

SOCIAL POWER AND INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

by 6408

RUSSELL VEITCH

B. S., Wisconsin State University - Whitewater, 1967

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A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Psychology

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

Approved by:

*William Griffith*  
Major Professor

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank William Griffitt for his technical and material assistance in preparing this manuscript. The author would also like to extend his special thanks to his wife, Jan, whose invaluable and steadfast transforming of "henscratch" penmanship into typescript must have been most perplexing.

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## INTRODUCTION

### PART I

A great deal of recent research on interpersonal attraction has focused its attention on the effects of attitude similarity-dissimilarity on attraction. It has been repeatedly found that persons are attracted (exhibit positive affect) toward others who hold similar attitudes and are repelled (exhibit negative affect) by others who hold dissimilar attitudes (Byrne, 1961; Byrne & Clore, 1966; Byrne & Griffitt, 1966; Newcomb, 1961). The most general explanatory concept to account for these effects is reward and punishment. Similar and dissimilar attitudes represent within this framework special cases of reward and punishment, respectively.

It is assumed that when one individual receives positive reinforcement from another, positive affect is elicited and, through classical conditioning, becomes associated with the other individual. It is further assumed and consistently substantiated (Byrne, 1961; Byrne & Clore, 1966; Byrne & Griffitt, 1966; Byrne, Griffitt, Hudgins, & Reeves, 1966) that subsequent evaluative responses directed toward that other individual will be positive. Conversely, when one individual receives negative reinforcement from another, negative affect is elicited and becomes associated with the other individual. Subsequent evaluative responses toward that other individual under these circumstances will be negative. The relative amounts of reward and punishment (positive and negative reinforcement) associated with a given individual determine the strength and direction of attraction toward him.

It has been further proposed and substantiated that attitude statements are affect arousing (Byrne & Clore, 1967). The motive involved in this arousal has variously been labeled the learned drive to be logical, to interpret

"correctly" the world around us (Byrne, 1961; Dollard & Miller, 1950), the "need for certainty" (Brim & Hoff, 1957) or the "need to control and predict" (Pervin, 1963). All of these, however, can be subsumed under the label "effectance motive" (White, 1959). However, unlike White, who stressed the "positive" aspects of the motive to explain why organisms avoid the monotonous, repetitious and familiar in order to seek stimulation via play, intellectual curiosity, and manipulation of the environment, Byrne and Clore (1967) propose that this same motivational construct (effectance) also accounts for a negative response to stimuli which lie further along the continuum of unfamiliarity, unpredictability and unexpectedness. When an individual is exposed to an attitude expressed by another individual which is similar to his own, he is rewarded through what Festinger (1954) calls consensual validation. It is gratifying to know that others feel the same way about a particular issue as one does and this lends credence to the belief that one has correctly interpreted his stimulus world. On the other hand, having another individual expound a dissimilar attitude frustrates the belief that one has correctly interpreted his world and thereby arouses negative affect.

That attitude similarity does have reinforcement value has been demonstrated by Byrne, Young, and Griffitt (1966), Clore (1966), and Golightly and Byrne (1964). In these studies employing a discrimination task attitude similarity was found to act as a positive reinforcer and attitude dissimilarity as a negative reinforcer. Based on the linear relationship between proportion of similar attitudes and attraction, Byrne and Nelson (1965) proposed a tentative law of attraction:

$A_x = mPRx + k$  or attraction toward  $x$  is a positive linear function  
function of the proportion of positive reinforcements received from  $x$ .