorial format, I should say, as similar as possible. So for instance, a couple of women's magazines there, a couple of women's magazines here, some news magazines, et cetera, and we looked at ads for a variety of products and we developed a coding scheme, and we looked for differences in the sorts of mention of us versus me, mentions of family versus personal benefits, hedonism, how often your personal pleasure was mentioned. These kinds of things, and then tallied up how frequently they occurred in the ads in each society.

And I should add that later on, other work that was done, for instance by Heejung Kim and Hazel Markus, pointed to some very similar conclusions when they looked at emphasis on conformity versus individuality in ads in South Korea compared to the U.S., and they found as you would expect that there was much more emphasis on fitting in, and confirming, and going with the crowd in the South Korean ads, as opposed to standing out and being distinct in the U.S. ads.

Andy Luttrell:
So, you kind of mentioned this already, but I want to get you to unpack it a little bit, which is that you could say, "Oh, well, the ads are different here, and different somewhere else, but of what consequence is it? Maybe it's just happenstance that that happens. But if we were to take ads from South Korea and bring them here, they would do just fine." Why would you probably not conclude that? How could you say that this is really about effective persuasion and not just what people seem to think they prefer?

Sharon Shavitt:
Because the studies on content analysis have been followed up by experiments that manipulate the content of messages and show them to consumers. And so, I wouldn't say that a really well-formulated ad in one country could not work in another country, but what the body of research that's grown over the years seems to point to pretty consistently is that what is more effective is speaking to the distinct goals and motivations of consumers in a given society. And so, if the advertising industry, the modern advertising industry, was established in the U.S. and very much built around American sensibilities, advertisers in other cultures need to be aware that they should gear things to their own culture's sensibilities, because the purpose of consumption or the purpose of opinion formation really can be quite different in two societies.

So, the research points to the importance of thinking about what are the goals of the people who are being targeted by your persuasion strategies? Start with that and think about how culture might inform those goals.

Andy Luttrell:
Do you think that you would have come to this insight if you weren't in an advertising department? So, there's part of me that thinks that persuasion as we often study it, we can get bogged down in nitty gritty of like how people are processing messages. But the applied interest in advertising is tied up with global interests, and so maybe this is a domain, and certainly I feel like I've seen more of this kind of work since the research you're describing in the advertising and marketing domain than in sort of psychology as a general pursuit. Does that resonate at all?

Sharon Shavitt:
Completely. It's interesting that you ask that, because I think that's true. For quite some time I felt that this work was embraced more by people who took a practical and practitioner sort of orientation, because they had problems to solve. They had to understand whether the ad campaign they designed for one set of countries would work in a completely different region, and there were ongoing debates in the advertising industry about what they called globalization versus localization. Those that would argue that you can… A really great, well-crafted marketing communications campaign would work well no matter where you are, and others who say, "No, things must be tailored at great expense and effort." Right?

So, there was a raging debate, and this really spoke to that, because it was as you said, a real problem that needed to be solved. By contrast, I think in the traditional social psychology sphere of things, talking about cultural differences was not readily embraced. At least not at first. I think it had the potential to make people think, "Well, maybe these theories we've been developing, maybe they need to be adapted or expanded in some way. Maybe they don't hold in all cases." And so, I think that that may have led to a certain let's say reticence to think about the implications. But what happened over the ensuing years is multiple studies, many of them in marketing, but also very important research in psychology kind of pointed out that no, we really do need to reexamine our theories and expand them to better embrace and incorporate different ways of thinking about the world. Whether it's understanding people's motivations in other cultures, and why things like consensus information about what other people do might actually be very important information to people who care about fitting in in a collectivistic culture, whereas we've labeled it as sort of something kind of a heuristic that people might use in a Western context, where you're supposed to make your own judgments.

These kinds of insights started to accumulate, and research started showing that indeed, if you compared consumers in say Hong Kong to the U.S., you might get different patterns in testing some basic theoretical predictions. So, I think it became harder to sort of push that aside.

Andy Luttrell:
Some of the message tailoring insight reminds me of some newer work on moral values in persuasive messages, and so there are these findings that liberals and conservatives have different moral priorities, and that messages that emphasize some of those priorities are more persuasive to relatively liberal or relatively conservative-minded people. And so then, my question is would we call that a culture? It's similar in that we're talking about values and we're tailoring our message to an audience's values, but it just… For me, that puts a little strain on how we're defining culture. So, even just to back up, is there a commonly embraced, this is what we mean by culture, and I can divide that line, I can see the difference between two cultures very clearly?

Sharon Shavitt:
Yeah. It's a great question. I mean, I think there's certainly parallels. That people who are liberal versus conservative tend to think about things in different ways, and those differences somewhat parallel the differences between let's say people in individualistic cultures and people in collectivistic cultures. I agree with you that you don't want to strain that comparison too much, but it is the case that there are some parallels.

Now, culture is normally defined in terms of… Well, what Hofstede called the software of the mind. The notion that people who live in different geographic regions, ethnic groups, or historical periods, as Triandis pointed out, have different ways of viewing the world, and different values, and different goals that they are pursuing. That's more global, I would say, than liberal and conservative ideologies, but there may be some parallels.

Andy Luttrell:
So, if you're to give a take home message to practitioners, I often think about this message tailoring literature as a perfect reason to avoid a one size fits all approach to persuasion. There seems to be this desire to be like, "Well, teach me the principles." And you probably encounter this in business students who you work with, like, "Give me the principles that are persuasive." And so, what sort of cautions would you give to someone with that question?

Sharon Shavitt:
Yeah. Well, we always start, whether it's in my marketing communication courses, or in research, with asking about the motivations of the people you are targeting. Actually, people who study marketing communications have a very sophisticated understanding of the importance of segmenting the market. Market segmentation is your starting point, so who am I selling to, what is the market out there, how do they break down into different categories? Whether those are demographic categories, including cultural or ethnic backgrounds, or whether they are lifestyle categories, or what as known as psychographics. So, categories of motivational profiles, lifestyle interests, activities, opinions. Marketers are actually very shrewd and effective at tailoring messages to subsegments of society based on careful segmentation research. That's actually not a hard sell in the marketing environment.

Andy Luttrell:
Whereas it seems maybe harder for psychology, given the historical, like we are studying human nature, there's an extra road to cross to say, "Well, the process is malleable, and it can differ for different audiences." And actually, to that point, I also wanted to think about what culture means for what an opinion is, right? So, there are ways of changing opinions, but what have you been seeing and thinking about in terms of how do we define what opinions are in ways that maybe aren't universal?

Sharon Shavitt:
Absolutely. I think that's really the most interesting question for me, this idea that perhaps the way we've been thinking about opinions in the West is not a one size fits all, so it's not… It's beyond what persuades people. It's why do people have preferences in the first place? And we know in the West that opinions are necessary tools for agency. To grow up as an effective person in a Western context, you have to establish yourself as independent, as self-reliant, as able to make his or her own decisions, as being unique, distinct from others, right?

And so, all of these put an immense value on establishing well-crafted opinions that are solid, strong, consistent from situation to situation, and that can be used to define you as something distinct from other people, right? But what about context where being distinct is not the goal? When fitting in is the goal? When adapting to your situation is a more important priority? In these kinds of contexts, fitting in and doing what others want would suggest that having your own highly stable opinions might get in the way. It might be better not to have highly stable, strong, accessible, consistent opinions that define you, and that you use to express yourself.

So, what I think is a fundamental observation in the accumulated literature in the study of culture is that opinions might serve a very different function in contexts where collectivistic, interdependent values and ways of thinking predominate. And there, I think what that means is that we need to spend more time thinking about how do people manage their opinions? How might they distance themselves from their own attitudes or manage the self-expression of their attitudes? What might be norms that people refer to when they decide whether to say what they think, whether to share their opinions in a group? I think we have different scripts and different norms for these kinds of situations.

Andy Luttrell:
And it sounds like I could see that being both on the opinion holder him- or herself, thinking about when to express opinions, but also judgments of an opinion expressor, where you go, "It's inappropriate." You might get socially punished for expressing a strong opinion when the goals of the situation are to reach a… I mean, the old group think stuff is this sort of thing, where you go, "Well, our goal is consensus, so please don't be the one person being an individual, because we need to reach a consensus." So, what are the kinds of things that you've seen to make that more concrete? Can you give an example of how this plays out?

Sharon Shavitt:
Sure. So, one of the things that we're actually in the process of doing is studying what are these distinct cultural scripts about opinion expression. So, in one project with my Ph.D. student, Aaron Barnes, and our colleague Hao Shen at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, we're interested in the idea of what does maturity mean when it comes to expressing your attitude? So, if you think about what does a mature person do? Well, in the Western context, maturity means becoming more and more certain of yourself and better able to articulate and defend your point of view. But in an East Asian context, it's not that at all. A mature person is someone who has learned to modulate their self-expression and avoid saying or doing anything that would disrupt harmony, right?

So, a mature person, even if they disagree with you, would be one who learns not to self express. And indeed, we find across multiple studies that not only do people in a Hong Kong context, for instance, compared to a U.S. context, not only are they less likely to say, "I'll express my opinion when I like Apple smartphones but you like Samsung smartphones," but when you activate the notion of maturity, when you ask them to reflect on what do mature people do, Easterners are more likely to say, "I will withhold my opinion." Westerners are more likely to say, "I will express my opinion," the more they're thinking about maturity. So, that's one example.

Andy Luttrell:
It sounds nice to be in a context where people don't have to push their opinion all the time when that seems like the right thing to do. I know there's debate in the cultural psychology world about

changes in culture over time. Certainly, there has been suspicions that with the internet and increasing communication between all corners of the globe, that culture is sort of on the decline and we're all just sort of merging into one sense of culture. And so, I've kind of heard tidbits of argument on either side of that. What do you think about that sort of proposal, that culture is waning, and that if you're an advertiser online you don't have to worry about this stuff, because we're in a global culture now?

Sharon Shavitt:
That is probably the most frequently asked question of people who study culture, right? Culture is over. And it's interesting, because the research suggests quite differently, that culture is here with us, probably here to stay. And in particular, if you look at just globally patterns of purchases, whether people buy things that make them distinct from others or buy things that help them to connect with other people, it's still there. If anything, I think the influence of culture might be increasing, because some research on intercultural communication and intercultural contact suggests that as we globalize, as people come more and more into contact with people of other cultures, although there are some good consequences, they can become more creative and more flexible in the way they think, they can also become more rigid and more threatened.

And I think one of the things we see in the world today is some of that sense of intercultural threat playing out, right? The more we see migration, the more there are refugees, the more politicians can sort of in a populist fashion appeal to a sense of culture threat, and a sense of needing to protect one's culture. I think that culture is deeply meaningful and symbolic to people, often in ways that they don't realize, and it's not difficult to play on those kinds of potential threats to get people to kind of circle the wagons and try to defend what they see as their own cultural legacy or identity.

Andy Luttrell:
Can we go back to the message tailoring idea? Because what you're saying is reminding me of a thought I had at the moment, which is why it matters that you speak to a person's motivations. Ultimately, even just to get into the weeds a little bit, psychologically what's going on? Because there's a version of that as you were describing these tensions of identity, is that, "Well, if you're expressing your position using the things that matter to me, you're sort of making yourself look like you're in my group, and I just trust you more, right? Because I feel like you get me and we're aligned, and so I'll let you in." Whereas there's other maybe explanations that don't require a sense of identity or group thinking at all. So, have you thought about why? Ultimately, what is it that is actually more persuasive about speaking to the cultural values of your audience?

Sharon Shavitt:
Well, I think speaking to their values doesn't require that people consciously are aware that something you presented is speaking to their cultural values. In fact, they may not need to be thinking at all about culture or have any of that be salient in their conscious mind. But I think that there are multiple ways in which consumers of different cultural backgrounds think about and respond to messages in different ways. One is whether it matches the values or the goals that they're trying to achieve. Another is whether it fits well with the way that they process information, and so processing scripts, or ways of thinking, thinking styles, as Richard Nisbett has established, are among the ways that messages can land very differently for people of different cultural backgrounds.

I'll give you one example. So, Nisbett's research suggests that in Western cultures, we tend to separate and distinguish between things, whereas in East Asian cultures, we tend to integrate and connect things. What we find is that that has implications for something as simple as whether you think a more expensive product is a better product, okay? Because what we find is that when people are thinking holistically, that is they're integrating and connecting, they're more likely to believe that a high priced product is a better product. That is, you get what you pay for. Price and quality are more connected, whereas if people are thinking analytically, they're more likely to distinguish things from each other. So, price and quality are not as connected as they otherwise would be.

And so, we find that when we activate either a holistic way of thinking or an analytic way of thinking, we can get people to be more or less persuaded that a high priced item is a higher quality item.

Andy Luttrell:
I'm curious what moved you in the direction of consumer behavior, so even just to backtrack a little bit, you are at Ohio State in a moment where basic psychological research on the processes of persuasion and what attitudes are, and so my sense is that at that time, the move into advertising or business schools, which now is all the rage, maybe was less common then. So, what was it that moved you in that direction.

Sharon Shavitt:
You're right. It was much less common then. I was one of the only people I knew who was moving into marketing, but I was always very interested in the marketing context, and at Ohio State, I did work with Tim Brock. Tim was one of the first people who was actually working on applying persuasion insights to advertising copy testing. So, copy testing is where advertisers want to figure out if the message that they crafted is going to be effective. Before they spend millions by buying time and space in advertising media, they want to figure out with test audiences how that message is playing, right? How will it play in Peoria, as they used to say.

Well, this was how will it play in Cincinnati, because that's where we were getting our data from, and we were partnering with a major marketing research firm there, and this was very foresighted of Tim. He was a very creative researcher, my research mentor, and so as a graduate student, I got involved in trying to understand advertising copy testing. We would look at lots of cognitive response protocols, so basically in layman's terms, thought lists. How people listed out what they were thinking when they saw a commercial for a particular brand. And we developed coding methods to identify what were the key types of content in people's thoughts that predicted whether a message would stick, would continue to be persuasive.

One of the things we saw is that the more self-relevant content was, the more sticky it was. The more likely it was that people would remember it later and would form their intentions to buy or not buy based on whatever it was that they had thought about when they saw the ad. So, we were trying to directly apply the insights from all the research being done at Ohio State on self-relevant processing to the understanding of how advertisements establish long-term persuasive outcomes. That was one of the things that convinced me that these basic insights that were coming out of the Ohio State school really had legs, really had a lot of potential to move our understanding forward in all kinds of domains. And I was very interested in the marketing domain to begin with.

And then when I went on the job market, it was clear that the opportunities in marketing were phenomenal, and people were very interested and very open to what I could potentially bring. So, it was a decision that kind of made itself as those opportunities came up. I really looked for an opportunity that would allow me to remain a basic social psychologist and not sort of change my identity, and an opportunity at Illinois just spoke to me and I've never looked back.

Andy Luttrell:
Did Tim come up with that idea? Or did someone approach? How did that begin, that collaboration?

Sharon Shavitt:
The collaboration with the marketing research firm.

Andy Luttrell:
Yeah.

Sharon Shavitt:
That's a good question. I don't think I was there at the very initial conversation. My guess is that because Tim was just very effective at making the pitch, because he knew the research inside and out, he'd conducted a lot of it, he was very effective at explaining to marketers that what they had been doing up until that time was missing the mark. At that time, a big emphasis in copy testing was looking at playback. Playback meaning just like a tape recorder, if you saw a commercial for something, could you basically play back what you had seen? Straight recall.

Andy Luttrell:
Just memory.

Sharon Shavitt:
Memory. And that was a key criterion in copy testing at the time, and what Tim was trying to do is bring all these insights from cognitive elaboration to the table, to explain to them that it's really not about whether a consumer remembers anything about your ad. It's about whether they connected it to something meaningful in themselves, in their own lives, that they could then associate positively with your brand. That's what it was. So, if they connected your brand to something positive that was self-relevant, then that would be enduring persuasion. If they connected your brand to something negative and self-relevant, that would be enduring boomerang. It would not be persuasive and don't worry about recall.

And when we contrasted how persuasive or how predictive people's self-relevant thoughts were to their more message playback kind of thoughts, it was very clear. It was about elaboration. So, this was really my first opportunity to take all of the cognitive response work that was being done at Ohio State and understand the dynamics of that in the commercial persuasion world.

Andy Luttrell:
And it anticipates the culture matching research, too, because that's what that is doing, right? It's speaking to something self-relevant that can be sticky, and have you looked at thought listings in that program of work?

Sharon Shavitt:
Yes, sometimes we do, but not as much. I can tell you from having done a lot of that work in developing coding schemes that it is quite laborious. And I remember vividly days of taking paper thought lists, because this… We did not have a whole lot of computer technology at the time, and literally cutting out squares that encapsulated people's thoughts and sorting them on long tables to see which thoughts went in which piles. We don't do a lot of that anymore. But I think we would gain some insights from it.

Andy Luttrell:
Wow. So, you were cutting out… Walk me through that again. I'm just curious now, because I've done some thought coding stuff, and I've not snipped out pieces, so you're saying like themes, like trying to find themes in the thoughts that people have?

Sharon Shavitt:
Exactly right. Yes, we were trying to find themes, so we were basically sorting the way that people would do card sorts or other things, multidimensional scaling kinds of solutions, but we weren't doing anything that analytically complex. We were simply cutting out thoughts and seeing what seemed to go in categories that hung together well to try to build a broader coding scheme, and then to establish its validity in predicting some downstream consequence, like a purchase intention.

Andy Luttrell:
So, that was the early days of your career? If we're to sort of end by thinking forward and the next steps, what are the things that we don't know? What are the things about the role that culture plays in public opinion persuasion that are on the front lines?

Sharon Shavitt:
Yeah. I think this is the big unanswered question in my mind, is just how do people manage their opinions? We've taken it for granted that having strong opinions that we can express to other people are assets. But what about in cultures where people's opinions might get in the way of fitting in with others? How do people manage that situation? We know that it exists, but we don't have theories for understanding attitude modulation. We don't have theories for understanding how do they decide whether they need to change an ambivalent attitude to a more extreme one? Or how do they decide whether they need to express or withhold? Or how do they decide or what scripts do they deploy when they have a very accessible, strong preference, but it doesn't happen to agree with the preferences of the people that matter to them?

I think these are big unanswered questions. I think they're actually broad theoretical opportunities for researchers in this area to try to understand more, not only what happens when attitudes are strong, which we assume are very helpful to individuals in Western context, where decisions get made on the basis of your preferences. But what happens in contexts where strong attitudes bump up against the priorities of your society? So, I think those are the big unanswered questions, the attitude modulation and attitude management questions.

Andy Luttrell:
Well, thanks so much for sharing all this stuff with us, and look forward to seeing what comes out next.

Sharon Shavitt:
It's my pleasure. Thanks very much.

Andy Luttrell:
Thanks again to Dr. Shavitt for coming on the show. Check out the show notes for a link to her lab's website and links to the things we talked about today. Also, thanks to Shali, who you heard in the intro, for indulging me in weirdly interviewing her in our own home.

Shali Goyal:
This is weird. Sorry. This is why I don't listen to your podcast. I'm geeking out even now.

Andy Luttrell:
For more on this show, go to OpinionSciencePodcast.com or follow us on Twitter or Facebook @OpinionSciPod. And here's the part of the show where I ask you very earnestly and from the bottom of my little old heart, if you like this show, share it with your friends and colleagues, and please leave a nice review on Apple Podcasts to help people discover us. May we soon be able to travel further than our front porch. But in the meantime, I'll see you next week for more Opinion Science. Bye-bye!