

THE EFFECTS OF A PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION
ON THE PERCEPTION OF A MESSAGE FILM

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I

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study is to examine, in a controlled experimental situation, two variables that might have an effect upon the viewer's perception of a message film.

One variable that can be expected to affect perception is the viewer's prior knowledge of the film. This study deals with one specific variable - a published review.

Another variable that might affect perception is personality. This study deals with one identified personality type - authoritarian.

The message film is the award-winning, five-minute, color, anti-war film, Star Spangled Banner. It was produced and directed by Roger Flint and was released in 1972.¹

The sections that follow examine a variety of previous research findings, develop the theoretical concepts, report the method of study, and analyze the findings.

¹See Appendix A, p. 48.

II

THEORETICAL FORMULATION

In their book, The Celluloid Weapon: Social Comment in American Film, David White and Richard Averson state that they,

scrupulously avoided suggesting any causal relationship between the content of a message film and social behavior - simply because no one knows enough about the complex variables that come between a moviegoer and what he sees on the screen²

Thirty-four years before, in 1938, Paul Cressey stated, "Fundamentally, the motion picture is an instrument of communication and informal education and it can be best studied sociologically when so conceived."³ He went on to state that quantitative and experimental research "should provide a conceptualization of the whole motion picture experience by which we may be able . . . to perceive more fundamentally its role in the growth of attitudes and personality."⁴

²As reported in a review by Robert W. Wagner in AV Communication Review 21 (1973): 471-73.

³Paul G. Cressey, "The Motion Picture Experience as Modified by Social Background and Personality," American Sociological Review 3 (1938): 516-25.

⁴Ibid., pp. 518-19.

Because film research, after forty years, is still trying to measure the whole motion picture experience, behaviorists still do not know what the viewer actually perceives or internalizes from the viewing experience.

Cressey was one of the early sociologists that maintained that motion pictures had an effect on the viewer and an influence on society as a whole.

Until the mid 1960's, most sociological researchers considered film to be an "art" and an influencing agent. Little thought had been given to it as a form of communication, to the cognitive style of the viewer, or to other factors that might influence what the viewer actually perceived or accepted from the film.

Film as Visual Communication

Sol Worth became concerned with film as a visual communication and he defined it as, "the transmission of a signal received primarily through visual receptors, which we treat as a message in inferring meaning from it."⁵ He was concerned with how the meaning, as perceived by the sender, or film-maker, was received by the viewer. He expressed his theory of film communication in the diagram in Appendix C.

⁵Sol Worth, "Film as A Non-Art: An Approach to the Study of Film," American Quarterly 35 (1966): 323.

Taking into account that the film-maker does utilize a belief system to formulate a feeling concern, especially in a message or attitude film actually does transmit this concern into an image-event, and assuming the viewer must receive this message through his own belief system, Worth concluded, "This model . . . describes the process of film communication. It doesn't, however, explain it."⁶

That certain viewer cognitions or prior knowledge of a film might influence the perception of the film has always been acknowledged by sociologists. However, researchers have not isolated any portion of these in a controlled situation.

White and Averson were among the first to admit that certain variables come between the viewer and what he sees. They did not specify what these variables were, nor did they venture a guess.⁷

Two Related Studies

Two recent studies, although not directly connected with film research, do relate to this problem.

The first is a study that was conducted by Michael

⁶ Ibid., p. 329.

⁷ David White and Richard Averson, The Celluloid Weapon: Social Comment in the American Film (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

Burgoon in 1970.⁸ Burgoon based the study on the concept that attitudes induced by one event influence attitudes toward another event.

He selected 216 subjects from four midwestern cities comprising four groups: labor union members, adults in a data processing class, college freshmen and high school students.

A written message that had been pretested for moderate content was given each subject. Half of the subjects randomly received messages with militant name sets (Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Eldridge Cleaver), and the other half received the non-militant set (Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts, Mayor Carl Stokes of Cleveland, Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr.). Before reading the message, subjects were asked to evaluate their specific name sets on a five-point semantic differential scale, with filler questions regarding media and a demographic question to determine race used to disassociate the names from the message.

The results were: (1) Blacks rated both sets of names significantly less militant than did whites; (2) both racial groups perceived the non-militant name set to be significantly less militant than the militant

⁸Michael Burgoon, "The Effects of Response Set and Race on Message Interpretation," Speech Monographs 38 (1970): 164-68.

name set; (3) the control group differed significantly from the experimental groups in judging the militancy of the message; (4) blacks who were given the non-militant set judged the message as less militant than did blacks who received the militant set; and (5) whites given the non-militant sets judged the message as significantly more militant than did the blacks given the non-militant sets.

Although blacks, in general, perceived less militancy in the messages than did whites, both white and blacks perceived more militancy in the messages attributed to militant authors.

The second related study was conducted by James Bradac and Mae Bell in 1975.⁹ They dealt with nonfluency and fluency expectations of a five-minute videotaped speech and a five-minute audiotaped speech.

The subjects were 196 freshmen speech and composition students.

Each speech contained twenty-five nonfluencies: ahs, sentence change, omission, etc.

In the nonfluent expectation, the subjects were told the speaker had previously been judged poorly by

⁹James D. Bradac and Mae A. Bell, "The Effects of Observer Expectations, Task Ambiguity and Medium of Presentation on Low-and-High Inference Judgments of Communicative Behavior," Human Communication Research 1 (1975): 123-32.

speech professors.

In the fluent expectation, the subjects were told the speaker was understandable by speech professors.

There was a high-ambiguity condition where the subjects were told that nonfluencies reflected the psychological state of the speaker, and a low-ambiguity condition where nonfluency was operationally defined.

There was no significant difference between the audiotape and the videotape.

They found that: (1) Task ambiguity influences the effect of observer expectation on the counting of nonfluencies; (2) subjects led to expect a nonfluent speaker rated him as relatively nonfluent on a high-influence scale, more negatively on form and content of his speech; and (3) subjects who expected a fluent speaker rated him fluent and rated him more positively on aspects of performance.

Current Study

Bradac and Bell studied the perception of fluency or nonfluency of a speaker, and found that subjects saw and heard what they were led to expect.

Burgoon studied the perception of militancy in a written message, and found that subjects who expected more militancy did indeed comprehend the message as

being more militant.

The current study deals with the difference in perception of militancy in an anti-war film between different levels of the authoritarian personality. The expectation of militancy or non-militancy was induced in the form of a printed review of the film.

Therefore, if Worth's definition of film as a visual communication¹⁰ is considered along with White and Averson's contention that the viewer does not always get the intended message because of intervening variables¹¹; and if Burgoon, Bradac and Bell are correct that subjects will read, see and hear what they are led to expect, (this study's intention is to demonstrate that the film-maker's message intent may be distorted by persuasive forewarning. It further intends to demonstrate that the effectiveness of the forewarning will depend, in some measure, upon one aspect of the viewer's cognitive structure, the presence of authoritarian personality characteristics.)

¹⁰See Appendix C, p. 57.

¹¹For a detailed discussion of this matter, see p. 4 above.

III

DEFINITIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Perception

Julian Hochberg stated, "Pictorial communication of shape and form is not simply a learned visual language."¹²

However, Sol Worth wrote that "film can be thought of as a new and unknown language."¹³

The difference between these two concepts of pictorial communication is that the first is an approach to perception in and of itself, without any regard for the manner in which the perception is a part of the total cognitive style of the perceiver. This is known as the phenomenological approach, or the study of isolated visual phenomena where the subject reports how the phenomena "appear" in contrast to how they "are."¹⁴ Phenomenological studies are perception studies that deal with the manipulation of light, size and shape of objects, movement, distortion, etc. In such studies,

¹²Julian Hochberg, "The Psychophysics of Pictorial Perception," AV Communication Review 10 (1962): 51.

¹³Worth, "Film as A Non-Art," p. 333.

¹⁴Samuel H. Bartley, Principles of Perception, 2d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

the response of the subject is completely independent of any knowledge or belief concerning the stimulus.¹⁵

Although these can, and have been applied to film-making, this definition of perception is not applicable to this study because it will deal with a message film that employs both visual and audio sensitivity and assumes prior knowledge and belief relative to the stimulus.

Therefore, in this study, the word perception is defined as an impression through an audio-visual language transcription upon the state of awareness of the viewer.¹⁶

Cognitive Style

Each individual is unique and each one has an individual psychological structure which is an organized set of thoughts, beliefs, values, etc. that a person has about himself and the world around him. Each separate component is called a cognition. Each cognition is simply an awareness of a single entity. When all the elements within the psychological structure are taken together they form the individual's so-called

¹⁵Julian Hochberg, "Perception: Recovery of A Definition," Psychological Review 63 (1956): 400-05.

¹⁶Hans Toch and Malcolm S. Maclean, Jr., "Perception, Communication, and Educational Research: A Transactional View," AV Communication Review 10 (1962): 55-77.

personality. Psychologists generally agree that individuals are constantly acquiring new cognitions and arranging and sorting them within the personality structure. For the purpose of this study, the individual's total psychological structure is referred to as his cognitive style. The degree to which an individual feels about any of the cognitions is referred to as saliency.

Ambiguity

For the purpose of this study, ambiguity will be considered as the degree of variability of the relationship between the film's message and the perceptual response of the subject.¹⁷

Message Film

A film that is made by a producer and/or director with the intent of conveying one or more cognitions of that producer and/or director is a message film.

¹⁷For a detailed discussion of this matter see p. 10 above.

IV

THE FILM

Star Spangled Banner¹⁸ was chosen for this study for three reasons: It is a message film, it is a short film (five minutes), and it has received many awards at film festivals around the world, including the "Best Short Film and Special Jury Award" at the Cannes Film Festival in 1972.¹⁹

Correspondence from the writer-producer-director, Roger Flint, indicates that his message intent was, "we all are related and interlocked. What happens to one happens to all We die, too, when one of us dies."²⁰

The film opens with the title superimposed over a jungle scene where a lone American soldier slowly and carefully picks his way through the underbrush.

There is no dialogue. The soundtrack is a synchronized rock version of "The Star Spangled Banner" sung by The Grass Roots. As the soldier moves through the jungle, there are flash frames and quick cuts of a

¹⁸The correct title according to the film credits.

¹⁹See Appendix A, p. 48. ²⁰Ibid., pp. 42-46.

naked young woman, a motherly woman, and the soldier with the young woman. The soldier begins to run as rifle fire is exchanged near him. Interspliced with his progression through the jungle are quick cuts of a cross-section of American society. They appear to be watching the soldier.

Suddenly, he steps on a mine and he dies in agonizing slow motion. Again, the quick cuts to the symbolic American types who fall and die in moments of domestic routine. Flint uses freeze frames very effectively. The heart of the message comes at this point, making it painfully clear that a piece of each one of us dies with every soldier who is killed in battle.

Again, the credits are superimposed. The dying soldier, in the last frame, desperately grasps a handful of mud as the melodious sound of birds and insects is heard.

Flint uses brilliant color throughout. He utilizes montage and juxtaposition much in the manner that Sergei Eisenstein did in Potemkin and Strike. Flint welds the total impact with a pulsating balletic quality reminiscent of Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will.

Star Spangled Banner is a technically superb, well composed, and sensitively edited film that makes a

powerful statement about human values.

Star Spangled Banner has been described as, "a devastating piece, it hits one like a punch in the eye," (Variety); as, "the most eloquent of all the anti-war films of recent years," (Landers Film Reviews); and as, "a brief, nonverbal film of disturbing realism concerning contemporary warfare, its tragic results for the young soldier, and the impact of his death on American society," (The English Journal).²¹

This film is more than just a message film. It is also a work of art. The value of this film, as with any other artistic endeavor, is its worth to the beholder or possessor. Therein lies the seeming ambiguity of the film. Although this is slight, it is enough to provide the condition necessary for the manipulation of the perceptual response.

²¹See Appendix A, p. 47

V

FILM RESEARCH

Some Representative Studies

Some film studies have been concerned with the effects of films upon the behavior of individuals, or upon the behavior of certain age groups, such as children or adolescents. A great number have been done that were concerned with the effectiveness of films as an educational learning device.

Since the current study involves the use of an attitude or message film, some representative ones are discussed in this chapter.

Estimating the Net Effect of A Commercial Motion Picture Upon the Trend of Local Public Opinion²²

This study by J. E. Hulett, Jr. is an example of one of the early studies as it was done in 1949. It employed a modified panel survey technique to try to determine the effects of a commercial motion picture, Sister Kenney, on community opinions and collective

²²J. E. Hulett, Jr., "Estimating the Net Effect of A Commercial Motion Picture Upon the Trend of Local Public Opinion," American Sociological Review 14 (1949): 263-75.

action. The study had problems with control, mortality, and other factors, and was highly inconclusive. Hulett did find that individuals reacted to the film with the formation of individual opinions. They were not, however, motivated toward collective action on related community issues. Three-fifths of the group expressed, in varying degrees, the feeling that the film was probably a biased Hollywood portrayal.

Moving Attitudes with Moving Pictures²³

This study was done by Richard Hirsch, also in 1949. It utilized films to change student attitudes toward the plays of Shakespeare. The control group read, discussed and listened to lectures. The experimental group did also, but they saw films of the plays. Hirsch used the Thurston Attitude Scale.²⁴

Hirsch found a definite improvement in attitude toward Shakespeare's plays in the experimental group over the control group and concluded, "Motion pictures appear to be one of the best tools a teacher can use to achieve success in the simulation and motivation of students toward a favorable attitude."²⁵

²³Richard S. Hirsch, "Moving Attitudes with Moving Pictures," Educational Screen 28 (1949): 446-47.

²⁴L. I. Thurston, "Attitudes Can Be Measured," American Journal of Sociology 33 (1928): 529-54.

²⁵Hirsch, "Moving Attitudes," p. 460.

They Saw A Game: A Case Study²⁶

A. H. Hastorf and Hadley Cantril showed a film of a football game between Dartmouth and Princeton which took place on November 23, 1951, to some one hundred students from both Dartmouth and Princeton. The students responded to a questionnaire and the Dartmouth students "saw" the Princeton team make more infractions, while the Princeton students "saw" just the opposite. They concluded:

It is inaccurate and misleading to say that different people have different 'attitudes' concerning the same 'thing,' for the 'thing' simply is not the same for different people whether the 'thing' is a football game, a presidential candidate, Communism, or spinach. We do not simply 'react to' a happening or to some impingement from the environment in a determined way (except in behavior that has become reflexive or habitual). We behave according to what we bring to the occasion, and what each of us brings to the occasion is more or less unique.²⁷

Attitude Films and Attitude Change²⁸

After conducting a series of experiments showing traffic films specifically designed to change driver

²⁶A. H. Hastorf and Hadley Cantril, "They Saw A Game: A Case Study," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 49 (1954): 129-34.

²⁷Ibid., p. 133.

²⁸Irving R. Merrill, "Attitude Films and Attitude Change," AV Communication Review 10 (1962): 3-13.

attitudes, Irving Merrill stated, "The initial result of viewing an attitude film is manipulation of the cognitive component of attitude."²⁹ A total of 181 subjects were divided into groups according to their responses to the flexibility scale of the California Psychological Inventory. The subjects viewed the film and took a posttest. Merrill found that there was no more attitude change in flexible thinkers than in rigid ones. He suggested that defensive avoidance might have occurred due to strong fears aroused by the film, and concluded that attitude films "do not directly change the affective component of attitude structure."

Archie Bunker's Bigotry: A Study in Selective Perception and Exposure³⁰

Neil Vidmar and Milton Rokeach conducted a survey study concerning attitudes toward the television program All in the Family. Basically, they found that prejudiced and nonprejudiced subjects ascribed different meanings to the intent and outcome of episodes. They found that "nonprejudiced viewers and minority group viewers may perceive and enjoy the show as satire,

²⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

³⁰ Neil Vidmar and Milton Rokeach, "Archie Bunker's Bigotry: A Study in Selective Perception and Exposure," Journal of Communication 24 (1974): 36-47.

whereas prejudiced viewers may perceive and enjoy the show as episodes telling it like it is."³¹

(The concluded, as did Hastorf and Cantril, that a person's prior attitudes and set of values will affect that person's perception or interpretation of a social event.)

The Drug Attitude Film: Development
of A Measurement Technique for Assessing
Attitudes Toward Adolescent Drug Users³²

Andrew Ahlgren took a thirty-minute drug education film which was produced by the New York State Narcotics Control Commission and, with their permission, extracted clips, then spliced them together at timed intervals. The first sequence consisted of a descriptive title, clips of five different students discussing their reasons for drug use (each about ten seconds), separated by three seconds of black. After a second instructional title, "Now mark your responses to each student quickly," the five clips appeared again, each preceded by a sequence number and separated by fifteen seconds of black. During the intervals, the subjects

³¹Ibid., p. 37.

³²Andrew Ahlgren. The Drug Attitude Film: Development of A Measurement Technique for Assessing Attitudes Towards Adolescent Drug Users (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 106-741, 1975).

rated each student on a five-word-pair semantic differential scale. There were ninety-five subjects. Some of the subjects rated the sound film, some the silent film and some the transcript.

After a thorough factor analysis, Ahlgren concluded that reading the transcript was almost as effective in creating negative attitudes as was the viewing of the film. Ahlgren stated:

However, the negative-change groups were also made up of more 'conservative subjects - health professionals and in-service teachers, etc., rather than college seniors as in the two workshops. So an alternative proposition would be that liberal and conservative types are simply confirmed in their predilections.³³

It must be noted that Ahlgren did not pretest to determine attitudes toward drug users, nor did he actually test for "conservative" subjects. In the final paragraph he concluded that the findings were inadequate to support firmly any generalization at all, and "such propositions as are advanced above must wait on more carefully controlled studies with more clearly identified samples."³⁴

³³ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁴ Ibid.

Vicarious Attitude Change and the Design of
"Message" Films: Application to Race Relations ³⁵

This study was sponsored by the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. It was an effort to determine the effects on viewers of vicarious attitude change in message films used as part of the military race relations training program.

The subjects were 199 white soldiers, assigned at random to four groups. One of the four groups watched a video recording of a white soldier viewing the film, Black and White: Uptight, showing the positive effects of the film on the viewer's racial attitudes. A second group saw a version in which the viewer's attitudes were not affected. Group three saw only the film, and group four was not shown anything. The group that saw the videotape that included both the film and positive change, and the group that saw the original film, showed significantly less prejudice on the posttest than did the other two groups.

This study also concluded that an attitude measure should have been given prior to the making, as well as

³⁵ Alfred J. Kraemer, Deborah Hansen Bercini, and John D. Harris. Vicarious Attitude Change and the Design of "Message" Films: Application to Race Relations (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 110-074, 1975).

the showing of the original film and the videotapes.

The conclusion was,

the subjects had implicitly been assumed to be more prejudiced than they actually were. It is likely that this influenced the script writing so as to cause the model's initial attitude and his subsequent change to be of less than³⁶ optimum value for most of the subjects.

Current Study

The current study departs from the usual message film research in that it does not attempt to change attitudes, measure an effect upon the behavior of the viewer, or to motivate the viewer to action. It attempts to measure what the viewer perceives the message of the film to be after having read a printed review, and the amount of militancy perceived in the film by those scoring high on the F Scale.

Research concerning film as a visual communication has been sporadic and has, in general, lacked control. Almost every study admonished researchers to continue to study the message film in any way that would help isolate any cause and effect relationships. The current study purports to do nothing more than continue with the hope that the results will be of some value.

³⁶Ibid., p. 17.

VI

THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY

An Overview

In 1950, The Authoritarian Personality³⁷ appeared. The initial concern of the book was anti-semitism. What actually evolved was a focus upon ethnocentrism and potential fascism. The study, also known as the Berkeley Study, was not based on a systematic research program and it does not withstand an appraisal based on current standards of personality research methods, but it has had a wide influence on the thinking and research in the social sciences.

Arthur Cohen, in Attitude Change and Social Influences,³⁸ stated that:

It was a large-scale study of social attitudes and personality. In general, their investigation demonstrated the correspondence between certain basic psychodynamic processes characteristic of a person and his outlook on a great variety of areas, ranging from the most intimate features of family life, to sex adjustment, through

³⁷Theodor W. Adorno et al., The Authoritarian Personality (New York: Harper & Row, 1950).

³⁸Arthur R. Cohen, Attitude Change and Social Influence (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1964).

relationships with other people in general, to religion, and to social and political philosophy.³⁹

Within a loosely organized research program, the authors identified potential fascism and an underlying personality complex related to ethnocentrism and anti-semitism. They used a scale, called the F (fascism) Scale which is sometimes referred to as the California F. Scale.⁴⁰

The Adorno investigation was not the first. The first was a study done in 1939 by Ross Stagner.⁴¹ For the study, Stagner developed a questionnaire scale to test the significance of seven factors hypothesized as indicators of personality type who would have fascist leanings. The seven factors included: (a) nationalism or opposition to internationalism, (b) imperialism, (c) militarism, (d) racial antagonism, (e) anti-radicalism, (f) middle class consciousness, defined by Stagner

³⁹Ibid., pp. 55-56.

⁴⁰John F. Kirscht and Ronald C. Dillehay, Dimensions of Authoritarianism: A Review of Research and Theory (Lexington, Ky.: The University of Kentucky Press, 1967), p. 5.

⁴¹Ross Stagner, "Fascist Attitudes: An Exploratory Study," The Journal of Social Psychology 7 (1936): 309-19.

as "a superior attitude to the working class," and (g) the benevolent despot or the strong man philosophy of government. Stagner concluded:

The essence of the general 'pro-fascist' attitude which seems indicated by this study lies in the attitude of class superiority taken by many individuals toward the element of the population which are below them in an economic and industrial sense. The anti-radical attitude is also markedly involved, and nationalism and racial antagonism are manifested.⁴²

In 1941, Erich Fromm, in Escape from Freedom,⁴³ identified this personality syndrome as "authoritarian," and elaborated further:

The more distinctive forms of this mechanism are to be found in the striving for submission and domination, or, as we would rather put it, in the masochistic and sadistic strivings as they exist in varying degrees in normal and neurotic persons respectively Since the term 'sado-masochistic' is associated with ideas of perversion and neurosis, I prefer to speak of the sado-masochistic character, especially when not the neurotic but the normal person is meant, as the 'authoritarian character.' This terminology is justifiable because the sado-masochistic person is always characterized by his attitude toward authority. He admires authority and tends to submit to it, but at the same time he wants to be an authority himself and have others submit to him. There is an additional reason for choosing this term. The Fascist system call themselves [sic]

⁴²Ibid., p. 315.

⁴³Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1941).

authoritarian because of the dominant role of authority in their [sic] social and political structure. By the term 'authoritarian character' we imply that it represents the personality structure which is the human basis of fascism.⁴⁴

According to R. N. Sanford, an associate of

Adorno,⁴⁵ the title, The Authoritarian Personality,

was used in order to make reference to their own

earlier writing and research. Sanford identified the

authors' concept of authoritarianism as a "composite

of subparts with dynamic relationships to prejudice"

and he summarized these subparts as:

1. Conventionalism. Rigid adherence to conventional middleclass values.
2. Authoritarian Submission. Submissive, uncritical attitude toward idealized moral authorities of the in-group.
3. Authoritarian Aggression. Tendency to be on the lookout for, and to condemn, reject, and punish people who violate conventional values.
4. Anti-intracception. Opposition to the subjective, the imaginative, the tender-minded.
5. Superstition and Stereotypy. Belief in mystical determinants of the individual's fate; the disposition to think in rigid categories.
6. Power and Toughness. Preoccupation with the dominance-submission, strong-weak, leader-follower dimension; identification with power figures; exaggerated

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 17. (Italics mine.)

⁴⁵R. N. Sanford, "The Approach of the Authoritarian Personality," in Psychology of Personality: Six Modern Approaches, ed. J. L. McCary (New York: Logos Press, 1956).

- assertions of strength and toughness.
7. Destructiveness and Cynicism. Generalized hostility, vilification of the human.
 8. Projectivity. Disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world; the perjection outward of unconscious emotional impulses.
 9. Sex. Ego-alien sexuality; exaggerated concern with sexual 'goings-on,' and punitiveness toward violators of sex mores.⁴⁶

"Each item of the F scale supposedly measures one or more of these facets of authoritarianism . . . this instrument is, in large part, the working definition of authoritarianism."⁴⁷

The validity of the F Scale has often been questioned and various studies have been undertaken to ascertain its supposed superiority or inferiority in comparison with other scales.

The original F Scale contained over sixty items and all of them were negative. This led to criticism of response bias as well as the problem of acquiescence. Also, because of the length, it was time consuming to give and tabulate.

In 1960, Milton Rokeach developed what he called a D (dogmatism) Scale. He published it in his book

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 1.

⁴⁷Kirscht and Dillehay, Dimensions of Authoritarianism, p. 6.

The Open and Closed Mind.⁴⁸ Throughout the sixties, the D Scale was tested against the F Scale.

Rokeach, in association with Fred Kerlinger, tested the two scales and performed a factorial analysis.⁴⁹ They concluded:

Fascistic, authoritarianism and dogmatism, as measured, both seem to be parts of one underlying unity and, at the same time, discriminable entities. The substantial correlations between the F- and D-Scale total scores in the three samples and the predominantly positive correlations among the first-order factors speak for an underlying unity. There is little doubt, then, that F and D are related phenomena with, probably, a common core of authoritarianism.⁵⁰

One of the latest comparison studies was done by Robert Thompson and Jerry Michel in 1972.⁵¹ In the summary of that study, they state:

In response to continuing criticism of the F Scale's bias toward conservatism, Rokeach constructed the Dogmatism Scale to measure general authoritarianism. Kelman and Barclay's explanation of the F Scale

⁴⁸Milton Rokeach, The Open and Closed Mind (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960).

⁴⁹Fred N. Kerlinger and Milton Rokeach, "The Factorial Nature of the F and D Scales," Journal of Personal and Social Psychology 4 (1966): 391-99.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 397.

⁵¹Robert C. Thompson and Jerry B. Michel, "Measuring Authoritarianism: A Comparison of the F and D Scales," Journal of Personality 49 (1972): 180-88.

as a measure of breadth of perspective was extended to the D Scale and the assertion that the D Scale can discern authoritarianism untapped by the F Scale was tested. Using responses of 379 undergraduates, the hypothesized fit of the breadth of perspective approach was generally substantiated. In addition, similarities of F and D score distribution raised doubt concerning the claim of superiority measurement capabilities of the D Scale.⁵²

The D Scale is unidirectionally constructed, as was the original F Scale. This makes the D Scale as liable to the same response bias problems as the F Scale.

In trying to correct the response bias in the F Scale, researchers have resorted to rewriting the positively worded items negatively, or balancing the number of positive and negative items on the scale.

In this study, the scale used to measure the presence of the personality characteristic classified as authoritarian was a balanced F Scale developed by Lee and Warr in 1969.⁵³ This scale employs thirty items whereas the original consisted of over twice that number. The balanced scale is composed of alternating positive and negative statements. After

⁵²Ibid., p. 188.

⁵³Robert E. Lee and Peter Warr, "The Development and Standardization of A Balanced F-Scale," The Journal of General Psychology 81 (1969): 109-29. See Appendix B for statements.

testing for validity of this balanced scale, Lee and Warr concluded,

The accumulated material about its statistical and other properties suggests that it might be fruitfully employed in studies where an adequately constructed and validated scale is needed . . . the scale is statistically at least as good as the original F-scale.⁵⁴

According to Cohen, the authoritarian

personality pattern associated with excessive respect for an obedience to authority, admiration for power, toughness and aggression, and an attitude of cynicism and defensive projection makes for relatively great acceptance of persuasive communication.⁵⁵

Because the film used in this study is anti-war in nature, authoritarian personality characteristics become a related aspect of the viewer's cognitive structure that might influence not only the perception of the message of the film, but the ability of the forewarning communication to alter that perception.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 128.

⁵⁵Cohen, Attitude Change and Social Influence, p. 46.

VII

THE STUDY

Method and ProceduresProblems

Film researchers are in general agreement that subjects do not view any film with complete objectivity, but bring to the viewing experience certain cognitions, some prior knowledge, a motivation to view it, etc.

The problems to be dealt with in this study are:

1. How much is the subject's perception of a film affected by what the subject may have read about the film before viewing it?
2. Will the personality type that has been identified by the F Scale as authoritarian in nature, be more easily persuaded?
3. How much militancy will the authoritarian personality type perceive in the film?

Hypotheses

With the three problems in mind, the following hypotheses will be tested:

1. The perception of a message film viewed for the first time, without prior knowledge of the film by

the viewer, will be in the direction of the immediate forewarning communication.

2. Subjects scoring high on the balanced F Scale will show higher agreement with the communication than low-scoring subjects.

3. Subjects scoring high on the balanced F Scale will perceive more militancy in the film than the low-scoring subjects.

Variables

The independent variables were the forewarning communications and the amount of authoritarianism.

The dependent variable was the degree of rating of the film as anti-war on the posttest.

Operational Definitions

Communications

The communications were short, newspaper-type reviews, attributed to a fictitious reviewer and magazine, to reduce the possibility of contamination by reviewer or magazine credibility. One review advocated that the film was patriotic while the other advocated it was anti-war. Both reviews were set in newspaper type, then photocopied.⁵⁶

⁵⁶See Appendix B, pp. 50-51.

