



# Attitudes & behaviour: LaPiere (1934)

## Module 2 11.1.2 attitudes & behaviour

### This activity will help you to...

- Understand an influential early study of attitudes
- Consider why behaviour may not be consistent with attitudes
- Criticise and evaluate studies of attitudes & behaviour

## LaPiere's (1934) study of attitudes and behaviour

In the early 1930s, attitudes towards Chinese people in the United States were rather negative and Chinese people encountered a great deal of prejudice. From 1930 to 1932, a social psychologist called Richard LaPiere spent considerable time traveling through the US accompanied by a young Chinese student and his wife. They visited a large number of restaurants, cafes, hotels and motels (251 establishments in all). However, LaPiere was surprised to find that they were refused service only once and, when they received any additional attention it was 'generally positive' (Erwin, 2001).

Six months later, LaPiere sent a questionnaire to all of the establishments they had visited on their travels, including the question, 'will you accept members of the Chinese race as guests in your establishment?' He obtained 128 replies. In response to the critical question 92 per cent of the restaurants and 91 per cent of the hotels/motels reported that they would not accept Chinese customers. The majority of the remainder reported that they were uncertain whether they would and that it would depend on circumstances.

LaPiere's study is often cited as evidence that there is little or no relationship between attitudes and behaviour.

Why might the questionnaire responses not have reflected the actual behaviour of the people encountered by LaPiere and his colleagues?

Do you think it is reasonable to conclude from this study that attitudes are poor predictors of behaviour? Why?