Competence motivation and interpersonal evaluation

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Interpersonal attraction in a face-to-face setting is examined in relation to attitude similarity-dissimilarity and accomplice liking for the S. In contrast to previous research (Byrne & Griffitt, 1966), attraction scores in the dislike range were observed. Ss reciprocated the stranger's evaluation and attraction toward them regardless of the degree of attitude similarity. Both reciprocal attraction and similarity attraction effects are discussed in terms of Byrne and Clore's (1967) competence-reinforcement theory of attraction.

The association between attitude similarity and interpersonal attraction is well documented in a number of studies (Byrne, 1971). Byrne has argued that similar attitudes function as positive reinforcements; attraction then increases as a linear function of the proportion of similar attitudes (Byrne & Clore, 1967).

Aronson and Worchel (1966) have proposed an alternative account of the similarity attraction effect. Rather than reinforcements, similar attitudes function as cues to the likelihood that the stranger would like the S. The individual has presumably learned to expect approval from persons with similar attitudes. The expectancy of being liked elicits attraction toward the similar stranger. In support of this inferred attraction hypothesis, Aronson and Worchel (1966) found that "liking" had a significant effect on attraction regardless of attitude similarity-dissimilarity. Subsequent research (Byrne & Griffitt, 1966) indicated that the absence of a relationship between similarity and attraction in the Aronson et al study was attributable to their use of a restricted range of attitude similarity-dissimilarity. Byrne and Griffitt (1966) concluded, however, that personal evaluations were much more important influences on attraction than similar attitudes.

In both the Aronson and Byrne studies the accomplice not only evaluated the S negatively, but also insulted the S by describing him as "shallow, uninteresting, and unformed." In no condition was a mean attraction score less than 8.0, which indicates liking, observed with the interpersonal judgment scale. Two possible accounts are suggested, (a) that Ss found the situation unbelievable or (b) that "dislike" ratings do not occur in face-to-face paradigms. Research by Gormly (in press) suggests that the latter hypothesis is inadequate, because this investigator reported mean attraction scores in the dislike range in response to face-to-face disagreements. The absence of scores in the dislike range in the Aronson-Byrne studies is probably attributable to S suspicion.

The current study examines the relative strengths of both evaluative feedback and attitude

similarity-dissimilarity as determinants of interpersonal attraction. An expanded experimental design was implemented with a more subtle presentation, without insults, of the accomplice's purported dislike for the S. Previous research by Johnson and his associates (Gormly, Gormly, & Johnson, 1971; Johnson, Gormly, & Gormly, 1973) has shown the viability of the competence-reinforcement theory of attraction in accounting for relationships between a wide range of variables and interpersonal attraction. The similarity evaluation controversy is viewed as a two-process manifestation of Byrne's (1971) competence-reinforcement theory of attraction. Generally, people are attracted to others who enhance their feelings of competence. In the Aronson-Byrne studies, as well as in the present study the Ss received competence-relevant information in two areas: specific attitude agreements and global evaluations of likableness. Specifically, it was predicted that (a) Ss would prefer similar strangers, but (b) knowledge of the stranger's evaluation of them would evidence a stronger effect than attitude consensus. Furthermore, since the global evaluation is seen as a more powerful indicant of competence than specific attitude agreements, then the following rank order of conditions by mean attraction scores was predicted: like-similar, like-dissimilar, dislike-similar, dislike-dissimilar.

METHOD

The Ss were 80 undergraduate students in introductory psychology who volunteered to participate in an experiment on interpersonal decision making. The Ss were roughly equal in regard to sex. Ss came to the laboratory individually and were introduced to another S who was actually an accomplice. The accomplice was always the same sex as the S. The E explained that he was interested in how accurately people could make judgments about others on the basis of their opinions. Each person would be asked to state his opinion on a variety of issues, as well as to make judgments about the other person on the basis of their stated opinions. Before beginning face-to-face interaction, the S and accomplice completed an 18-item attitude questionnaire privately. E collected the questionnaires and seated S and the accomplice at a table facing each other.

The accomplice agreed with one half of the Ss on 15 of the 18 items, while the other half received agreements on only 4 of the

*Sponsored by John Gormly, who takes full editorial responsibility.

18 items. The accomplice always went first and gave the response option signaled by E, who stood out of view of S and was presumably recording responses. Pilot research on disagreements indicated that when the accomplice followed the S, the S was more likely to attribute an intent to disagree (i.e., hostility) to the accomplice. The current methodology provides a more accurate assessment of the effect of the "existence" of dissimilar attitudes which is uncomplicated by S inferences about the accomplice's intent to disagree.

After both persons had stated their opinions on the 18 issues, the two participants were separated to make their judgments. The attraction measure used was the evaluative-behavioral attraction measure (Gormly, Gormly, & Johnson, 1971). The E-BAM consists of three polar adjective pairs (i.e., unpleasant-pleasant, familiar-unfamiliar, unfriendly-friendly) and three social distance items (i.e., would accept as roommate, would accept as member of my social group, would accept as intimate friend) presented in a six-alternative forced-choice format. Scores can range from 6 to 36.

Ss were assigned to one of the four conditions in Table 1. In all conditions, Ss examined the accomplice's E-BAM judgments, ostensibly to check their accuracy, before judging the accomplice. The evaluations indicated either strong liking or strong dislike for the S.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A mean attraction score of 21 indicates "dislike," and inspection of Table 1 shows that such scores are attainable in face-to-face situations. The combination of dissimilar attitudes and dislike by the accomplice is apparently sufficient to elicit attraction scores below the neutral point on the E-BAM attraction measure.

An analysis of variance of the data in Table 1 yielded a significant main effect for accomplice's liking of the S ($F = 59.90$, $df = 1/76$, $p < .001$). Expressions of like and dislike by the accomplice were reciprocated by Ss, regardless of the degree of similarity of their attitudes. Thus, if the accomplice indicated that he liked the S, the

S was strongly attracted toward the accomplice even when the accomplice expressed dissimilar attitudes.

A nearly significant effect ($F = 3.47$, $df = 1/76$, $p < .10$), was observed for attitude similarity-dissimilarity. An examination of the cell means in Table 1 suggests that the similar stranger was preferred; however, the like-dislike manipulation had a far greater effect on attraction. The interaction effect of Accomplice Evaluation by Attitude Similarity did not reach significance ($F = 2.37$, $df = 1/76$, $p > .05$). The direction of the interaction suggested, however, that attitude similarity-dissimilarity had a greater effect when the accomplice expressed liking rather than disliking for the S.

The rank order of the cell means from greatest to least attraction was liked-similar, liked-dissimilar, disliked-similar, disliked-dissimilar. This is exactly the order predicted from a competence-reinforcement theory of attraction. Both attitude similarities and the accomplice's liking ratings may reflect on the S's competency feelings. The competence-reinforcement theory is seen as dealing with phenomenological fields of self-evaluation including specific factors (e.g., agreement on specific attitudes and opinions) and a more general factor (e.g., social evaluation, social stimulus value, likability, etc.). Within the constraints of the laboratory, the degree of specific factors is limited, but information on whether another likes us provides a potent manipulation of the general factor.

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Table 1
Mean Attraction Responses Toward Accomplice as a Function of Attitude Similarity and Expressed Liking of the Subject

Attitudes		Accomplice Evaluation	
		Liked	Disliked
Similar	Mean	28.35	20.70
	SD	4.58	6.41
	N	20	20
Dissimilar	Mean	27.95	16.50
	SD	3.43	6.47
	N	20	20