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one-sided persuasive message presented by either a white or black
source. Eighty-eight white college students heard a message. Of
these, 39 had the message attributed to a black source and 49 had it
attributed to a white source. The results showed that white
high-prejudice individuals will attempt to disassociate a message from
a black source, associate the message with a white source seen as
"like me," and consequently be more susceptible to persuasion. White
low-prejudiced individuals are equally persuaded by either a white or
black message source. (Author/JK)
THE PERSUAIBILITY OF A WHITE OR BLACK SOURCE
UPON HIGH AND LOW RACIALLY PREJUDICED WHITE INDIVIDUALS

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Abstract

Congruity theory is used as the basis for predictions made in this study. The study deals with the effect (1) extrinsic ethos, and (2) general susceptibility to persuasion, have upon a prejudiced or non-prejudiced individual's degree of persuasibility to a one-sided persuasive message presented by either a black or white source. Eighty-eight (N=88) white college students participated in this study, wherein thirty-nine (n=39) were exposed to a message attributed to a black source and forty-nine (n=49) were exposed to the same message attributed to a white source. Pre- and post-measures of attitude toward the topic discussed in the one-sided persuasive message, evaluative semantic differential ratings of the attributed source, and prejudice ratings gathered from the Christie Forced Choice F Scale (short form) were gathered from the respondents.

Findings: Our first hypothesis—high prejudiced individuals will have a more negative attitude toward the black message source than will low prejudiced white individuals—was upheld (t=2.65, df=30, p<.05). Our second hypothesis—high prejudiced white individuals will have a more negative attitude toward the black message source than toward the white message source, while low prejudiced white individuals will not differ in their attitude toward the white or black message source—was negated in the former (t=0.15, df=30, p>.05) and supported in the latter (t=0.84, df=28, p>.05). Our third hypothesis—high prejudiced white individuals will be positively persuaded to a lesser degree by the black message source than by the white message source, while low prejudiced white individuals will be persuaded equally as well by the white or black message source—was negated in the former (t=2.14, df=30, p>.05) and supported in the latter (t=.01, df=28, p>.05).

Conclusion: White high prejudiced individuals will attempt to dissociate a message from a black source, associate the message with a white source seen as "like me," and consequently be more susceptible to persuasion. White low prejudiced individuals are equally persuaded by either a white or black message source.

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Congruity Theory is used as the basis for predictions made in this study. Developed by Osgood and Tannenbaum (1) its basic premise states: "When two attitude objects of differing evaluation are linked with an assertion, there is a tendency for the evaluations of each subject to shift toward a point of equilibrium or congruity."

The variables in a communication situation which are significant in the predictions made from Congruity Theory are: (1) the existing attitudes held by the receiver toward the source of the message, (2) the existing attitude held by the receiver toward the concept presented by the source, and (3) the nature of the evaluating assertion which relates the source and the concept in the message. Changes made by a receiver in his evaluation of the message source and the message concept are always in the direction of increased congruity with the receiver's existing frame of reference.

An individual can hold varying attitudes toward diverse concepts without feeling any overwhelming desire for congruity as long as no assertion connecting these objects is made. In order to predict the direction of attitude change from Congruity Theory, it is necessary to simultaneously take into account the existing attitudes held by the receiver toward each of the objects of judgment prior to reception of the message, and the nature of the assertion which is found within the message.
The source of a message is deemed more credible, and thus more persuasive, if he is seen as being "attractive" to the receiver. "There is a considerable body of evidence that a person is influenced by a persuasive message to the extent that he perceives it as coming from a source similar to himself. Presumably the receiver, to the extent that he perceives the source to be like himself in diverse characteristics, assumes that they also share common needs and goals. The receiver might therefore conclude that what the source is urging is good for 'our kind of people', and thus change his attitude accordingly." Wheeless (3) discusses a distinct three-step pattern which leads to a source's overall "image" or credibility rating which, in turn, determines the attractiveness and persuasibility of the source.

First, the "extrinsic ethos", or predispositions evoked upon initial contact with the source, is the image of the source as it exists prior to the communication. Next, an image is derived from the characteristics (visual, verbal, message content) displayed by the source during the presentation of the communication. This is called "intrinsic ethos". Lastly, the "final ethos" is a product of interaction between the initial predispositions held by the respondent, and those favorable or unfavorable characteristics of the source perceived by the receiver during the actual communication.

Byrne and Wong (6) found that white subjects with strongly anti-Negro attitudes were more likely to feel that Negroes held views dissimilar to their own views on issues of fundamental importance than whites with pro-Negro attitudes. This reinforces the studies which have shown that, "...subjects empathize with and adopt the feelings of others to the extent that these others have been represented as similar to themselves." Thus, a perceived
"non-similar" black source holding "non-similar" views will most likely be a low persuasive influence upon a highly prejudiced individual.

Hovland, Javis, and Kelley (4) in their research on personality and susceptibility to persuasion, recognize two general classes of personality characteristics which influence a person's responsiveness to persuasion. These are his readiness to accept or reject a given point of view on the topic being discussed, and his general susceptibility to various types of persuasion and social influence. Inclusive in this research, personality correlations of attitudes toward minority groups were analyzed and found to indicate that, "...acceptance of anti-minority group attitudes is associated with such characteristics as ideological adherence to conventional moral standards, compulsive submission to parents, and strong ambivalence toward authority figures." 4

These characteristics parallel the overall personality syndrome associated with a highly prejudiced individual. Allport (5) found these characteristics to be part of the prejudiced personality: (1) ambivalence toward parents, (2) moralism, (3) dichotomization, (4) a need for definiteness, (5) externalization of conflict, (6) institutionalism, (7) authoritarianism.

The Handbook of Social Psychology also delineates the personality correlates of an individual exhibiting highly prejudice tendencies. "It was found that highly prejudiced subjects, in contrast to those who were tolerant, showed a more rigid personality organization, greater conventionality in their values, more difficulty in accepting socially deviant impulses as part of the self (for example, fear, weakness, aggression, and sex), a greater tendency to externalize these impulses by means of projection, and more inclination to be status- and power-oriented in their personal relations-
ships. These personality attributes as well as others (for example, idolizing one's parents, impersonal and punitive aggression dichotomous thinking) represented the defining features of the authoritarian personality.

...The unconscious conflict involving fear of and dependency on parents, on the one hand, and strong hatred and suspicion of them on the other, seemed to be contained by an authoritarian personality structure tuned to expressing his repressed hostility toward members of socially sanctioned outgroups.†

Hovland, Janis, and Kelley present findings which associate low susceptibility to persuasion with critical, derogatory attitudes toward others. They conclude, "...there is an inverse relationship between susceptibility to social influence and aggressiveness toward others." Thus, the individual associated with a high prejudiced personality will tend to be generally less susceptible to persuasion by others.

Some recent studies have looked at the reaction of racially prejudiced individuals to visual representations of Negroes. Vidulich and Krevanick (7) report that high prejudiced individuals gave a stronger physiological Galvanic Skin Response rating to pictures depicting Negroes, to Negroes in person, to statements about Negroes, and to the verbal stimulus "Negro", than did low-prejudiced individuals. Blume (8) found that "neutral" racially prejudiced individuals became manifestly more negative in their attitudes toward blacks after being exposed to visual stimuli containing Negro models in negatively stereotyped behavior roles or situations.

These studies show that racially prejudiced individuals do react to a pictorial representation of blacks, and that their prejudiced attitudes, whether latent or already overtly manifested, will be invoked as a variable affecting their reaction to the black individual.
This study considers how racial prejudice affects persuasibility. In other words, how does "degree of racial prejudice" affect one's interpretation of message symbols encoded by a racially similar, or dissimilar, source. The topic discussed in the experimental message is not varied. It was chosen for the expected lack of preconceived bias held by the experimental subjects towards it.

Thus, we are considering, in this study the effect (1) extrinsic ethos, and (2) general susceptibility to persuasion, have upon a prejudiced or non-prejudiced individual's degree of persuasibility to a one-sided persuasive message presented by either a black or white source.

**Hypotheses**

**H1:** High prejudiced white individuals will have a more negative attitude toward the black message source than will low prejudiced white individuals.

**H2:** High prejudiced white individuals will have a more negative attitude toward the black message source than toward the white message source, while low prejudiced white individuals will not differ in their attitude toward the white or black message source.

**H3:** High prejudiced white individuals will be positively persuaded to a lesser degree by the black message source than by the white message source, while low prejudiced white individuals will be persuaded equally as well by the white or black message source.

**Methodology and Design of Study**

Two students, one white and one black, were chosen as the "supposed" sources of the stimulus message. The two students were matched on as many
physiological qualities as possible (size, facial features, facial expression, etc.) so that race was the predominant difference between them.

Full color 35mm slides were made of each student. A slide of either the white or black source was shown to a randomly selected section of Journalism 204 (Writing Workshop) at the University of Georgia, Spring Quarter, 1971. A total of eight sections were used with a range of from five to fifteen students (mainly sophomore or junior Journalism majors) in each section. All of the subjects were white.

Initially, each class was asked to respond to highly evaluative semantic differential type statements rating the concepts "Traveling by Airplane", "Rapid Transit", and "Travel Agencies". "Rapid Transit" was the concept of importance with the other concepts being foils (see Appendix). They were shown a slide of either the white or black student. After viewing the person in the slide for 30 seconds they were instructed to rate "Person on Slide" on highly evaluative semantic differential type statements (see Appendix).

After rating the person in the slide, one of the authors (the same one in every section) informed the class that he was going to read an essay written by the individual pictured in the slide. The message consisted of a short (approximately 350 word) one-sided persuasive message aimed at gathering support for the development of rapid transit systems (see Appendix). The subject was chosen because of its supposed lack of controversy, group orientation, or saliency.

After listening to the essay each class was again asked to rate the concept "Rapid Transit" on the same semantic differential type statements.
Prejudice ratings were then gathered from responses to the Christie Forced Choice F Scale (short form). This scale was designed to measure authoritarianism as defined by Adorno et al (1950). However, it was designed to avoid two problems encountered with the previous scales relating to: (1) acquiescence response set and (2) inadequate counterbalancing which yields unreliability and perhaps multidimensionality. The raw score responses on the scale ranged from seventeen (17) to forty-nine (49). It was decided to trichotomize the respondents into prejudice categories (low = 17 to 31; middle = 32 to 36; and high = 37 to 49) for analytical purposes.

The respondents are analyzed on the basis of their prejudice level category and their totaled ratings of the concepts "Rapid Transit" (ranged from 12 to 78) and "Person in Slide" (ranged from 18 to 99). Thirty-nine (n = 39) subjects were exposed to the black message source and forty-nine (n = 49) subjects were exposed to the white message source. Therefore, eighty-eight (N = 88) students took part in the study.

After trichotomizing the respondents, the middle group of twenty-six (26) respondents were dropped from further analysis under the belief that they could not be accurately described as being either high or low prejudiced in their racial beliefs. Thus, thirty-two (32) high prejudiced individuals, of which fifteen (15) were exposed to the white message source and seventeen (17) were exposed to the black message source, remained to be analyzed. Also, out of the remaining thirty (30) low prejudiced individuals, fifteen (15) were exposed to the white message source and fifteen (15) were exposed to the black message source. In other words, sixty-two (N = 62) respondents were used as the group analyzed in this study.
Findings

Our first hypothesis - high prejudiced white individuals will have a more negative attitude toward the black message source than will low prejudiced white individuals - was upheld (t = 2.65; df = 30; p < .05). Further analysis showed that there was no significant difference in how high and low prejudiced individuals rated the white message source (t = 1.43; df = 28; p < .05).

Our second hypothesis - high prejudiced white individuals will have a more negative attitude toward the black message source than toward the white message course, while low prejudiced white individuals will not differ in their attitude toward the white or black message source - was only partially supported. We found no significant difference in the high prejudiced individual's attitude toward the white and black message sources (t = 0.15; df = 30; p > .05). As predicted, we found no significant difference in the low prejudiced individual's attitude toward the white and black message sources (t = 0.84; df = 28; p > .05).

Our third, and major, hypothesis - high prejudiced white individuals will be positively persuaded to a lesser degree by the black message source than by the white message source, while low prejudiced white individuals will be persuaded equally as well by the white or black message source - was in the first instance negated, and in the latter, supported. The high prejudiced individuals, contradicting the hypothesized outcome, were significantly more persuaded by the black than by the white message source (t = 2.14; df = 30; p > .05). As hypothesized, the low prejudiced individuals showed no significant difference in their persuasiveness when exposed to either a white or black message source (t = .01; df = 28; p > .05).
In order to validate the possibility that: (1) for some reason the two groups of individuals did not differ in their initial attitude toward the topic under consideration; and (2) the message presented to the respondents was, in fact, a persuasive message, further analysis was endeavored.

The authors found that, both groups of individuals showed no difference in their initial attitudes toward the topic prior to the persuasive message ($t = .80; df = 60; p > .05$).

An analysis of variance (Treatment - by - Subjects Design) was employed to evaluate the degree of attitude change which took place concerning the topic "Rapid Transit".

Table 1: Attitude Change Toward Topic "Rapid Transit" by all Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>ms</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11910.78</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>11309.28</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatments</td>
<td>120.03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>120.03</td>
<td>15.21</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>481.47</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>7.89</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We feel confident in stating, based on this analysis, that the message presented to the subjects was highly persuasive, $p < .001$.

Further analysis showed that the high prejudiced individuals were significantly more persuaded by the message than were the low prejudiced individuals. An analysis of variance (Treatment - by - Levels Design) pointed out a significant levels effect, $p < .05$. Thus, while high prejudiced individuals were persuaded to a greater degree than low prejudiced individuals, there was
no difference in the persuasibility of the white or black message source, and no significant interaction between the levels and the treatments.

Table 2: Persuasibility of High and Low Prejudiced Individuals by White and Black Message Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2905.00</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels</td>
<td>273.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>136.95</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatments</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatments X Levels</td>
<td>42.34</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>2588.26</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>36.97</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Congruity Theory predictions were not confirmed in this experiment. Under Congruity Theory principles, if an individual (e.g., high prejudiced) holds an attitude at point #1 toward a topic (e.g., "Rapid Transit") and is presented a persuasive message by a negatively rated source (e.g., black source) then his attitude toward the topic at point #2 should be less favorable rather than more favorable.

Also, our findings broadly contradict past findings relating to the overall resistance by high prejudiced individuals to a persuasive message, regardless of the source.

The low prejudiced individuals reacted as predicted - not significantly different in their attitude toward the white or black source and not differentially persuaded by either source, even though they were, as a group, positively persuaded by the message.
Why did the high prejudiced individual behave in a manner opposite to the hypotheses? Needless to say, this is a question that needs further research. However, the authors feel that there are several ways to explain these results.

First, the authors chose the message sources to be as similar as possible in all physical characteristics except for race. Consideration was not given to the fact that many people may respond differently to similar characteristics possessed by individuals belonging to two different racial groups.

The black source, for instance, may have been perceived as a "typical" contemporary middle-class black youth. The white source, in being "like" the black, may have been viewed as an "extreme" liberal or even a radical type of individual. Thus, it can be seen why the high prejudiced respondents rated the black source in a negative way but were more persuaded by the black when used as the message source. By viewing the black as "normal" and the white as "abnormal", the high prejudiced respondents may have been inclined to hold the black source as more "credible" than the white source.

Second, respondents may have perceived the black source as more of an "expert" on the topic of "Rapid Transit". This possibility is feasible because the Negro is generally thought of as an inner-city dweller and rapid transit is associated with larger urban areas. Thus, if considered an "expert" by high prejudiced whites, the black source would be more "trustworthy" and more persuasible. Unfortunately, the authors, believing no prior topic-oriented bias would be in effect, did not measure for differential "expert-trustworthiness" on the part of each experimental message source.

Third, and the most likely explanation of our results, the authors feel that the respondents in this experiment dissociated the experimental message
source from the message. This dissociative phenomenon may have resulted from the fact that the experimental source did not physically present the persuasive message. The experimental source was visually presented on a 35mm color slide while the interviewer read the message to the respondents after crediting the experimental source with the message.

The dissociative effect may have resulted from a rejection on the part of the respondents of the accredited message source relationship, i.e., a feeling that the experimental source did not actually write or endorse the message. The fact that the interviewer read the message himself may have led to an inability on the part of the respondents to distinguish between the message and the "physical" message source, thereby relating the preparation and endorsement of the message to the interviewer.

Prior research by Powell (10) determined that closed-minded individuals had a significantly more difficult time distinguishing between a message source and message content and judging each on its intrinsic merits than did open-minded individuals. Our research might be pointing out the same inability for our high prejudiced subjects. In other words, the high prejudiced individuals may have been persuaded by the message as presented by the interviewer while totally dissociating it from the experimental source.

The interviewer reading the message was white, neatly dressed, and generally conservative in appearance and mannerisms. Approximately one week after collecting the results the interviewer returned to one of the classes included in the experiment. The class members were asked to write brief paragraphs on their personal feelings concerning the interviewer. By and large, the interviewer was perceived as a conservative person. Thus, this type of individual would more likely be seen as "like me" by high prejudiced individuals.
Conclusion

The authors feel that our experimental design has opened up questions of inquiry relating to the method of accrediting a particular source with a particular message. Especially when dealing in the area of black message sources communicating to high prejudiced white individuals, the connection of the source to the message seems to be critical.

We conclude that when a black source is physically present, the message credited to him is more persuasive with white high prejudiced individuals when it is physically presented by a white individual. Of course, research specifically aimed at testing this statement should now be pursued.
Footnotes

1. Insko, Chester A., *Theories of Attitude Change*, p. 113.


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Appendix
THE MESSAGE

If ever a country depended on one item for existence, the country would be the United States and the item would be the automobile. The increasing number of motorized vehicles has become a very real problem affecting our everyday life, our cities, and the national economy.

There are more than one-hundred million cars and trucks in America today. This is an increase of seventy-three million vehicles since 1945. In a nation that accounts for one half of all the cars in the world, four out of every five families own an automobile. The automobile is definitely the number one material influence in our country. In fact, cars and other vehicles are multiplying faster than people. This increase in cars is the primary reason behind the rapid growth of suburbs.

With regard to labor, it's interesting to note that one business in six exists because of the motor vehicle, while one worker in five owes his job, directly or indirectly, to automobile production.

So, like it or not, we are deeply associated with the car and all of the resulting problems -- pollution, noise, and massive traffic jams that are crippling many of our big cities. Ten years from now, 62% of the population will be located in urban areas in and around these bigger cities. This means more people, more cars, and more congested streets and highways.

Can our nation survive this future? The solution to the pending crisis? -- mass rapid transit.

Already, attempts are being made by state and federal agencies to insure adequate rapid transit in the big cities. But much work remains, especially on the state and local level. If our metropolitan areas are to survive, if a total breakdown in transportation is to be avoided, firm decisions on rapid transit must be made, and made now.
I urge you, as citizens it is necessary that you support efforts aimed at developing rapid transit systems. By means of rapid transit it will be possible to eliminate much of our dependence on the car for city travel, while bettering our public transportation facilities in the big cities and surrounding urban areas.
Rapid Transit

Good: __:__:__:__:__:__:Bad
Hopeful: __:__:__:__:__:__:Hopeless
Dangerous: __:__:__:__:__:__:Safe
Insufficient: __:__:__:__:__:__:Sufficient
Meaningful: __:__:__:__:__:__:Meaningless
Unimportant: __:__:__:__:__:__:Important
Timely: __:__:__:__:__:__:Untimely
Uncomfortable: __:__:__:__:__:__:Comfortable
Useless: __:__:__:__:__:__:Useful
Warranted: __:__:__:__:__:__:Unwarranted
Friendly: __:__:__:__:__:__:Unfriendly
Not for me: __:__:__:__:__:__:For me
Person on Slide

Good:___:___:___:___:___:Bad
Kind:___:___:___:___:___:Cruel
Dangerous:___:___:___:___:___:Safe
Wise:___:___:___:___:___:Foolish
Unfriendly:___:___:___:___:___:Friendly
Successful:___:___:___:___:___:Unsuccessful
Influential:___:___:___:___:___:Uninfluential
Dishonest:___:___:___:___:___:Honest
Emotional:___:___:___:___:___:Unemotional
Dull:___:___:___:___:___:Witty
Retentive:___:___:___:___:___:Forgetful
Ugly:___:___:___:___:___:Beautiful
Clean:___:___:___:___:___:Dirty
Like me:___:___:___:___:___:Not like me
Not for me:___:___:___:___:___:For me